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DeKalb County Government  
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes  
January 24, 2017**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday January 24, 2017 at 6:00 pm in the Gathertorium of the Legislative Center. In attendance were committee members: Mr. Brown, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Mr. Bagby, Mr. Porterfield, Mr. Roman and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Porterfield arrived after Roll Call. Ms. Little and Mr. Schmarje were absent. Guests included Frank Ostling, Beckey Morphey, Ryan Hannan, Al Roloff, Josh Clark, Peggy Doty, Nathan Schwartz, Jerry Augsburger and Mark Pietrowski.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Brown called for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2016 meeting. Mr. Bagby moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh and the motion passed unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mr. Brown noted that the agenda needed to be amended to move item # 9 would need to be moved to the Executive Session. He then called for a motion to approve the amended agenda. Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Roman and the motion passed unanimously.

**WELCOME AND PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Brown began by thanking everyone for a great turnout of staff, visitors and other board members. He then welcomed Mr. Roman from southwest DeKalb and noted there were 4 new Committee members, Ms. Little, Mr. Schmarje, Mr. Porterfield and Mr. Roman. He also extended a warm welcome to former Board and Committee member Jerry Augsburger.

Mr. Brown asked if there were any public comments. Hearing none, he proceeded to the first agenda item.

**ANNUAL ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (IDNR)  
REPORT ON CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE**

Mr. Hannan began by introducing Mr. Frank Ostling from the IDNR to the new members. Mr. Ostling noted that former Board member Michael Haines had sent some questions to him that he would be addressing tonight along with any questions from the Committee. Mr. Brown noted that Jerry Augsburger also brings his perspective as a hunter and longtime outdoorsman.

Mr. Ostling noted that they have been in the process of culling deer from 2 forest preserve areas for several years now. They do this in an attempt to minimize and document the prevalence of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) within the County and the State.. These activities have also helped with mitigating the growth and spread of the disease. They are also assisted by local hunters who voluntarily agree to provide samples for testing.

He commented that in northern DeKalb County, there is a distinct level of infection from the borders of Boone and Winnebago counties down to Northwest DeKalb County. This area shows the highest prevalence rates of the areas being monitored.

Mr. Porterfield arrived.

The IDNR looks to public and private landowners to allow the culling activities to facilitate the CWD testing. Carcasses of culled deer are removed in full from the locations and held until the testing is completed. Deer showing positive results are then incinerated. Deer showing a negative result are sent to processing facilities and the meat is donated to the Northern Illinois Food Bank. He noted that while the process of culling can be unpleasant to some, it has proven the most effective and necessary tool in containing the disease.

The testing is done primarily to determine the presence of the prions associated with CWD. Mr. Ostling noted that positive samples have been found this year in the County.

Mr. Ostling then read an email from Michael Haines asking if it might be possible that some deer in the County may be developing a natural or genetic resistance to CWD and whether or not culling activities may be removing some of these resistant deer from the population. He notes that allowing natural resistance might be helpful in the future.

Mr. Ostling responded that there has been some research suggesting that natural resistance may exist – but not complete resistance. The disease is always fatal once contracted. The difficulty with partial resistance is that it may enable infected deer to survive longer and therefore increase the potential to distribute the prions for a longer period of time before eventually succumbing to the disease or conditions related to it.

Mr. Ostling noted that the prion involved in CWD is in a class of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy similar to Mad Cow Disease. At this time there is no clear evidence that humans can contract the disease by consuming meat from an infected animal. However, some folks prefer to participate in the testing before processing or consuming the meat from animals they have taken.

He further noted that some epidemiologists with experience in infectious agents note that the greater the spread of a disease, the greater the chance it could mutate and cross species. This is another good reason for trying to limit growth and expansion of the disease.

Mr. Pietrowski asked what was the best way for private hunters to access testing services. Mr. Ostling replied that the IDNR works with some deer processors who can take the samples, or as an alternative the IDNR has placed barrels where a hunter can leave the head of deer they have taken along with a note with their contact information. These are then tested with no cost to the hunter and they are contacted once the testing is completed.

The University of Illinois is currently testing all samples from the past hunting season. This testing takes approximately 6 to 8 weeks to complete. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) does recommend that hunters wait for test results before consuming any of the meat, but individuals can make their own decisions on that. He did note that since there has been no clear evidence of the disease jumping to humans from the consumption of the meat – this should not be considered a food safety test. The testing merely tells whether the disease is present in the animal or not.

Mr. Pietrowski then asked if there are any medications or treatments being developed. Mr. Ostling replied that Canada has been doing some experimentation with inoculations, but nothing concrete yet. Illinois has focused primarily on identifying the distribution and prevalence of the disease. Resources are short and the animals involved are free ranging, so that makes for an uncertain future for the efforts.

Mr. Hannan asked if Mr. Ostling would discuss the Illinois management model compared with what has occurred in Wisconsin. Mr. Ostling replied that the disease was first detected in Wisconsin in 2002, about the same time as efforts began in Illinois as well. Initially, both states started the same, but in 2005 Wisconsin ceased their culling activities and looked to voluntary participation from local hunters exclusively. Since then the Illinois prevalence rate has been holding at about 1%, while the Wisconsin rates have elevated dramatically. He commented that there have been articles lately that indicate that Wisconsin hunters have been actively moving away from areas with high prevalence rates to those with lower rates. This is allowing the high rate areas to expand unchecked. Wisconsin's activities have been unfortunately politicized, something he notes that Illinois has been lucky enough to avoid.

Mr. Ostling noted that the IDNR website contains annual summaries of their activities samples and prevalence rates to keep the public informed of their progress and efforts. Mr. Ostling also indicated that anyone is also invited to contact him with questions or concerns.

Mr. Porterfield asked if in the process of culling, CWD is found, is the entire herd eliminated? Mr. Ostling replied that it is not. Mr. Porterfield then asked if a hunter turns in an animal that is positive for CWD, can he get a new hunting tag or another deer. Mr. Ostling replied that hunters who submit samples that are positive are given a new tag for the next hunting season. Additionally, hunters can purchase unlimited amounts of tags giving them a theoretically unlimited opportunity to harvest deer. But he cautioned that the level of harvest does not remove the need for the targeted culling in certain areas due to the limitations of time and success involved in natural harvesting.

Mr. Hannan about the volume of deer taken at forest preserve sites. Mr. Ostling responded that they generally have taken 4 to 5 deer at Potawatomi Woods per year on average. He noted that the IDNR Kishwaukee Fish and Wildlife Area has had consistently positive test results. At the Hoppe Heritage farm, they have taken only a few deer, with some positive results. Mr. Ostling passed out a map of the goals per area and test results shown.

Mr. Bagby asked what the tests consisted of. Mr. Ostling responded that the brain stem and lymph nodes under the jaw are the areas tested. They look to these areas for evidence of spongiform tissue.

Mr. Brown then asked Mr. Augsburger to speak on the issue if he would like. Mr. Augsburger noted that he is extremely supportive of the IDNR activities and approach to the problem of the disease. He has read widely of other areas struggling to deal with CWD. He commented that he was surprised about a Wyoming study since the western states have a history of struggling with the disease while Illinois is frequently noted as being successful with its containment efforts.

Mr. Ostling commented that he feels for Wisconsin residents who see the value in Illinois' approach, but whose hands are tied due to the political environment. He further commented that he agreed that comparing Wyoming and Illinois with respect to possible resistance is an apples to oranges comparison due to the comparison of mule deer to white tailed deer that populate the two areas. He went on to note that the particular gene that has shown some possibility of resistance is not at all common. Models have suggested that trying to allow solely for natural resistance to develop could take in excess of 200 years. Further hindering that development is the fact that there are areas in Wyoming with over 50% prevalence rates and predators have likely taken great advantage of these weakened animals.

Mr. Augsburger again stated his support for the IDNR approach and commented that he was sorry that some have taken such an adversarial position towards the IDNR.

Ms. Doty the commented about the way the prions concentrate in the neural tissue, creating the spongy tissue that ultimately degrades the animals brain. She noted that there have been studies indicating that the prions may be spread through the simple act of licking. There are also concerns that the prion can survive on the landscape and be transmitted as well. She closed by noting that while this has not crossed species to this point, there is concern about excessive buildup of the prions in certain areas. Another factor that plays into the retention of prions is the soil type. Prions have been shown to be able to work their way into sandy soil. But those that more readily than clay are shed on denser clay-type soil can remain exposed longer. There hasn't been solid documentation of landscape prevalence.

Mr. Hannan noted that Mr. Ostling has come tonight not only to report on the activities, but also to ask for permission to continue culling activities on 2 District properties through March of 2017. The areas would be Potawatomi and the South Branch Prairie at

the Hoppe Heritage Farm primarily. The activities would be held Monday through Thursday and they do notify the various police departments before activities are held. The carcasses of negative deer will be donated to area food banks and the remainder of the culled specimens will be sent to U of I for several additional studies so nothing is wasted and everything goes to a good use.

Mr. Porterfield moved to approve the IDNR culling activities for 2017, seconded by Mr. Roman. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Ostling thanked the Committee for their time and continued support. Mr. Brown commented that since deer are evident in virtually all areas of the County, this is a critical matter.

### **SOMONAUK TO SANNAUK TRAIL RESOLUTION**

Mr. Hannan passed out the proposed resolution and map showing the proposed Somonauk to Sannauk Trail. He commented that he had also sent emails to the Committee on the matter.

Mr. Hannan then did a quick review of the history of this project and noted that it has been ongoing for a few years now. There had been a landowner who had initially agreed to participate in the project who had changed their minds in 2012, but has since returned at the end of 2016 with a willingness to move forward with the trail project.

Beckey Morphey of the Village of Somonauk noted that they have long had hope that the trail project could come to a successful conclusion.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved that the resolution be moved to the full Board for consideration, seconded by Mr. Bagby.

Mr. Brown then asked for discussion of the motion. Mr. Bagby noted the current resolution covers only the land purchase.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh commented that she is delighted this is finally moving forward. Mr. Hannan noted that he has spoken to the landowner, frequently and he does seem eager to move forward now. Mr. Porterfield asked of the land behind the proposed trail was planned for development. Ms. Morphey noted that it is on the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan for eventual residential and commercial development, though nothing is imminent. He then asked if the trail would be compromised in any way of the land were to be developed.

Mr. Schwartz, County Engineer for the Highway Department, commented that it is not uncommon to have driveways or road entrances crossing over paths or rails. He noted that the Peace Road Trail has several such crossings. Mr. Hannan then showed a map and photo of the area the trail would be located.

Mr. Pietrowski asked if there would be a need for additional parking to accommodate trail users. Ms. Morphey commented that things have not gotten that far yet and they feel the Somonauk Library parking could be shared at first.

Mr. Brown thanked Mr. Hannan for keeping the Committee well informed on this project and noted that he too is pleased to see it moving forward. Mr. Bagby agreed that this has been a project a long time in development. Ms. Haji-Sheikh commented that she is also pleased to see this in an area of the County with this project. Ms. Morphey closed by saying that it was also the hope that one day this trail could be extended to connect to Sandwich one day.

A roll call vote was held on the motion with 5 in favor, none opposed. The motion passed.

### **POTAWATOMI WOODS FARM LAND LICENSE RENEWAL**

Mr. Hannan reviewed the history of the existing approx. 39 acre farm license for the property. He then noted that a request for bid was sent out in a legal notice in The Midweek and only one bid was received,

Mr. Brown formally opened the bid and noted it came from Michael Exler who has farmed the land for the past 5 years, The bid was for \$165.39 for 39 acres with annual payments through March of 2021.

Mr. Bagby asked what the prior lease value was. Mr. Hannan responded that it had been set at \$171.00 per acre. Mr. Porterfield asked if that amount were reasonable in comparison to other area leases. Mr. Hannan responded that it is given that the land in question is not the most productive soils, rather small acreage and no-till farming practices are required..

Mr. Porterfield moved to accept the bid from Michael Exler, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh. The motion passed on a roll call vote with 5 in the affirmative and none opposed.

### **MONTHLY REPORTS**

Mr. Hannan noted to the Committee that usage, maintenance, projects, visitor attendance and activity reports are included in the packets. He also noted that there is a photo of the Frank O'Barski memorial bench located at Sycamore Preserve. He commented that in addition to the O'Barski bench, there have been three or four additional memorial benches donated and a future bench planned for former Board member and forest preserve advocate John Dlabal. Mr. Hannan went on to comment that the Forest preserve is waiting for the FEMA transfer of the land from the County to the Forest Preserve District before it can officially open ( liability and property insurance ) . They are also waiting for final resolution on the land transfer of the path area through the Stone Prairie property that connects Sycamore Forest Preserve to the Great Western Trail.

Mr. Hannan noted that the annual MS "Tour de Farms" will again be using Merritt Prairie for rest stops during their annual biking event.

Mr. Hannan the introduced Peggy Doty to the new Committee members and asked her to do a quick recap of activities at the Natural Resources Education Center (NREC). Ms. Doty noted that in her role with the University of Illinois Extension she handles activities at the NREC and also works with local schools on recycling and environmental education as well as adults through the Master Gardner and other programs.

She commented that the NREC had recently held Winterfest and reminded the Committee that the event is a celebration of a season, not of precipitation given the extreme warmth and lack of snow during the event. She noted that the Daily Chronicle did a great job covering the event and they saw a large amount of new faces in attendance. This is designed to be a very affordable (free) and educational event for local families. She added that there were also a very good amount of donations made during the day that will be used to keep the NREC facility going and their animals fed. She noted that the largest amount of the money will go to feeding the animals. During the activities, there was also a naming of the wood carved bear that has been added near to the NREC. It will now be known as “Forrest Stump”.

Ms. Doty closed by noting that next month she will be giving her annual Environmental Education report to the Committee.

#### **ILLINOIS CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT**

Mr. Hannan noted to the Committee that this organization has provided 50% grant funding for District projects in the past ( Prairie Oaks and Swanson Grove) . The current Grant application is for approximately \$70,000.00 to assist with the Nelson acquisition approved in 2016. These 3 properties along with a future property will make up the “ Haines Creek Conservation Corridor”.

The Illinois Clean Energy Foundation is a Commonwealth Edison endowment fund to support energy conservation and land preservation efforts in the state.

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that she has spoken to the new owners of The House Café in DeKalb and they will be continuing as Pedal Pal members. She notes that the facility hopes to have its liquor license soon and that the owners, who already have another restaurant in Malta, are very enthusiastic about The House.

Mr. Brown asked about a recent invitation he had received to a “Green Drinks” event. Mr. Hannan reported that local nature photographer and forest preserve volunteer Tom Robbins will be showing his photos at an event at Blumen Gardens to be held on 3-8-17 at 7:00 pm. He noted that the national Green Drinks organization was founded years ago to encourage informal socialization and networking of individuals in the environmental and natural resource fields.

Mr. Hannan then introduced Mr. Roloff and Josh Clark to the new members as well as Andrew Krafft their Summer student intern who is scheduled to go to U.W. Stevens

Point to continue in environmental education and Ryan Hannan, local volunteer, natural resource advocate and hunter.

Mr. Porterfield thanked Mr. Hannan for his great photographs in the reports. Mr. Brown also noted he appreciate the night sky photos from the North Western Suburban Astronomers at Afton and Potawatomi Woods.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Brown then asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to take the Committee into Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Roman. A roll call vote was held with 5 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative.

Following the Executive Session, Mr. Bagby moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh. A roll call vote was held with 5 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Roman. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Brown".

Bob Brown, Chairperson  
Forest Preserve District Committee  
BB:kjr