

Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Forest Preserve District Committee at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.

DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes
May 23, 2017**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday May 23, 2017 at 6:00 pm at the Maintenance shed of the Hoppe Heritage Farm and 1835 Miller Ellwood Cabin. In attendance were committee members: Mr. Brown, Ms. Little, Mr. Roman, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Mr. Bagby, Mr. Hughes and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Porterfield arrived after roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Brown called for a motion to approve the April 25, 2017 minutes. Mr. Roman called for a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Little and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Brown called for a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Bagby and the motion passed unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan welcomed the Committee to the Hoppe Heritage Farm, 1835 Miller Ellwood Cabin and South Branch Prairie. He noted that the property had been previously owned by the Hoppe sisters. They wanted to make sure the land would be used for the public good. After 10 years of discussions, the 5 acre farmstead and 55 acres of flood plain farmland were acquired by the District 8 years ago. The 5 acre property condition was quite a challenge at the time, containing 82 old truck tires, roofing and siding garbage, a great deal of screws and nails, a motorboat and even ammunition. The farmstead restoration process consisted initially of removing many trees and the condemned farmhouse, taking out an old silo and removing an old barn that had fallen down. Following that work, a small prairie was added named Gary's Prairie in honor of longtime County Board and Forest Preserve Committee member Michael Haines brother Gary Haines. Over the years they have been developing the native plantings and making other improvements. This year the staff insulated the metal barn shop to use for storage, maintenance equipment and welding. In 2010, the 1835 Miller Ellwood cabin was moved to the site.

The Hoppe sisters have also included a first right of refusal for the District for the remaining 100 acres should that could be sold one day

The Natural Resources Education Center (NREC) at Russell Woods uses the Miller Ellwood cabin and the Hoppe Heritage Farm for many activities through the year.

Mr. Brown asked about a muddy lane that seemed to be connected to the farm area. Mr. Hannan replied that actually belongs to the Nelson property.

Mr. Hannan then noted that the District has benefited from many Eagle Scout projects. He also expressed thanks to the local Lion's Club for the shelter they have donated to the new Sycamore Forest Preserve.

Local photographer Chuck Christianson sent in some very good photos from Prairie Oaks Preserve. Also an immature and a mature Eagle and River Otter have been spotted at the South Branch Prairie and Prairie Oaks..

Mr. Hannan noted that other groups have been making use of the Preserves. One group is Adventure Works, a group that does rehabilitation with at risk youth. Another recent event was the 5K Russell Hustle fundraiser for St. Mary's held at Russell Woods Preserve. Mr. Hannan noted that he has provided a handout with brief description of all of the Preserves for the benefit of the new members as well as a budget information.

Mr. Brown and Mr. Roman reported that they had received an email from a private company asking to do a bat survey at Wilkinson Marsh. Mr. Roman noted that the group had been hired to look into the effect of wind farms on bats. He was not sure if it would be appropriate to participate in the study or not given the recent wind farm discussions at the County Board.

Mr. Brown noted that this seemed like an odd request. He said the company had told him they want to use a mist netting to capture and categorize species in the area. Mr. Roman noted that they want to do this documentation to see if there is any effect from proposed wind turbines.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked what the ramifications might be if the Committee did not agree to allow the study to be done. Mr. Hannan responded that he did not see what problems might arise in either saying yes or no. However, he commented that the information gathered might be useful for the District.

Mr. Porterfield arrived.

Mr. Bagby asked if the mist net capture would cause any distress to the animals. Mr. Hannan said this is a common approach and usually does not cause any undue harm.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked again what would happen if the Committee said no. She asked if the group would just go to some other area. Mr. Hannan again noted that there really is no way to say what issues might arise.

Ms. Little commented that it did seem that this could provide beneficial information to the District.

Mr. Brown asked if the District participated in other research projects. Mr. Hannan noted that they were participating in the recent hawk and kestrel airport relocation efforts and

there have been several other studies done on District properties as well over the years. Mr. Hannan noted that his only concern might be the identity of whoever the group is that has hired the firm and whether that might involve the District in any controversy.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh then asked why the request was sent only to Mr. Brown and Mr. Roman. Mr. Brown speculated it might have something to do with the proximity of their districts to the area of the study. Mr. Brown then asked if the Board had approved the test towers for the proposed wind farm yet. Mr. Roman responded that they had not.

Mr. Hannan asked if the Committee wanted to do a consensus of general agreement and send the question to the Planning and Zoning Committee for their additional discussion and input. Mr. Brown responded that seemed like a good idea.

COM ED/OPEN LANDS GRANT RESOLUTION

Mr. Hannan noted that he has been sent a request for a new requirement of the ComEd/Open Lands grant program. The organization would like evidence of the work done on the Genoa-Kingston Trail project. This evidence can be provided in the form of a resolution detailing the grant work as well as noting any additional contributions that were made to the project.

Ms. Little moved to forward the resolution drafted by Superintendent Hannan to the full Board for approval and subsequent passage to the ComEd/Open Land Grants organization, seconded by Mr. Roman. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hughes asked about the history of this grant and project. Mr. Hannan responded that it was a grant given last year by the ComEd/Open Lands organization for the purpose of advancing a trail project to connect Genoa and Kingston.

Mr. Hannan then reported that the ComEd Trail lease for the DeKalb/Sycamore Trail is also currently up for renewal. ComEd is asking for a greater number of assurances regarding liability for two sections of the Trail one located behind the local movie theater and one behind the Farm Bureau Building. PDRMA and ComEd lawyers are currently in discussions on this.

Curran Construction will be back at the new Sycamore Forest Preserve next month to complete the project. All of the final paperwork for the Sycamore Forest Preserve site has been sent to FEMA and there will be a resolution forthcoming to transfer the land for the Sycamore Forest Preserve from the County to the Forest Preserve District. Once this is done, the Preserve can be officially opened and have liability and property insurance.

Mr. Hannan then reported on the progress of the *Haines Creek Conservation Corridor* project. He noted there is a 50% grant approval from the Clean Energy Foundation for the Nelson property totaling \$76,022.00 for land acquisition and restoration work. This is in addition to \$121,000.00 provided for the Conro property (Swanson Grove) and \$200,000.00 for the Sparks (Prairie Oaks).

The Clean Energy Foundation has been a great partner for grant funding in the last few years since IDNR grant funding has all but disappeared.

Mr. Hannan then passed out documents to the Committee showing the District budget, tax information and photos illustrating what the tax revenues are used for. He noted, for the new members of the Committee, that the Forest Preserve costs homeowners approximately \$40.00 per year about \$3.33 per month in forest preserve tax..

Mr. Hannan then recommended that the Committee enter Executive Session at this meeting and stay in session during the upcoming trip and tour of a possible future land donation.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Brown asked if anyone had any Committee Member comments. Ms. Haji-Sheikh then spoke to the new members about the Pedal Pal organization that she has been promoting for the past few years. She noted its purpose and that there is a website that outlines local bike-friendly events and lists participating member businesses. Currently the organization has 47 local businesses signed up. She continued by noting that they also have partnered with other local organizations like Active Transportation who have contributed to their work. She then closed by encouraging the Committee members to seek out new possible partners.

Mr. Hughes mentioned that he would inquire at the Genoa Chamber of Commerce.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Brown then asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Ms. Little moved to take the Committee into Executive Session, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh. A roll call vote was held with 7 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative.

Following the Executive Session, Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Ms. Little. A roll call vote was held with 7 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Little moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Porterfield. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Bob Brown, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
BB:kjr