

*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  
February 23, 2016**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday February 23, 2016 at 6:00 pm in the Freedom Room of the County Administration Building. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Turner, Mr. Emerson, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Ms. Polanco, Mr. Brown, Mr. Bagby and Superintendent Hannan, Mr. Metzger was absent. Guests included Frankie Bensen from the DeKalb County Trail Riders and Greg Millburg, manager of the DeKalb County Farm Bureau.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Turner called for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 22, 2015 meeting. Mr. Bagby moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Brown and the motion passed unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Benson expressed thanks to the Committee and members for the turnout at the recent memorial for Frank O'Barski. She noted that he was a past treasurer and vice-president of the DeKalb County Trail Riders.

**MONTHLY REPORTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Mr. Hannan began by noting that a memorial bench and a Sycamore tree will be dedicated for Mr. O'Barski at the new Sycamore Forest Preserve (the former Evergreen Village site). He noted that it was both good, but also sad that he had a nice talk at the January County Board meeting after the meeting over a drink with Mr. O'Barski. His family has indicated that there will be a small ceremony at the time the tree and bench are dedicated.

Mr. Hannan commented that in the monthly packet, there are photos of District staff seeding the 30 acre prairie at the Sycamore Forest Preserve.  
(see monthly Natural Resource Report )

He commented that the South Branch Prairie was planted about 3 years ago and is a good demonstration of what the Sycamore site may look like in the future.

Mr. Hannan noted that the report also contains the staff projects list and commented that the Sycamore Fire Department recently used the pond at the Sycamore Forest Preserve site to do ice rescue training. The Fire Department has expressed its gratitude for the cooperation of the District staff.

Mr. Hannan then turned to a report of the attendance at this years' Winterfest, noting there were over 150 people in attendance. He noted that they had a very good day for the event and it seemed to be enjoyed by all.

Mr. Hannan called the Committee's attention to Al Roloff's Natural Resources report in the packet as well as the lists of upcoming Spring volunteer activities and Pete Olson's annual bird walks (see monthly report).

Mr. Hannan noted that Peggy Doty and Connie Handel have also presented a report on the 2015 activities at the NREC noting that over 5000 students have been served by the Natural Resource Center staff through their environmental education programs.

The packet also contains the itinerary for Maple Syrup Day which will be held March 5, 2016 at the NREC in the Russell Preserve.

Mr. Hannan then presented two photos taken by Steve Wade, retired Forest preserve manager at Sannauk, showing two bald eagles that were next to Sannauk Forest Preserve. The first shows a mature eagle feeding and the second shows an immature eagle. The eagle takes approximately three years to develop the distinctive white head and tail. Sighting of a young eagle is a good sign that there was a nest and successful hatching near that area. He commented that there have been 2 to 3 nests spotted in the County.

Prescribed burn activities will be starting soon in areas of the Preserves to help control invasive species and improve native plant species. Mr. Hannan noted that the burns are a natural management tool that has been used for several years now. He commented that they were also able to do some prairie burns in the fall. In addition, the District has acquired new foam spray equipment to assist in fire containment during the burn process.

Mr. Hannan then reported on recent complaints he has received of people coming out of the brush and brambles on the Great Western Trail and frightening trail walkers. After some research, he has discovered that these individuals appear to be geo-caching. Additional research indicated that there are over 38,000 geo cache sites in a 140 mile area around Sycamore. Some of the caches have been discovered in pill boxes, or ammo boxes and can be disturbing to individuals not familiar with the geo-cache activity.

He noted that he has contacted forest preserves in surrounding counties and all have a policy on the practice that many of the counties limit the quantity of cache sites and some require permits. Mr. Hannan would like to develop a draft policy as he feels this is going to be helpful in limiting potential problems in the Preserves. Mr. Hannan requested a consensus of the Committee to pursue the development of a formal policy to bring DeKalb into line with other counties dealing with these activities.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that the policy should restrict the use of ammo boxes or pill containers. Mr. Bagby noted that there was language in some of the other counties policies to address that issue.

Mr. Brown asked for a brief explanation of how the geo-caching activity works and if this is something that bodies beyond the Preserves should address.

Mr. Bagby commented that it is a type of orienteering using GPS tools and is a rather popular and family friendly activity.

### **FY2015 BUDGET AMENDMENTS**

Mr. Hannan reminded the Committee that this is an annual process to detail what transfers and amendments need to be made. The details are currently at the Auditors for review. County Finance Director Pete Stefan will be doing the County amendments and transfers at the March meeting.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to forward the transfers and amendments, seconded by Mr. Emerson and the motion was passed unanimously.

### **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Ms. Haji-Sheikh commented that she had met recently with a new chair and vice president for local arts activities and introduced them to the Pedal Pal project.

Ms. Turner commented that she was surprised to hear there was another new group focused on arts activities and promotion. Ms. Haji-Sheikh replied that they are tied to a granting opportunity the City of DeKalb is pursuing.

Mr. Brown asked if we had any idea how many people from out of the County attend our activities such as Winterfest. He noted that bringing people in for these events was a definite economic development opportunity.

Ms. Turner noted that the Cross Country teams who use the Afton Preserve have brought a great deal of attention to and awareness of the County. Mr. Hannan added that about ½ of the Scout troops who use the preserves are generally from out of the County.

Mr. Hannan also noted that there may be some movement again on the trail connection between Somonauk and Sannauk Preserve. This project has been dormant for some time, but recent events have indicated there may be renewed interest.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked if there were any additional updates on the Sycamore Preserve (former Evergreen Village) project.

Mr. Hannan reported that he had met recently with Nathan Schwartz to get an estimate on the asphalt for the paved areas. He anticipates that it will be late 2016 or early 2017 before the Preserve can be “officially” opened. The District has received a sizable anonymous donation to assist in the land development and connection to the Great Western Trail.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Emerson moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Polanco. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anita Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anita" clearly legible and the last name "Turner" written in a more stylized, connected script.

Anita Turner, Chairperson  
Forest Preserve District Committee  
AT:kjr