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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes
March 22, 2016**

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

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 Ms. Polanco and the motion passed unanimously. Two minor corrections were then introduced. Guest Frankie Benson noted that Mr. O'Barski was a past vice President and Treasurer of the DeKalb County Trail Riders. Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that the organization she had met with recently was the DeKalb Area Arts Council.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

MONTHLY REPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

Mr. Hannan began by noting there is a landscape design completed for the Sycamore Forest Preserve (former Evergreen Village) site. He then presented and went over the design with the committee.

He commented that Nathan Schwartz and highway department engineers have helped with engineering for the road and parking areas. A portion of the donation for the Sycamore Forest Preserve site will be used to cover the paving of those areas. Mr. Hannan then pointed out the location for the connection to the Great Western Trail via a path that will travel through adjacent to the Stone Prairie Rental Community. He also noted the areas where shelters, picnic areas, fishing pond, trails and prairie area will be located.

Mr. Hannan then reminded the Committee that the Sycamore Fire Department had used the pond located on the site for ice rescue training and in the process it was verified that

the pond is approximately 16 feet deep. He noted that there will be a path and service road that will travel by the pond and a nearby 30 acre prairie where there will be additional paths and new plantings. However, he also noted to the Committee that much of this area may be under water during flooding events. He commented that land improvement timeline signage will be up soon to inform the public of what is being done on the site in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The hope is that the site will be ready for the public by late next fall or early next year.

Mr. Metzger asked how the Preserve will be closed when the area floods. He commented that the site may need gates or some obvious prevention to avoid any liability issues. He recommended that Mr. Hannan discuss that with the State's Attorney to be sure the proper preventions are put into place, either gates or fences.

Mr. Brown asked about the history of the pond on the property. He noted that he would like to investigate more on the history of the property.

Ms. Turner will ask some local residents who have been in the area during the time the mobile home park was developed. She will also speak to the Sycamore History Museum.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked when the trails would be ready for bikers and hikers. Mr. Hannan replied that things are progressing and they hope to complete the path adjoining Stone Prairie this summer. However the trail head and parking will most likely be open in 2017.

Mr. Hannan then reminded the Committee that the monthly reports, activities and visitor use reports were included in their packets. He also pointed out that there was a photo of a pair of eagles recently sighted in Somonauk.

Mr. Hannan also pointed out a photo of the Miller-Ellwood cabin where shelters were recently added. He also pointed out the rock and plaque that was donated by the Ney Grange which outlines the history of the cabin.

Cabin window shutters, and wooden door handles and locks have been added by forest preserve staff.

Mr. Metzger asked if the cabin was furnished. Mr. Hannan replied that there were some picnic tables outside and they will add a table or two inside for meetings. Future time period furnishings are planned.

Despite the lack of furnishings, the cabin has already been used for meetings of the Ney Grange and the Nelson family reunion.

Mr. Hannan then reported that by this time last year the District had only just begun burn activities. However the more cooperative weather this year has burned several sites at Prairie Oaks, Merritt Prairie, Potawatomi Woods, Afton and the South Branch Prairie. He commented that the district has acquired a new piece of equipment to assist with the burns. This new Spray Foamer can be used to contain fire much more efficiently than

water alone. He noted this helps to preserve small trees and keep the fire controls lines safe as well as putting out fires that may jump fire lines.

Mr. Hannan then reported that Pete Olson's annual bird walks will be coming up in May and many volunteer tree plantings and trail cleanups in April. Mr. Metzger asked if the schedule of upcoming activities could be placed on the District's Face Book page. Mr. Hannan noted he would do that.

Mr. Roloff also sent a Natural Resources report in the packet. His volunteer stewards will be at the Sycamore Forest preserve area tomorrow to assist with site cleanup of limbs and branches and scouts will also be there to clean up litter. . Mr. Hannan noted that these volunteers have been invaluable in helping with many natural resource management projects.

Mr. Hannan then presented a listing of the local businesses who have signed on to the Pedal Pal initiative. Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that Moxie's and Mudslingers have actually closed since the list was made, but that there is hope for both sites to have new businesses opening soon.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted her recent attendance at Gardeners Pathway where she had conversations with some local farmers who had questions on seed collection.

Mr. Emerson asked if Mr. Metzger had seen any progress on a potential acquisition in Sandwich. Mr. Metzger responded that he did not have any update. Mr. Brown asked if there were any update on the geo-caching issues that had been discussed at last month's meeting. Mr. Hannan responded that he had not yet had an opportunity to draft a policy. Mr. Brown then presented a possible option that his wife had recently located. Mr. Hannan then brought the Committee members who were not at the prior month's meeting up to speed on the issues that have arisen around the geo-caching activities. He reminded the Committee that a recent web search of a site used by geo-caching enthusiasts indicated there were 80,000 geo-cache sites within a 140 mile radius of Sycamore.

Mr. Metzger commented that this could open up a whole new economic development opportunity, geo-cache tourism.

Mr. Brown noted that he and his wife had attended the Maple Syrup presentation at the Natural Resources Education Center. After the presentation his wife immediately purchased materials to tap trees on their property. He noted that by the very next morning, they had over 8 gallons of sap and were in the process of turning it into syrup.

Ms. Turner noted that the plan for the Sycamore Forest preserve will be taken to the next County Board meeting because there has been so much public interest in the project. Mr. Metzger commented that he has even heard enthusiastic comments from people in the South County who are monitoring the improvement to the site.

Mr. Hannan closed by noting that during recent burn activities at the South Branch Prairie Sandhill Cranes were sighted. Whooping Cranes were also seen as well.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anita Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Anita Turner, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
AT:kjr