

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
December 21, 2010**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, December 21, 2010 at the DeKalb County Administration Building Conference Room C at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Ms. DeFauw, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Deverell, Ms. Fullerton, Mr. Newport, Mr. Augsburger and Superintendent Hannan. Ms. Turner was absent. .

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci called the meeting to order and then asked if there were any changes to the November 16, 2010 minutes. Ms. DeFauw moved to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Mr. Augsburger and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci noted that the Committee needed to make one addition to the agenda, adding item #6, regarding whether or not to hold a meeting in January 2011. Mr. Anderson moved to accept the amended agenda, seconded by Mr. Deverell and the motion passed unanimously.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Fauci extended a welcome to the Committee and especially the new Committee members for the coming year. She noted that there would be an overview of the Forest Preserve given by Superintendent Hannan.

FOREST PRESERVE OVERVIEW

Mr. Hannan then presented a PowerPoint presentation on the forest preserves and also provided a packet for new members containing the prior 2 months worth of minutes, reports etc. The Powerpoint presentation consisted of an overview of the Forest Preserve mission, land preservation, recreation, education, maintenance and natural resource management as well as the 1835 cabin project. He also reviewed the statewide structure of Forest Preserves and Conservation Districts. He commented that not all forest preserves consist of forested areas, forest preserve districts also preserve and restore areas with prairies and wetlands. He noted that the preserves serve a vital role in the protection of clean water and air along with soil conservation in our Fox and Kishwaukee River watersheds.

He then reviewed some of the activities enjoyed by area residents at the preserves, including biking, hiking, sledding, x-country skiing, snowmobiling, fishing, camping, astronomy, photography and bird-watching to name just a few. Even during the winter months, the sites are very busy with Scout troops and others and many local schools use the preserves for outdoor education and for sports team training. Additionally there are many fishing areas and sled hills that are widely enjoyed throughout the year.

Mr. Hannan noted that the North Suburban Astronomers organization uses Afton and Potawatomi Woods preserves as a frequent location to star gaze due to its distance from the ambient city lights of the western suburbs. This organization also holds two public viewing nights in the spring and fall.

The camps held at the Natural Resources Education Center are also extremely popular and always sell out as soon as the camp dates are released. In addition to the camps, the NREC and its Director, Peggy Doty runs several outdoor education programs and presentations in local classrooms. The Natural resource Education programs teach 5,000 students per year.

Mr. Hannan noted that district natural resource manager, Al Roloff also holds nature walks and public restoration management programs through the year as well as presentations on preservation activities. These activities include prescribed burns, tree, prairie and wetland planting and others projects to educate and encourage the preservation and restoration of our local ecology.

He went on to say that wetland preservation includes activities in both natural and created wetlands through the Wetland Bank program. He commented that the Afton Wetland Bank has been very beneficial for the District. He explained to the new members that the Wetland Bank provides a place to mitigate negative wetland impacts by development to “offset” those wetland losses by purchasing wetland acres in the wetland bank.

Aside from the District staff that support and perform the majority of maintenance and land management throughout the preserves, the District is also privileged to have a large and enthusiastic volunteer base of partners to assist with a variety of work activities.

He went on to note that in 2006, the residents of the County passed Land Acquisition referendum to provide funding for land acquisition opportunities. Mr. Hannan then reviewed the newest acquisition, the 43 acre Sparks property, and reviewed its future benefits for the County. Of special note are the 150+ year old oaks on the property as well as the rich habitat consisting of forest, pond, oak savannah, prairie, wetland, fen and stream. The Conservation Foundation has partnered with the County to buy and hold the property while grants are sought to assist with its purchase. The lease agreement between the District and the Conservation Foundation has been approved by the State’s Attorney and the County can now move forward to seek the grants that are available. Ms. Fullerton made some suggestions regarding strengthening the contract. Mr. Anderson asked that the naming agreement with the family be clarified at the earliest possible opportunity. This will be worked out with the Sparks family attorney, Ron Klein and Dan Lobbes from the Conservation Foundation who has been acting as the District’s representative. Ms. Fauci noted that the closing on the property will occur in 12-27-10 and Commissioners can attend. However, she reminded the Committee that they cannot make any changes to the agreement at the closing.

Mr. Hannan reminded the Committee that this was the last month a deal could be finalized for the Pizzo acquisition. Since it is clear Mr. Pizzo does not intend to move

toward sale that was approved by the Forest Preserve Commissioners, the negotiation impasse will require the District to accept a 2 year penalty from OSLAD grants. However, Mr. Hannan noted that he has been told by representatives of IDNR / OSLAD that if this had to happen, this is likely the best time as revenues for the program are expected to be very low in the coming two years. However, he commented that there will be a lot of projects for the District like the new Hoppe acquisition, new trail projects, remainder of the cabin project, expansion of the wetland bank and other forest preserve improvement work in the next 2 years.

He commented that the County had established, after the Land Acquisition referendum, a series of priorities for ranking land purchases and noted that the Sparks land met the majority of the criteria and is very pleased to be able to preserve this purchase for the long-term use of the County residents.

Mr. Hannan then closed with a review of the 1835 Miler/Ellwood Cabin relocation project that has been underway for a little over a year now. He noted that after the Ellwood family offered the cabin to the District, it has since been placed on the newly acquired Hoppe property near Russell Woods and is being developed into a learning as well as a historical resource for the County.

Ms. Fullerton commented that the District was very fortunate to have located Mr. Tim Kilby, the restoration expert who has been leading the project. Mr. Hannan responded that Mr. Kilby is a nationally recognized expert who has been very extraordinarily helpful through the process.

Mr. Hannan noted that aside from a location for the cabin, the Hoppe property has been a very beneficial acquisition for the County and there is hope that an additional adjoining 55 acres will become available to the County in the coming year. He has recently had conversations with Paul Searl of the USDA / NRCS and the land is very highly ranked in the Wetland Reserve Program and it is the District's hope that this is secured in the first round.

The property is also key link to a future Genoa/Kingston trail project the District is investigating to provide safe access for high school students and residents between the towns and the Preserve area.

He commented that local filmmaker, Mr. Tim Murray is filming the cabin project and is focusing on tracing the lineage of the logs that went into the building of the original cabin.

Over \$25,000.00 in donations have been received toward the project to date and Mr. J. Ellwood Tolle has offered to be a sustaining donor throughout the process.

Ms. Fullerton asked if the volunteers are covered under the District's liability insurance. Mr. Hannan noted that the District was insured through the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) and that entity provides coverage, waivers and training for the volunteer force.

Ms. Fauci echoed that the District was very lucky to enjoy the good will and support of the community and that there has never been a claim filed against the District throughout all of its years of operation.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan noted that the packets contain the November reports, use figures, events, photos and various studies that are currently occurring. He also went on to hand out “thank you” photos to the Committee to express his appreciation for their work over the year.

He then noted that he would soon have the results of the annual Christmas bird count conducted by the Audubon Society. He commented that this count has been done for several decades all over North America and provides a very good look at the trends in bird species and migratory patterns. He noted that having the preserves enhances the accuracy and ability to get this information for the counts.

Mr. Hannan commented that two Bald Eagles were sighted recently in the County, with one near Russell Woods and the other north of Sycamore. He noted that there might even be a nesting pair possible.

Mr. Augsburger noted that there are Bald Eagle migrations happening across the Midwest with new nesting spots occurring. He noted that ecological changes and improvements in pesticide restrictions appear to be allowing this.

Mr. Hannan noted that it was time again for the annual Chronic Wasting Disease report of activities from the IDNR (Illinois Department of Natural Resources). He reminded the Committee that for several years the IDNR has been conducting targeted hunts in the preserve areas with an eye to reducing the deer population and gaining better control on the spread of CWD. In previous years, IDNR sharp shooters have hunted two Preserves (Potawatomi and MacQueen), tested the deer culled and provided the meat from deer that test negative to area food banks.

He commented that Will County FPD had allowed private citizens to participate this year in addition to the two regular hunting seasons.

A letter was recently received from Tom Biessell, Northern District Biologist at the IDNR noting that they would soon begin the contact of landowners to request their continued cooperation with the culling activities.

The culling activities have made progress in reducing the disease in Illinois. Several adjoining states that have not been as diligent with their herd control activities have had significantly worse results. The IDNR expressed its thanks for the community assistance in control of the disease.

Mr. Hannan commented that while there has been some small public concern regarding the IDNR activities, that many local hunters are very supportive of the program and note that the quality of the local deer herds has been benefited by it.

Mr. Anderson asked why more tags aren't allowed in the County. Mr. Augsburger responded that issuing more tags to private citizens does not address the issue of protected lands like the Preserves.

Ms. Fauci noted that the IDNR also immediately tests the animals taken to determine if infection is present and do a very good job of disposing of the carcass if the disease is found. She then asked if it was the consensus of the Committee to allow the IDNR to use the Preserves again this year for the additional hunts.

Mr. Anderson asked to see the results from the prior year and Mr. Hannan noted he would get him that data.

Ms. Fauci noted that while the activity is regrettable, it is necessary to the containment of this disease.

Mr. Deverell asked why the neighboring states aren't having as much success as Illinois. Mr. Hannan noted that he did not have the exact details. Mr. Augsburger commented that the original Wisconsin plan was somewhat draconian (shooting for full eradication of the deer from many areas) and that it likely turned public sentiment against the program.

Mr. Fauci again asked if the Committee had reached consensus to again partner with the IDNR. Ms. Fullerton noted that it appeared there was consensus on the subject.

Mr. Hannan closed by reporting that while working on a state truck bid, he has been contacted by a local dealer who is coming extremely close to the lowest state bid and may allow the District to keep the funds local. He noted that the bid should be resolved within the next week or two.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci extended her thanks to all for their support of her return as Committee Chair. She then handed out two documents to the Committee members. The first was the text of the state statute and reviewed the details with the Committee to assure that everyone realized the full implications of the statute's expectations. She noted especially that it highlights the need to seek lands that do not burden the resources of the preserves, to enhance and develop wildlife resources and scenic vistas. She then noted the history of the Burnham initiatives that lie at the heart of these efforts.

She then reviewed the land acquisition checklist adopted by the Committee to review the potential value of properties presented for possible sale to the County.

Ms. Fauci then closed by holding a small quiz for the Committee on Forest Preserve history.

JANUARY MEETING

Ms. Fauci noted that in the recent Budget Review, Committee's were asked to meet 10 times or less to conserve resources. She commented that January had been suggested as a possible month that could be skipped.

Mr. Anderson moved to forgo the January 2011 meeting, seconded by Mr. Newport and the motion passed unanimously.

Before moving to adjournment, Mr. Hannan asked if anyone on the Committee knew about a camping group that had fished and camped and ate frog legs near the former Miller/Ellwood cabin site. He had recently been told about the group by a 93 year old resident who donated money to the cabin project, but had no other information. He noted that he would appreciate any further details the Committee might have. Mr. Deverell commented that he had worked on that farm when he was quite young, but did not remember a specific group like that. There then followed a brief discussions of items found in the cabin and of the families that lived there over the years.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Newport moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr