

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
July 20, 2010**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, July 20, 2010 at the Afton Forest Preserve 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Ms. DeFauw, Ms. Turner, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Augsburger, Mr. Walt, Mr. Gudmunson and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Newport was absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci called the meeting to order and then asked if there were any changes to the June 18, 2010 minutes. Ms. Turner moved to approve the minutes as noted, seconded by Mr. Augsburger and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Hearing none, Ms. DeFauw moved to accept the amended agenda, seconded by Mr. Walt and the motion passed unanimously.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Fauci noted there were no guests at tonight's meeting.

FOREST PRESERVE MONTHLY REPORTS AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan noted that the monthly staff project and use reports were in the Board packet and he commented on one particular item involving rare butternut trees. Not seen generally in the county, naturalist Al Roloff has been cultivating them from seeds and they are being distributed throughout the preserves through various service projects.

Ms. DeFauw asked what the suitable habitat was for the trees. Mr. Hannan responded that they prefer sun and half shade environments with a medium to wet soil. He noted that they will grow to about the size of a walnut tree. He closed by noting that he had some of the trees available if any of the Board members wanted to take one to plant.

He. Hannan then directed the committee's attention to a supplemental report from Ms. Peggy Doty regarding the recent Summer camps at the NREC. He also noted that last month was National Trails month and there were photos of the County Forest Preserve trails included as well.

He then handed out the results of the University of Illinois study on Nature and Human Health for the committee's review as well as the most recent PDRMA handouts.

Mr. Hannan noted that Ms. Doty had also asked to tell the committee to save the date 9-25-10 for an upcoming fundraiser at the NREC. This will be a rummage and bake sale.

Mr. Hannan then reported that he has received a wetland mitigation check from the Army Corps of Engineers for a recent wetland mitigation done by the Corps of Engineers.

He then noted that he had recently met with Mayor Grandgeorge of Somonauk regarding a connecting trail between Somonauk and the Sannauk Preserve. He commented that discussions are being held with a local family for an easement along the proposed trail route and that they are currently looking at a CA – 6 and limestone surface as this would be a lower cost and be less restrictive than attempting a federal highway grant might be.

He noted that gravel has been put down recently on the roads at Sannauk and Shabbona and that he has recently met with local and state NRCS staff regarding the prairie and wetland plan for the Hoppe property. He commented that they will need to get this work started before winter.

Mr. Hannan then passed out photos of the improvements that have been made so far to the Hoppe property. At this time all of the box elder trees have been removed, the silo house, collapsed barns and other structures have been removed and car parts, truck tires and scrap metal have been either sold as scrap or recycled. A big improvement.

He noted that the metal barn and corn crib have been retained for future use. As a comparison, Mr. Hannan handed out photos of the Potawatomi preserve when it was first obtained and commented that this demonstrated the potential for transformation that is possible.

Mr. Hannan reported that last month, at the Afton preserve, local Girl Scouts stayed at the preserve for their week long summer camp experience. He passed out photos of the girls helping to plant butternut trees and painted murals to put on Afton foot bridges. The group also camped out at the preserve one night.

He noted that he would be meeting tomorrow with PDRMA staffers to do the annual tour and safety inspection and risk management of the preserves.

Mr. Hannan then closed by noting that in the recent InVironments magazine there was a very good article on the local preserves and open spaces. The article was written by Cory Pfund who does climbing, leadership and team-building activities in the area. Mr. Pfund did a recent activity for children with life-threatening diseases at Potawatomi Woods that was very well received.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci began by noting that it had recently come to light that there was a discrepancy in the sale of the Hoppe property. It appears there is an issue with an easement on 10 the property to give access to the farmer and to the land in the future (if the Forest Preserve does not exercise our first right of refusal) in the upper northeast quadrant that the some of the committee was not aware of when the voted on.

She noted that she would be sharing her impressions of how this omission had come to light, how it might have occurred and would then cede the floor to Mr. Hannan for his comments. Following this, she would then open the floor to comments from the other committee members.

Ms. Fauci recounted that at the last County Board meeting, it had come to light that there was an easement attached to a 10 acre parcel that was not involved in the sale. She noted that it appears that Mr. Hannan had not fully informed the committee on this point, despite the fact that he had been specifically charged to bring all information regarding the sale to the full committee so that they could properly inform the full Board of Commissioners prior to an acquisition vote. She commented that the committee had relied on Mr. Hannan to perform this function in the absence of a formal agent handling the acquisition.

She commented that part of the confusion might have arisen from the fact that there were two maps used during the purchase discussions. She further noted that perhaps Mr. Hannan might have been so involved with the broad details of the sale, in addition to his regular duties, that he appears to have overlooked a critical detail. She noted that when she became aware of this, she was initially very concerned that the District had placed itself into future trouble with the purchase. She contacted the District Attorney and requested a ruling on whether the District could be held accountable for funding road resurfacing or other costs due to the easement.

She noted that the reply she received indicated that there are many easements at virtually all of the County preserves and while the owners of the 10 acre parcel would have clear right to the use of the road, the County would not be responsible for its maintenance and upkeep nor could they be denied access.

Ms. Fauci then noted ways the committee's procedures could be changed to assure that this sort of omission does not occur in the future:

- Hire an agent with land acquisition experience rather than rely solely on in-house staff.
- Require that all maps used in acquisition discussions be regularly updated and distributed to the committee in a timely fashion when changes occur.
- All final purchase documents would be provided to the committee and the full Board of Commissioners for their review.
- Keep the committee informed regarding critical relationships with local farmers and if any easements may be required to retain those relationships. The committee would then be able to agree up front on any obligations that the easements may cause.

Ms. Fauci then turned the floor to Mr. Hannan for his comments on the situation. Mr. Hannan then read a prepared apology to the committee for the lack of communication that appears to have caused this issue. He then went on to assure the committee that there was no ill intent involved nor did he feel that any harm would come to the County from the situation.

Mr. Hannan then noted examples of other easements existing in most the forest preserves. These include farmers access, road easements, utility easements etc. He noted that in the future if this easement becomes a road or street, it will be like any forest preserve today,

there is a road or street access to the forest preserve and you turn off into the forest preserve.

He closed by noting that while the County will have the right of first refusal should the 10 acres (and the other 90 acres) be placed for sale, should it not opt to do so, even annexation or private sale would not remove the access rights from the District.

Ms. Fauci then opened the floor for comments from the committee members.

Mr. Anderson indicated that he felt his comments should only occur in an Executive Session. Mr. Fauci noted that it would be better for transparency that this discussion be held in open session.

Ms. Turner and Mr. Augsburger then noted that they felt they were adequately informed throughout the sale process and are surprised that this issue is even under discussion. Mr. DeFauw commented that she was not aware of the easement issue until this all surfaced.

Ms. Fauci reiterated that the focus of future discussions on this issue should be on process changes to assure that there are no situations like this in the future. She closed by noting that she felt strongly that the committee should seriously consider hiring an actual agent to handle future purchases.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Walt moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Turner and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr