

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**  
**June 15, 2010**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, June 15, 2010 at the Natural Resources Education Center at Russell Woods Preserve 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Ms. DeFauw, Ms. Turner. Mr. Newport, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Augsburger, Mr. Walt, Mr. Gudmunson and Superintendent Hannan. Guests included Peggy Doty of the NREC and John Horn of the U of I Extension.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Ms. Fauci welcomed Peggy Doty and thanked her for the use of the facility for the meeting.

**FOREST PRESERVE MONTHLY REPORTS AND GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Mr. Hannan noted that the annual MS ride happened over the weekend of June 19-20 where MS volunteers used several Forest Preserve locations for rest stops. There were over 2000 riders "riding for the cure". Mr. Hannan expressed thanks to Don Overton for the use of his barn to shield the bike riders and their bikes from the storms. The ride was ultimately called off at 11:00 am due to the dangerous weather. The group then retreated to NIU for the night and resumed the ride the next day in the Northern part of the county.

Mr. Hannan noted that the May volunteer reports were included in the May packet and that the closing on the Hoppe property occurred the prior Thursday.

He commented that when the group gets to the property tour scheduled for later in the evening, to please try to visualize where it will be a year from now. This farmstead needs major clean up and salvage / recycling work and will be seeing the site at it's worst. Plans for the farmstead include the clean up, seeding prairie grasses and flowers, planting native trees and shrubs, new roof on corn crib, small parking area and picnic area, handicap accessibility and the 1836 Miller- Ellwood cabin relocation project. He noted that when several other forest preserve purchases occurred for the District, there were property clean ups that had to be addressed. For instance:

- Potawatomi Woods contained several old houses to be removed and debris.
- Knute Olson Preserve had old trash and debris.
- The County Farm Woods property had the old trash piles and debris.
- The Great Western Trail had old railroad ties to be removed.
- Afton Forest Preserve had several old machine sheds and corn cribs in disrepair
- Wilkinson Marsh was a site of several debris piles.

He noted that the Hoppe site has a great number of old tires and metal to clean up and recycle, a old silo, home and barns to dismantle, many box elder trees to remove, as well as a lot of debris to clean up and salvage and recycle what we can.

He commented that before the 1836 Miller – Ellwood cabin can be moved to the property and with the change in ownership, the property must be re-zoned from Agriculture to FP / Conservation. He noted that he is working with the County Planning and Zoning Office and that this process will be completed in the next 2 months.

Mr. Hannan then turned the floor over to John Horn from the University of Illinois Extension Office to discuss the recent State of Illinois efforts to reconfigure the Extension Service.

Mr. Horn opened by indicating that the DeKalb office is not getting a lot of detailed information from the State at this time. He did note that contracts for various center offices are being terminated and there have been letters regarding terminal contracts and reassignments that have begun to be sent out.

Phase one of the reconfiguration included having the directors of the 76 statewide sites meeting to address how to reduce that figure to 27 ultimate units/directors.

They have completed the reconfiguration of the units. DeKalb will be in a combined unit with Ogle and Boone counties. There are meetings scheduled for the upcoming Thursday to discuss the details on programming and staffing for the new units.

He commented that while one of the purposes for the restructuring is to save money, the State also hopes to find ways to actually deliver the same of better programming than it was under the old configuration. He commented that the State had offered an early retirement option to those eligible and there are many current staffers considering that.

Effective 7-1-10, all Directors and Educators will be given terminal contracts of up to a full year depending on their prior length of service. At this time, the NREC will be at the same status until 7-1-11. Effective 7-1-11 the, yet undefined, phase 2 will take effect. Part of Phase 2 will be to determine which of the three sites contained in the new units will be the designated hub.

He commented that he had pressed hard for 4H and Natural Resources to be kept in the hub plans. However, he noted that since DeKalb does so much more than the other two sites, this has been a tricky situation. However, that said, he did comment that there are various initiatives that would benefit greatly from a continuation of Natural Resources Education.

He noted that the identification of the specific positions at each hub (Directors, Educators) was unidentified at this time, but that interviews for those posts would be starting shortly. He noted that while changes to the programs are inevitable, he was confident that that many of the NREC programs could be retained.

However, he commented that, going forward, educators would be much more administrators than hands-on classroom participants (as Peggy has been). He noted that Peggy does a lot of curriculum development. He noted that 4H would be similarly effected with planners and more hourly staffers being hired to actually run the programs.

Ms. Fauci asked if the other counties are at all similar to DeKalb. Mr. Hannan commented that the Directors did work to make the best matches and that for DeKalb's purposes, Boone and Ogle do share a similar mix of predominantly agricultural with some urban makeup.

However, he noted that Boone and Ogle have also been successful in passing Extension referendums to assist them with their funding, something DeKalb has not. But DeKalb has enjoyed strong support from the County Board and the Forest Preserve, so there seemed a basis for matching the Counties. It was noted however, that the final matches were up to the State Director.

Mr. Horn noted that it was not an easy process and that it was quite unsettling, but that as professionals, the Directors and Educators will continue to do what they have done and continue their commitment to the County's youth.

Ms. Turner asked how many kids were in the DeKalb 4H. Mr. Horn responded that he was not sure as the numbers tend to fluctuate. He noted that several 4H students were acting as "ambassadors" for ethanol use as a green energy and many other similar projects.

Ms. Fauci asked if there were anything that the Committee could do to offer any assistance. Mr. Horn responded that at this point, until the final decisions were made regarding final matches, the Extension is still on hold. However, he commented that he hoped everyone would be happy with the final outcomes.

He commented that at this point, there is still no way to know where the final satellite offices will be located or how this will all ultimately impact the volunteers and users (4H, Master Gardeners etc). However, he noted that there is a new position of Volunteer Coordinator being established. The scope of that role will ultimately be dictated by the number of volunteers that need to be coordinated.

Ms. Fauci asked if there were fee increases being considered to fund staffing or other expenses. Mr. Horn replied that fee increases could be a factor if they want to keep programs alive and well without severe reductions.

He noted that there were good and bad aspects alike to diluting out the Ag educators. It would be good for them to be more local rather than in a remote central office. However, having that central office coordination was also beneficial.

He noted that the meeting on Thursday might only name the Directors at this point without providing any further details.

Ms. Doty commented that she will likely be receiving a 12 month terminal contract, though Mr. Horn might be receiving a slightly shorter contract due to his tenure.

Mr. Horn noted that Extension has been in the situation before where it had to completely reinvent itself. He commented that the office had received none of its designated \$160,000.00 in funding that was supposed to come from the State. Due to this funding shortage, the Extension will likely be in a negative position by the end of the year. This is only true due to some very good reserve planning. There have been statements that the Extension might receive 50% of the 2010 budget, but not until August or September at the earliest. However, there have been some individuals who have indicated that they

will take the early retirement option and that will result in some additional cost savings that might be available.

He commented that one individual retiring would be Nancy, secretary at the Extension office who has been extremely involved in 4H activities. Mr. Gudmunson noted that she has been extremely valuable to the program. Ms. Doty noted that she will likely continue to play that vital role, but as an unpaid volunteer rather than a staffer.

Mr. Horn noted that many organizations will be effected by the States financial circumstances and everyone is doing the best they can while they wait to see what the final budget outcomes will be.

Ms. Fauci noted that perhaps there may be options for some small increases in local funding. Mr. Horn commented that local funding, such as from the Forest Preserve has been lifesaving during this crisis.

Mr. Horn noted that the State Director has set some goals for future expansion that seem to bode well for 4H and the Master Gardeners programs. The Master Gardeners have been predominantly self-sustaining, but he commented that he hoped they would have some office support.

Ms. Fauci closed the discussion by noting that if there were anything the Forest Preserve Committee could do to assist during this transition, to please just ask. She commented that the work that Peggy has done with the NREC has been extremely beneficial to the Preserve. She noted that the Extension shares a tie with other County committees, such as Health and Human Services.

Ms. Doty then provided an update on the Spring and Summer Camps.

She noted that the NREC hosted 1400 kids this Spring with just Ms, Doty and Connie as staffers. They are currently doing the annual summer camps, such as this week's "bird camp".

She noted that al the big kids' camps are full and have waiting lists. The little kids' camp attendance is also increasing. She commented that she has tried to keep the camp pricing at the high middle range of average costs. There are also some scholarships available for children who cannot afford to attend.

Regarding the proposed merger, she commented that while, Ogle has the Loreda Taft Field Campus where camps are held, and Boone has similar resources with the Boone County Conservation District, the NREC is the only camp resource in DeKalb. She hoped that would receive appropriate consideration. She closed by noting that she would be applying for whatever positions come out of the ultimate configuration.

Ms. Fauci, and several committee members, noted they would gladly assist with letters of recommendation.

Ms. Doty closed by commenting that the Insect Camp was coming up next followed by a Survival camp for big kids and an Endangered Species Camp for little kids. She

commented that at the recent River Camp, they had partnered with River Watch and actually had the campers (9 to 12 years olds) doing the equivalent of AP biology experiments. She noted this is why the River camp tends to fill first and be the most popular.

Mr. Hannan commented that he will be meeting soon with Somonauk mayor Aaron Grandgeorge regarding a way to create a bike trail, walking path link between Sannauk Forest Preserve and Somonauk. Also the new Hoppe Acquisition will help provide an important link in a future Genoa to Kingston trail connecting the 2 towns, High School, Russell Woods and subdivision.

He commented that the Girl Scouts would be doing a week long summer camp at Afton this year and will be doing wetland plantings as well as other service projects. Sannauk Forest Preserve also has summer educational programs planned. Ms. Fauci closed by noting that a program for snowmobile riders might be a source of grant funding for the Somonauk/Sannauk trail. Mr. Gudmunson asked where the fund source would be for that. He was wondering if it was a State sponsored fund or something more stable. Ms. Fauci replied it was funded through the snow mobile license fees. Mr. Hannan will try to get as many partners as can to share the cost, just like the partnerships in the Dekalb / Sycamore Trail Project.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Newport moved to adjourn so the Committee could begin its tour of the Hoppe property, seconded by Ms. Turner and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson  
Forest Preserve District Committee  
JF:kjr