

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
October 19, 2010**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, October 19, 2010 at the DeKalb County Administration Building Conference Room C at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Ms. DeFauw, Ms. Turner, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Augsburger, Mr. Walt, Mr. Newport and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Gudmunson arrived after the Committee entered Executive Session. Guests included Mr. Greg Milburg of the Farm Bureau, Peggy Doty of the Natural Resources Education Center and land acquisition specialist, Mr. Dan Lobbes of the Conservation Foundation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci called the meeting to order and then asked if there were any changes to the September 21, 2010 minutes. Mr. Augsburger moved to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Mr. Walt and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci asked if the Executive Session could be moved to the top of the agenda in order to allow Mr. Lobbes to leave in time for a family obligation. Ms. Turner moved to accept the amended agenda, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Fauci welcomed Mr. Milburg, Ms. Doty and Mr. Lobbes.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Fauci then asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Mr. Walt moved the Committee into executive session for the purpose of discussing potential District land acquisitions, seconded by Ms. Turner. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 7 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 1 absent. Following the Executive Session, Mr. Augsburger moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Ms. Turner. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 8 Committee members voting in the affirmative and none in the negative.

Following the return from Executive Session, Mr. Gudmunson moved to acquire the property discussed, contingent on it being determined a property where a residence could be built and to enter into a partnership with The Conservation Foundation to hold the property until eligibility for potential Forest Preserve grant support is achieved, seconded by Ms. Turner. The motion passed unanimously. NOTE: after checking with Planning and Zoning and legal description, the property can have a residence built on it, therefore justifying the "residential value" of the property. With that cleared up, the resolution to partner with The Conservation Foundation can move forward to the Forest Preserve Commissioners to partner with The Conservation Foundation and apply for grant assistance to possibly help with acquisition costs.

FOREST PRESERVE MONTHLY REPORTS AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan noted that the monthly reports contained photos of the Ellwood Cabin construction progress. He noted that Tim Kilby and the volunteers had made great

progress and that the cabin was now ready for rafters , roof, floors, doors and window installation before winter. Mr. Hannan reported that Mr. Kilby may have access to several antique windows that would be authentic to the cabin's age.

Mr. Hannan then commented on a mussel survey recently completed that showed a diverse variety and density of mussels which indicated high water quality in the South Branch of the Kishwaukee River in the County.

Mr. Augsburger commented that it was heartening to see the results of this study in an area that had been devastated by a hog farm contamination 15 to 20 years ago.

Mr. Hannan noted that he had also received an email from local birder Darrell Schambaugh listing an amazing range of birds spotted in the Afton Forest Preserve on the preceding Sunday. Mr. Schambaugh listed over 40 species identified in that single day. (bird species numbers and list attached).

He further noted that the NIU Northern Star newspaper had a recent article on Forest Preserve volunteers. One event highlighted was the recent Jeff's Trees event where the friends of Jeff donated a 3rd memorial bench to the Preserves as well as about \$1500 donation for the acquisition of benches and more trees.

Mr. Gudmunson noted that a local landscaper was disposing of a number of trees and asked if Terry could check to see if any would be of use to the County. Mr. Hannan responded that he would check on that, but that very few commercial and residential landscapers have native species (like oaks, wild plum, hazelnut, etc.) that the forest preserve plants.

Mr. Hannan commented that the recent local InVironments magazine had a very good story about Power Adventure Inc. that make good use of the Forest Preserves with outdoor events for differently abled children, team building exercises, nature education and other outdoor skills.

He then handed out the quarterly PDRMA news report and noted that the Sandwich High School band Haunted Forest fundraiser would again be held in the Sannauk Preserve and this year a Genoa group would be doing a similar fundraising event in Russell Woods. Mr. Hannan added that local Eagle Scouts and FP staff has been completing projects to improve the sledding hill safety at Sannauk as well.

Mr. Hannan then turned the floor over to Ms. Doty for a report from the NREC. Ms. Doty opened by noting that on 10-17-10, the new property adjacent to Russell had to have all their native Illinois tree and shrub plantings completed to obtain their Federal grant monies. The grant would provide \$3000 for plantings and \$1000 additional dollars for the project was obtained locally. Over 100 volunteers showed up to accomplish the task and 374 trees were planted in just under 45 minutes.

Ms. Doty reported that the door to the NREC recently has been repaired, but Forest Preserve staff found a fast and reasonably priced replacement to keep the building secure. Mr. Hannan closed by commenting on a recent article in National Wildlife on the health benefits of outdoor activities.

2011 budget

Mr. Hannan noted that a printed handout had been given noting that the Preserve had not been given a targeted budget reduction from the County Finance Office. Additionally, up to a 4% levy increase could be budgeted for retirement and risk management recommendations.

Mr. Hannan noted that a 4% increase would represent approximately \$1.76 per year for a home valued at \$200,000.00. The risk management reserve has been used to improve safety by updating infrastructure in the Preserve facilities and grounds.

He noted that the District was also facing the potential loss of the University of Illinois Extension local support for the NREC.

The Miller-Ellwood cabin project has received an offer from J. Ellwood Towle to provide additional support for the cabin restoration if needed.

He also commented that the budget presented was consistent with an excellent auditors review and report for the District.

He closed by reminding the Committee that the budget and levy will be placed on file for public review and a resolution to move the levy and budget on to the full Board of Commissioners for a November 17th vote would be needed.

Mr. Newport asked what the impact would be if the District opted for a 1.6% increase rather than the 4% maximum. Mr. Hannan responded that it would represent a loss of approximately \$35,000.00.

Mr. Newport then commented that he could support a 1.6% increase based on the current rates of new construction.

Ms. DeFauw noted that she supported a higher than 1.6% increase as the value the District brought to the County was greater than that. She commented that the support of the land acquisition referendum showed that the public understood that value.

Mr. Newport noted that the land acquisition referendum, while it was a very positive thing at the time, might not have the same support in the current economic environment. He commented that this might be a good opportunity to exercise economic restraint.

Mr. Hannan noted that there are projects that could be put off for a year and revisited in 2012 depending on the economic conditions at that time.

Mr. Newport commented that he felt Mr. Hannan has always been and continues to be exceptionally frugal in his actions on behalf of the District. Mr. Anderson added his

commendations to Mr. Hannan and noted that it was good to have a hands-on rather than an office only administrator.

Ms. Turner commented that she would support the 1.6% as long as it was clearly explained to the public that the Forest Preserve made a conscious choice to give up additional monies it could have levied and the very low tax rate.

Mr. Hannan commented that he had recently met an initially disgruntled resident who became much more of a supporter when he was told how little of his tax bill (less than 1%) was actually used for District lands and projects.

Ms. Fauci asked if there was consensus on the 1.6% levy. Mr. Newport moved to adopt a 1.6% levy increase for the 2011 fiscal year and to move the budget to the full Board of Commissioners, seconded by Ms. Turner.

Mr. Anderson then asked for discussion on some points of the budget prior to a final vote to move the budget. He started with a question on increases in the lines for seasonal help. Mr. Hannan noted that this reflected that of a part time staffer at the Natural Resource Center necessitated by the possible loss of the U of I partnership.

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any updates on the U of I Extension changes. She commented that the NREC budget lines were crafted with an eye to hedging against the U of I suddenly cutting or reducing time for staff member Ms. Doty and staff has at the NRC. She commented that if this staffer were removed, it would represent a significant loss of revenue. Mr. Anderson asked what the impact would actually be for the District if the funding cuts expected do materialize. Mr. Hannan noted that after the U of I partnership potentially ends, then funds could be made available as well as seeking other outside fund sources.

Mr. Anderson then asked about the \$16,000.00 in interest that showed in the land acquisition funds seemed to disappear and then reappear in 2011. Mr. Hannan replied that there were no projections available at the time he prepared this document, but would check with Gary Hanson to see if updated projections were now available.

Mr. Anderson then returned to questions about the NREC and specifically the pension and health insurance costs for Ms. Doty's position.

Mr. Newport replied that the pension calculation can fluctuate when the markets are not strong. All defined benefit plans have required higher funding amounts of late to offset market performance. Mr. Hannan noted that the information regarding family health insurance costs was provided by Gary Hanson.

Mr. Anderson then asked how the District would be handling the upcoming costs of buying a new Ford Ranger. Mr. Hannan responded that he would be using the State Fleet sales bid process as that had proved the most economical in the past.

Ms. Fauci asked if the committee was now ready to vote on Mr. Newport's motion. The vote was unanimous to support the 1.6% levy increase request as moved by Mr. Newport and seconded by Ms. Turner.

Ms. Fauci commented that the budget would now be moved to the full Board of Commissioners.

ADJOURMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr