

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
April 19, 2011**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, April 19, 2011 at the Somonauk Public Library, at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Mr. Augsburger, Mr. Anderson, and Ms. DeFauw and Superintendent Hannan. Ms. Turner arrived after the meeting began. Guests included Donna Prain, Frankie Benson, Barbara Chmielewski, Village mayor Aaron Grandgeorge, Village trustee Rebecca Morphey and County Board Highway Department Chairman John Gudmunson.

Ms. Fauci noted that since there would not be a quorum at the evenings meeting, the Committee could discuss things, just not decide things. This unfortunately means that the meeting could not be called to order nor could the minutes or the agenda can be officially approved until a quorum is achieved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Following the arrival of Ms. Turner, Mr. Anderson moved to approve the March 15, 2011 minutes, seconded by Mr. Augsburger and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. DeFauw moved to approve the agenda for the evening, seconded by Ms. Turner and the motion passed unanimously.

SOMONAUK TO SANNAUK TRAIL DISCUSSION

Ms. Fauci gave the floor to Superintendent Hannan to begin the discussion. Mr. Hannan shared several maps that showed the proposed path options. Mr. Hannan then asked the guests to introduce themselves. Following the introductions, Mr. Hannan noted that he was approached by Aaron Grandgeorge approximately a year ago regarding establishing a partnership with the Village of Somonauk to have a hiking, biking, jogging trail from Somonauk (1 mile east) to Sannauk Forest Preserve. The discussion centered around the fact that such a trail would be a benefit to citizens of the area. The landowner of the proposed trail site, Mr. Dewey and his mother met with Mr. Grandgeorge, Mr. Hannan and Rebecca Morphey a few times to discuss possible routes. The Dewey's said they would lease a 20 foot wide trail corridor to the Preserve at the same cost as farm rent per acre. The trail would be 10 feet wide with mowed shoulders. At one mile long, it would reflect approximately 2.5 acres of land leased. The rent would be approximately \$200 per acre. The materials for the trail would consist of road rock and ag lime to allow for any future changes that might occur should the Village develop the area further. The total cost at about \$12,000.00 - \$15,000.00 for trail base and surface materials as per 2010 estimates.

There would also be costs for hauling road rock and ag lime (\$12 to \$15 per ton, this could add another \$15,000.00), but there could be assistance from the County Highway department as well as Village of Somonauk staff to reduce these additional costs. They might also be able to assist with earthwork, grading and compacting the materials.

Mr. Hannan noted that if the property is developed in the future, the trail location might be altered with the current proposal likely becoming a sidewalk along Rt. 34. This would look very much like the current Peace Rd. trail between Sycamore and DeKalb.

The Green Corridor option would be more of a scenic and secluded route through the farmland. The Somonauk mayor has volunteered to establish a bike patrol to help patrol the trail and it would also be accessible to Sheriff's and local Somonauk police.

He then noted that the determination of what would be the best route would be the topic of the night's discussions. The mayor would also be discussing what the Village of Somonauk has in the future developments plans for the Dewey property. He then turned the floor to Aaron Grandgeorge.

Mr. Grandgeorge noted that the future land use plan contained only one major focus, commercial development along Rt. 34 as well as a road connecting Lake Holiday on County Line to Somonauk Rd. to assist with the traffic patterns from Lake Holiday.

He showed the Committee the proposals regarding Lake Holiday on the maps initially provided. He noted that these were the only really firm plans for the property at this time.

Ms. Morphey noted that the Dewey's had explored options for residential development, but the current market did not appear to make that viable at this time.

Mr. Fauci asked if the proposed bike path would improve the value of the property for residential development. Mr. Grandgeorge noted that despite how it would occur, through an agreement with the District or by requirement of a residential developer, they wanted to see a bike path established. It was a strong priority of the Village to get a path established to improve access for the Village residents.

Ms. Fauci asked if police vehicles could access the path, or would it only be accessible by bike. Mr. Hannan and Mr. Grandgeorge both noted it would be accessible to vehicles if necessary. Mr. Anderson asked if the land would be stripped to start off with. Mr. Hannan reiterated that their trail area would be cored out and CA 6 gravel and ag lime placed in the core to construct the path.

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any details discussed at this point regarding the sharing of maintenance costs for the path. Mr. Grandgeorge responded that he had not yet gotten to that level of detail with Mr. Hannan. He noted that budgets are tight, but they have been looking at getting some assistance from local organizations as well as contributing what they could.

Mr. Anderson asked about drain problems with the proposed areas. Mr. Hannan responded that there is more roll to the land on the green route than the red route. This might require more culverts put in to the very low ground. Mr. Hannan noted that he had tried to reflect the costs at the high end to allow for any additional needs that might occur. The Committee then discussed the costs and locations of the various suppliers of the rock and gravel.

Mr. Anderson asked again about the safety of the more secluded routes. He noted that he understood why the route along Rt. 34 might be less attractive due to potential commercial development, but was concerned that sufficient security could be maintained on the secluded farmland route. Ms. Fauci noted that at this time there really was no

commercial development planned for the path site. Mr. Grandgeorge noted that he actually preferred the green path as it followed well with a process the Village had already been pursuing of joining the library to the local school and park. There is a plan underway to find a grant to provide sidewalks between the sites. It appeared a natural progression to join in the Preserve to these locations as well.

He noted that if commercial development does occur, the cut-ins would disrupt the path quite a bit. He also noted that if there were residential development, placing the path on the green route would be far easier for a developer to accommodate than one running on Rt. 34. However, he closed by noting that it was impossible to predict when any such development will or might occur. Ms. Morphey noted that they had been working with the Soil and Water conservation District to provide assistance in the farmed area as well.

Mr. Grandgeorge noted that he certainly understood the concerns about keeping the green path safe and that was the impetus of his comments regarding establishing a bike patrol and that the Village would be ready to take on a greater level of responsibility for this.

Ms. Fauci noted that the green route certainly looked more interesting for cyclists and that the route had a possibly more interesting future should it eventually be integrated into a residential development. However, she noted that she could see the advantages of the red route regarding the need for less grading and maintenance.

Ms. DeFauw agreed that she preferred the green route as well as a cyclist herself. She noted that while the Peace Rd. path is acceptable, it is not generally her first preference. The traffic just does not provide a very good environment.

Mr. Augsburger noted that while he understood the security concerns, that security can be an issue anywhere. Ms. Fauci noted that the immediate exposure of the red route to Rt. 34 could provide a level of danger as well. Mr. Augsburger noted that a hiking and biking trail is almost always more interesting running through a more scenic area.

Ms. Fauci noted that Mayor Grandgeorge's and Ms. Morphey's preference for the green route seemed to imply their belief that the route could be safely maintained. Mr. Gudmunson noted that they had already had instances of local youth going into the fields and there could be fire issues for the local farm owners. Mr. Anderson noted that the establishment of a formal trail did have the potential to increase traffic and make the area safer by default. However, he commented that as a farmer himself, he would not want a public trail that close to his property.

Anita Turner arrived at this time.

Mr. Grandgeorge noted that the local farmer who owned the land surrounding the proposed trail preferred it to the red route. Ms. Morphey indicated that he felt that this would actually improve his property value.

Ms. Fauci called the meeting to order (now that a quorum had been achieved) at 6:27 pm.

Ms. Fauci provided the maps to Ms. Turner and noted that they were currently discussing the pros and cons of the two proposed routes. She asked Mr. Grandgeorge to review why the green route was his preference. He noted that they had initially only been looking at

the Rt. 34 option, but that the local landowners had brought it to the Village's attention that another route might provide a better hiking trail experience with the green route. The owner also noted that the trail fell along a section of his land that he did not farm due to the topography of the area. Ms. Fauci then asked if Mr. Grandgeorge was saying that there would not be corn planted along the route. He responded that there would be sections that would not have corn, but would be wooded. Mr. Hannan then noted the locations of corn that would be near the trail.

Mr. Anderson asked how much water flowed through the area. Mr. Grandgeorge and Mr. Hannan then noted where ravines occurred and culverts might be needed. Mr. Anderson asked what would happen if the owner decided to utilize the land for other things. Mayor Grandgeorge noted that the discussions to date were to do a very long extended lease (99 years possibly). He commented that the current owner has no immediate reservations regarding a future donation of the land, but wanted to keep his options open should market conditions change and donation might be a more valuable option to him in the future.

Mr. Augsburg commented that language could certainly be put into the lease to secure the trail as a donation in the future. Mr. Grandgeorge also noted that local ordinances could also be used to secure the trail as is or with minimal modifications at a developers expense.

Ms. Fauci asked if the land had been annexed yet. Ms. Morphey replied that it had and that language in the Unified Development Ordinance used had called out the use of areas of the land for public use. Mr. Grandgeorge noted that the owner has been extremely cooperative and supportive of the trail. From his perspective the issue now is just to hammer out the details.

Ms. Fauci asked of the donation would be to the Forest Preserve or to the city. Mr. Grandgeorge replied that was not decided at this time. Ms. Morphey noted that the issues of maintenance would likely dictate a long term partnership.

Mr. Anderson noted that he was concerned about insurance and felt there were very little details sufficiently firm to make him feel comfortable. Mr. Hannan noted that the District has had a very good relationship with Sheriff Roger Scott regarding being able to arrange for off duty patrols to assist in Preserve security.

Mr. Anderson asked if the problems they had been having at Sannauk had died down. Mr. Hannan noted that 99% of the users of the Preserves are good and respectful of the Preserve and what it offers. Unfortunately the 1% who are not require attention. Mr. Grandgeorge commented that the Sheriff's office and the Village of Somonauk had a good mutual aid relationship as well.

Mr. Hannan noted that he had discussed this with Sheriff Scott and that they had concurrence regarding their assistance in checking permits, looking out for alcohol or other violations.

Ms. Fauci asked if the Committee had any other comments. She commented that it appeared from the discussion that there was a route favored by the local citizens and that

a final decision should be influenced by the feelings of the residents who would be mainly using the trail.

Mr. Anderson noted that he felt that if the route to get to the Preserve were not as interesting as the Preserve that might not be a problem.

Mr. Grandgeorge commented that his mother, a retired educator, was very excited about the plan. She felt this would encourage local students to make a greater use of the Preserve to enhance their educational experience.

Ms. Fauci asked if the Committee was at a point where they felt there was a motion to be made of if they needed more detail.

Mr., Anderson noted that he would like more specificity regarding the costs involved. Ms. Fauci asked if there were anyone the Committee should involve in pinning down the details and the costs.

Mr. Hannan noted that he would discuss the plan with the highway department as well as Mr. Gudmunson. Ms. Fauci noted that past experiences with establishing trails has always had resulted in such great and positive partnerships across the County.

Mr. Hannan noted that the District has always been very lucky to have several public and private partners when they start a plan of this type.

Mr. Augsburger asked what the timeline might be if the details start to come together on this. Mr. Grandgeorge noted that they were probably looking at a year or so after the crop comes off this year.

Mr. Augsburger asked if there was anything the Committee needed to do at this time aside from just expressing its strong support for the project.

Ms. Fauci noted that it sounded as if the Committee had reached consensus on the project. She noted that costs need to be nailed down and she was quite pleased that Mr. Gudmunson was available to coordinate assistance with the Highway department and its equipment. Mr. Grandgeorge noted that the Village would assist as best it could as well.

Mr. Anderson asked if there was any fencing between the trail and the attached properties. Mr. Hannan noted there were areas that were fenced. Mr. Anderson asked who would be liable for the results if locals partied or littered the area. Ms. Fauci noted that this would be part of the details that now needed to begin to be determined.

Ms. Fauci noted that it appeared it was time to begin the discussions on pinning down costs and designs and exploring what partnerships could be formed to assist in the project. Mr. Grandgeorge noted there would need to be involvement by the County and Village attorneys as well to hammer out the details.

Ms. Fauci noted that there was a representative from a local equestrian group asking if the trail could be used for horses. Mr. Grandgeorge noted that in the current proposal it would not be available for horses.

GENERAL DISCUSSION/MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan noted that they were still waiting for word from the Illinois Clean Energy Association regarding the \$200,000.00 grant funding for the Prairie Oaks preserve on Cherry Valley Road. He noted that despite the recent unpleasant weather, District staff and volunteers (including 15 NIU students from the NIU Cares project) have been able to make some progress and beginning planting. Sycamore Lions and DeKalb Kiwanis completed their annual trail clean ups.

He noted that the District has concluded burn season for the year. He noted that an interesting experience occurred when they were woodland burning at Sannauk. As they progressed, they were followed by a large group of bluebirds who were eating up bugs kicked up by the fire.

Mr. Hannan handed out the quarterly PDRMA insurance information. He noted the information would be handed to the full Board tomorrow night. He noted that there was good training done and information provided by PDRMA to the Preserve staff.

He closed by noting that the usual usage reports would be in the Committee reports as well.

Ms. Fauci asked if anyone had any additional questions for Terry. Hearing none, she moved to Chair Comments.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci reminded the Committee of a film she had recently discussed, Green Fire. The film will be shown at Kishwaukee College on Tuesday April 26th in two showings. The film details the life of Aldo Leopold, the prominent Illinois naturalist.

She noted that there would also be an upcoming E-waste recycling event held jointly by the County and NIU.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Mr. Augsburger asked if along with the Sheriff's office, whether Conservation Police assisted with checking fishing and hunting licenses at the Preserves. Mr. Hannan noted that they did often check as well.

Ms. Fauci noted they were very lucky to have a lot of assistance with keeping the Preserves safe.

Mr. Hannan noted that he wanted to mention to the Committee that tomorrow at the Kirkland historical society, there would be a showing of the Miller Ellwood Cabin restoration PowerPoint, as well as the movie being done by local filmmaker Tim Murray. Though it is a County Board night, naturalist Al Roloff will be attending this.

Ms. Fauci noted that after the upcoming 8K run at Potawatomi Preserve, there would be an equestrian event held at Potawatomi Woods

Ms. Fauci asked the group to please provide some pictures and information on the event.

COUNTY PERSONNEL POLICY TO INCLUDE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT AS PER PDRMA REQUEST:

Mr. Hannan noted that PDRMA asked about the Forest Preserve personnel policy and how it involves the Forest Preserve Commissioners. He spoke with Mr. Bockman from the County and received clarification that the Commissioners were currently excluded, but that they could simply take a vote at the next Board meeting to note that the District was covered under the policy as well.

Mr. Anderson asked why this needed to be done. Mr. Hannan noted that it was something PDRMA felt was a clerical omission that simply needed to be corrected.

Ms. Turner moved to include the Forest Preserve District in the County Personnel Policy, seconded by Mr. Augsburger and the motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr