

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
August 16, 2011**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Wednesday August 16, 2011 at the newly acquired Prairie Oaks Preserve at 6:00 pm. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Mr. Anderson, Ms. DeFauw, Ms. Fullerton, Ms. Turner and Mr. Augsburger. Superintendent Hannan and Al Roloff, District Natural Resource Manager. Mr. Deverell and Mr. Newport were absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2011 meeting. Mr. Anderson moved approval, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci asked for an approval of the evening's agenda. Ms. Turner moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Augsburger and the motion passed unanimously.

PRAIRIE OAKS OVERVIEW

The meeting began with Al Roloff providing an overview of what was on the land when they began the restoration and what had been worked on so far. He noted that it will take two to three years to eradicate the weeds. They are currently using a cocktail of three to four different kinds of herbicides to address the problem. (see attached August and prior month natural resource reports)

He commented that the area consists of 43 acres. The Sparks family built the three shallow ponds that are on the property. Wildlife identified in the preserve consists of diverse mammal as well as several bird and butterfly and aquatic species.

The work is being partially funded by a \$200,000.00 Clean Energy Grant. Recently, Dan Lobbes of The Conservation Foundation wrote an article about this property for the Foundation's Summer publication.

Mr. Hannan commented that the first public hearing for re-zoning has occurred should be finalized with the full Board perhaps in September. The hope is that the area will be a great addition for natural resource preservation, recreation and education and noted that the gazebo can be used by Peggy Doty for the NREC as well as by NIU students despite the fact that the building is rather small.

Mr. Roloff then returned to the history of the land, noting that it was primarily used for grazing land, but was not tilled for farming. The north edge of the property was also, at one time, an old limestone quarry He commented on the number of Oaks near the quarry area and noted that those oaks prefer that type of habitat. The NIU Cares program assisted in planting many of the oaks last spring.

He commented that he is extremely excited about this particular project as the staff can really focus on making some of the plant communities eligible for registration with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. He noted that area provides excellent bird habitat. For year 'round and migratory species.

Mr. Hannan noted that the Conservation Foundation was a tremendous help in holding the property while the District sought the grants necessary to make the purchase and save 50% of the cost.

He then noted that there will be a parking lot in front of the property off Cherry Valley Rd. and that many of the existing trails will be used. There were questions at the public zoning hearing about the gazebo and its intended usage. He noted that they might remove the window glass and simply use it as an outdoor observatory and for small classes. Ms. Fauci asked if they thought it might be available for small parties as well. Mr. Hannan commented that it would likely be too small for that sort of activity.

Ms. Fauci then asked if there were any danger of visitors wandering into local hunting areas around the property. Mr. Hannan noted that those boundaries will be very clearly posted.

Ms. Fullerton asked when it would be open to the public and Mr. Hannan noted that the current anticipated date to open the new Preserve is June of 2012.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Anderson asked if there were an existing contract with the Sheriff's department regarding hiring off-duty officers for Preserve patrols. Mr. Hannan noted that there was a contract and this has been done before to help with park safety by weekend patrols of the Forest Preserves..

Mr. Hannan then went on to report that the 55 acre Hoppe property had been surveyed by the USDA / NRCS and all transactions related to the grant should be finalized by the end of the year,

He then reported that the Northwest Suburban Astronomer's group had scheduled 8-28-11 for their next public Star Party at Afton Preserve. There will also be 2 biology and 1 geography class doing class study at Russell Woods and Afton Preserve.

Also, next Tuesday at Afton, the Sycamore High School Cross Country 12 team invitational meet will be held. The team practices at the Afton Preserve throughout the year. There will also be the annual Jeff's trees volunteer event in October at the Afton Preserve as well. He also commented that there are pictures in this month's packet of the summer camps held at the NREC.

Mr. Hannan then commented that Scout troops from nearby western suburbs volunteered to assist with a new Lodge sign and a trail foot bridge at MacQueen Preserve as well as repairing picnic tables.

The Forest Preserve has also recently repaired water control structures (weir gates) at Afton Preserve that were not designed to allow enough water to pass by the several “hundred year” floods that have occurred in recent years. He noted that the new structures have been quadrupled in size and will help prevent future flood damage to wetland berms.

Mr. Hannan also noted that the National Resources Report is also included in the packet and commented that there had also been a bald eagle sighting recently at Afton.

Ms. Fauci asked about the nest sites of eagles. Mr. Hannan commented that they are usually quite large and easily identified, people have reported a pair of eagles along the Kishwaukee in northern DeKalb County.

FY2010 BUDGET DRAFT

Mr. Hannan handed out the draft FY 2012 budget documents to the Committee. One item he wanted to highlight was a calendar showing the budget dates until final adoption. He did note that there was no budget dollar target given to the District by the Finance Committee.

He also noted that the District can levy up to a 2.3% increase. The current budget assumes a 1.9% decrease in tax dollars over 2011.

He closed by noting that the auditors recently gave the District an excellent review of the Forest Preserve District financials.

Ms. Fauci noted that the budget would be discussed in greater detail at the next meeting

CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci noted that she and her husband recently visited the Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois. She commented that this was a Mies van der Rohe structure that was built to never take in water. However, she noted that recently the structure has been inundated due to the changing weather conditions. She noted that this is one effect that can occur due to development activities.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci asked for any Committee member comments. Hearing none, Ms. Fauci moved to a call for Executive Session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Fauci then asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Ms. DeFauw moved the Committee into executive session for the purpose of discussing potential District land acquisitions, seconded by Mr. Anderson. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 2 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 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 2 absent.

ADJOURMENT

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

The Committee then began a walking tour of the Prairie Oaks property.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr