

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
April 17, 2012**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday April 17, 2012 at 6:00 pm at the Afton Forest Preserve. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Augsburger, Mr. Deverrell, Ms. Fullerton, Ms. Turner and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Newport was absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2012 meeting. Mr. Anderson noted an incorrect day noted for the meeting in March (entered as Wednesday, not Tuesday). Mr. Anderson moved approval of the minutes as amended, seconded by Mr. Augsburger and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

MONTHLY REPORTS/GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan began by noting to the Committee that the packets contain, as usual, all of the monthly reports and also includes an article in the Daily Chronicle on mussels in the Kishwaukee River.

He noted that the Committee is meeting this evening on the site of the original 240 acres at Afton that were obtained by the District in 1974. All of the trees at Afton were started with 6" seedlings planted in 1975 by forest preserve staff and volunteers. The newest addition the 76 acre Afton South Prairie was purchased in 2007.

He then noted that since he had been observing starting at 5:30 that evening, he had seen over 19 varieties of birds, including juncos, mallards, downy woodpeckers, song sparrow, ring neck pheasant, tree swallows, goldfinches, brown thrasher, red tailed hawk and a little green heron to name just a few. There have been over 170 different species of birds sighted at Afton by various groups over the years.

Mr. Hannan then noted that the recent event, Hustle at Russell 5K run, sponsored by St. Mary's school had over 190 runners. He noted that many of the runners made very complimentary comments about the Preserve trail conditions.

On May 19, the Northwest Suburban Astronomers will be holding their next Star Party at Afton. These events open to the general public, allow the group to display their knowledge and demonstrate their (often handmade) telescopes to interested observers. Mr. Hannan commented that this is a very talented and interesting group of people who are very knowledgeable individuals who are frequent users of the preserves for their viewing activities. They do the Star Parties as a way to repay the district and the public for their usage of the Preserves.

Mr. Hannan then noted that one of the Districts seasonal employees recently hand made a pen from the wood log scrap at the Miller-Ellwood cabin and it was sent to J. Ellwood Towle in appreciation for his contributions to the project. Mr. Ellwood then sent back a \$1000.00 donation to further the cabin efforts as thanks for the unique keepsake.

Last weekend was NIU Cares day and next weekend there will be volunteers working with the Sycamore Lions Club on the Great Western Trail as well as the annual Dekalb Kiwanis DeKalb / Sycamore trail cleanup.

Mr. Hannan provided an update on the progress of the Hoppe property noting that the USDA sent the contract to the Hoppe's and it is being reviewed by their attorney, Bob Becker. Hopefully, the property can then be closed on soon. He commented that after the meeting, the Committee can view the new additions to Afton and the progress that has been made.

He closed by handing out the quarterly PDRMA publications to the Committee.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci reported that she was recently at the Forest Preserve and Conservation District annual meeting and there were conversations regarding upcoming programs on accessibility in Preserves.

Mr. Hannan passed out new District brochures and noted that that they contained information on accessibility at the various Preserves.

He also passed out handouts on woodland , prairie and wetland restoration and management information posters showing the benefits of this work.

Ms. Fauci closed by showing a photo recently taken of Mr. Roloff in front of a controlled burn. It gave an amusing appearance that Mr. Roloff had quite a fiery temper (smoke and flames coming out of his ears).

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Anderson noted that he had received inquiries about how the increased land acquisitions might be effecting maintenance and patrolling time and staff.

Mr. Hannan responded that when the forest preserves are designed, they try to achieve 90% in natural and conservation habitat and 10% in passive recreation (picnic areas, open play areas, trails, etc). He noted that zero turn mowers mowed more areas with less time than the old tractor type mowers. He commented that he would get more information to Mr. Anderson and the Committee.

Ms. Fauci noted that new equipment purchased over the past few years has also increased efficiency. The 10% fund created from the land acquisition funds has assisted with this as well.

Ms. Fauci noted that in comparison to other counties, DeKalb County FPD appears to have extremely good landscape design, aesthetics, trail accessibility, species diversity, etc. Ms Fauci visits the forest preserves a lot and appreciates the excellent maintenance.

Mr. Hannan responded that the staff takes great pride in maintaining the preserves at their best.

Mr. Augsburger noted that his Easter “sunrise service” was at his woods early that morning. The geese, turkeys and sand hill cranes made a wonderful cacophony of sound. He commented that it was a wonderful celebration of nature.

Ms. Turner noted that her son and future daughter in law will be married at the Afton Preserve in July and that they are both extremely excited about that.

Mr. Hannan noted that these are wonderful examples of the value the public receives from the Preserves in exchange for their tax dollars and that they remain a great value for the County citizens. Less than 1% of a homeowners tax bill goes to the Forest Preserve District. He also extended thanks to the Committee and Forest Preserve Commissioners for their support and advocacy for the District’s efforts.

Mr. Deverrell asked about what the property was like when it was originally purchased. Mr. Hannan noted that there were 4 buffalo located in the MW corner of the property. The District then acquired “ Buffalo Bill” the Bull from farmer Howard Andres and they also purchased additional 3 buffalo heifers from a 4H project in 1978 and 1979. However, the big snows of 1979 covered the fence many times, the Buffalo escaped a few times were rounded up, but on St Patrick’s day they were found just outside of Hinckley. Mr. Hannan and friend rounded them up again and put them in a farmers barn north of Hinckley. One local man who ended up providing unintentional temporary housing for the errant animals even became something of a local celebrity. (long story short).

Mr. Hannan commented that it was something of a shame the District did not have the buffalo established in 1976, as they might have made a humorous “Bison”-ennial display.

Mr. Hannan then recounted for the Committee stories related to the McGirr family whose farm was located on the Afton property. One family member, Kenny, had quite an extensive arrowhead collection and also a collection of buttons from WWI prisoners of war who worked on the farm. This farm was also renowned as the first to have indoor plumbing in the County.

He commented that when Kenny McGirr and Roger Searl were young, they had put their initials in the concrete bridge on the site. Mr. Searl’s great grandson , Steve who is currently doing an Eagle Scout project at Afton on the site, gets quick a kick out of seeing that.

Mr. Hannan closed by noting that “Afton” is also the name of a river in Ireland and that river is what the township was named after .

ADJOURMENT

Ms. Fullerton moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Turner. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr