

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

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Wednesday January 17, 2012 at 6:00 pm at the County Administration Building. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Mr. Anderson, Ms. DeFauw, Mr. Augsburger, Mr. Deverrell, and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Newport arrived after the meeting had been called to order. Ms. Fullerton and Ms. Turner were absent. U.W. Stevens Point Wildlife Biology student from Sycamore Shea Quinn also in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2011 meeting. Mr. Augsburger moved approval, seconded by Mr. Deverrell and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci noted there were two changes to the posted agenda – the revised dog ordinance needed to be added to the Monthly Reports and there would be the addition of an Executive Session to discuss land acquisition options. She then asked for an approval of the evening’s amended agenda. Mr. Deverrell moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan noted that, as usual, all reports are included in the monthly packets. He then noted that he would be starting with the truck bid opening as Mr. Frank Ostling, Wildlife Biologist with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) would be arriving a bit later for their presentation. He also took a moment to introduce Shea Quinn, a University of Wisconsin-Steven’s Point student who may be doing an internship with the District this coming summer.

He noted that the Truck Bid was for two vehicles approved in the 2012 budget. The first was to replace a Ford F250 snow plow / truck with over 110,000 miles. He commented that while this truck will be replaced for its primary duties, it will be used at MacQueen or Afton for occasional use there so it will continue to be of use to the District. The other purchase will replace a used truck used by the District for several years.

Mr. Hannan also noted that while the County has generally used a State wide bid process, it had not always provided the lowest bid, so this bid was done locally as well. Of the local dealerships, Brad Manning was the only one to submit a bid. A dealership in Kane County had made inquiries regarding the purchase, but did not submit a bid.

The bids for the vehicles were as follows:

For the F250 ¾ ton truck, Manning Ford bid \$23,245.00. The State bid was \$22,154.00. The State bid prevailed for this purchase.

For the F150 truck, the Manning bid was \$18,291.00. The State bid was \$20,204.00. The Manning bid prevailed for this purchase.

Mr. Hannan commented that he would do a thorough review to assure that the specifications bid were identical for the two prior to pursuing any final action. Ms. Fauci noted that the purchase approval would then be taken to the full Board tomorrow night after the review of the specifications.

IDNR PRESENTATION

Mr. Hannan introduced Mr. Tom Beissel Regional Wildlife Biologist for the IDNR and Mr. Frank Ostling, IDNR biologist. He noted that the two gentlemen were attending tonight's meeting to provide an overview of the IDNR Chronic Wasting Disease Management program.

Ms. Fauci opened the conversation by asking how the program has been working. Mr. Ostling noted that success for the program is measured by prevalence rates, defined as the given percent of animals in the landscape that could be expected to have the disease. Public hunting occurs approximately 3 ½ months out of the year (including all types i.e. bow, gun, muzzle rifle etc). Biologists will then set up check centers to take tissue samples of harvested deer with the samples being sent to a lab in Centralia Illinois for the results.

He noted that the lab is currently now finalizing the results from the last firearms season. These results then show what is happening on the landscape. He commented that he had provided additional documentation for the Committee's review and would welcome any questions after the Committee had a chance to review it.

Mr. Beissel noted that the campaign has been going on for approximately 10 years in Illinois. The IDNR knew when the campaign began that it would be a long process absent the discovery of a vaccine or cure. The disease is caused by prions that cause a mutation in the tissues of the nervous system and brain of the infected animals. Though there have been no authenticated cases of any deer to human transmission, the IDNR warns strongly against human consumption of the infected parts of the deer under any circumstances.

He noted that the disease spreads quickly in large populations due to the extremely social nature of the deer herds. For this reason, the IDNR decided the best approach to reduce the disease was to reduce the heavy concentrations of deer population to essentially starve the disease of its current host.

He commented that deer densities have been significantly reduced since the first sick deer was identified in 2002. He noted that the deer was discovered in Illinois in October of that year, but the disease had been seen in Wisconsin in March of 2002. Most researchers believe it started in Wisconsin and spread to northern Illinois. At the beginning of the campaign, prevalence rates in Illinois and Wisconsin were approximately equal. However, after 10 years of study, 90% of the positives each year are still occurring in the

same corridor consisting of roughly 3 miles each side of the Boone/Winnebago county line and Northwest DeKalb County.

He noted that all of this information is available to anyone online and that this free sharing of information is one of the steps taken by the IDNR to assure that the program is as open and transparent to the public as possible.

He commented that maintaining prevalence rates indicates the disease is being contained, and the prevalence rates for Illinois have remained steady since 2002. However, he noted that our neighbor to the north, Wisconsin, has taken a radically different approach.

Ms. Fauci asked why the same corridor in Illinois continues to be the source of so many of the positive results. Mr. Beissel replied that the prions can remain in the soil for some time, continuing to create new infections.

Mr. Beissel then presented some historical data. He noted that Wisconsin, having elected to take very little action against the disease, has prevalence rates of 16% to 20%. In the western areas of the country, the disease appeared about 35 years ago, but that area had had a fairly steady prevalence rate of 3%, likely due to the arid climates (and lower populations) keeping the disease down. However, he noted that about 15 years ago, the west reached a tipping point with the disease.

In Wyoming CWD began skyrocketing about 10 to 15 years ago and has some areas with 50% or greater prevalence infection rates. This has occurred despite increased hunting being done targeting bucks.

Mr. Beissel commented that he believes firmly that the IDNR has been and is taking the best approach to controlling the disease. He noted that having certain DeKalb northern preserves as an attractive habitat for whitetail deer has allowed the IDNR to conduct efficient hunts to control the populations. He expressed his sincere gratitude to the Committee for partnering with the IDNR and allowing that use of the preserves for the CWD reduction program.

He then commented that although the IDNR has been successful in managing the prevalence rates, there are a group of citizens who passionately oppose the IDNR practices for population control. He noted that his organization recognized and appreciates the Forest Preserve Committee for the support extended to the IDNR.

He commented that there were property owners in the north area of the County that will not allow the IDNR access to their land. He commented that this is part of the answer to why the CWD hot spot continues in the north part of the County. The IDNR is working outward from that region as much as possible to try to contain the disease and work around the center of the opposition.

Ms. Fauci asked if this included areas in Mr. Anderson's district. Mr. Anderson acknowledged that it was and asked if the IDNR had noticed any reduction in the opposition. Mr. Ostling responded that unfortunately there had been incidents of threats

issued as recently as today. He noted that, sadly, there are even people in these areas who will refuse to allow the testing of deer they have hunted themselves as the tests are currently not mandatory. Refusal to participate in the testing may cause the CWD hot spots to spread. The success of the CWD management program hinges on the cooperation of responsible hunters and the public with the IDNR.

Ms. Fauci commented that she had heard from a fellow Board member who was also a hunter that a rumor was circulating that the only reason the IDNR did their targeted hunts was to essentially take “all the good ones” for themselves. Mr. Ostling noted that they have created a brochure to attempt to dispel some of these myths. He commented that this rumor likely started because the IDNR do focus their hunts on bucks. However, this is done not for the trophy aspect, but because the does and fawns tend to keep to isolated family groups and the disease is spread more by the bucks than the does/fawns. Mr. Anderson asked if they knew what the Mt. Horeb site in Wisconsin had been doing about the disease. Mr. Beissel responded that Mt. Horeb area is a current CWD hot spot.

Mr. Anderson asked if it were true that access to hunting tags in Illinois is unlimited. Mr. Ostling responded that though the number of tags is quite large, there are only so many deer any one hunter can harvest.

Mr. Augsburgberger noted that he is an avid deer hunter and has also heard hunters expressing unhappiness that the IDNR has reduced the deer populations so much that it is hard for a regular hunter to find a good herd. Mr. Beissel responded that the problem is also that hunting magazines and hunting television programs will not even acknowledge the disease and therefore many hunters do not realize what a threat CWD is.

Ms. Fauci noted that she had attended a meeting last year of the statewide Forest Preserve Commissioners and heard Brant Manning, current Director of DuPage County Forest Preserve Dist. (Biologist and former head of the IDNR), speak to the group about the fact that the CWD management program was one of the most important programs to support in the State.

Ms. Fauci also noted that it seemed strange that anyone would want to take the chance of consuming animals that could carry the disease. Mr. Beissel responded that hunters have their priorities regarding the animals they pursue. This is why the IDNR cannot rely solely in independent hunters. The IDNR sharpshooters are trained to identify the best way to properly manage the herd populations. Mr. Beissel noted that Wisconsin had 142 positive tests this year alone. Illinois has had 300 positive results over the past 10 years. He further noted that sharpshooting accounts for approximately 45% of the positives identified.

Ms. Fauci noted that she and the Committee are very grateful for the visit this evening and asked if the Committee had any additional questions.

Ms. DeFauw asked if only whitetail deer are affected by the disease. Mr. Beissel responded that it actually has been found in deer, elk and moose. Mr. Augsburgberger asked if

the disease is spreading to the north in Wisconsin. Mr. Beissel noted that, sadly, it is and at a rapid rate.

Mr. Hannan reminded the Committee that the program is currently conducted in Potawatomi Woods and MacQueen preserves, and that part of the reason for the visit this evening is that the IDNR would like to expand the program into the new Prairie Oaks preserve this year.

By consensus, the Committee agreed that the expansion of the program would be good for the CWD reduction program and unanimously approved the use of the requested sites.

Mr. Anderson asked if there were good safety procedures in place when the sharpshooters were on the preserve property. Mr. Hannan replied that all gates are locked, signs are posted and the Sheriff is notified of all the shooting areas. Additionally, he noted that the sharpshooters are given annual training.

Mr. Beissel noted that each year the IDNR donates 20,000 pounds of clean venison to the Northern Illinois Food Bank. At this time the IDNR is the primary source of protein for the people who use the Food Bank.

He closed by commenting that there is some promise of a vaccine down the road, but that it would likely still be another 10 years before that would be available. However, if that happened it would certainly change the program to adapt to that.

He thanked the Committee again for their support and time.

GENERAL DISCUSSION contd.

Mr. Hannan reported on the progress of the Somonauk to Sannauk Trail. He reminded the Committee that they had voted to purchase the 2.88 acres needed for the trail corridor at a cost of approximately \$15,000.00 per acre and that the owner, Mr. Dewey, was a willing seller.

However, since that time, Mr. Dewey's attorney has advised him that he should lease the land to the District instead. He has submitted a proposal of \$500 per acre per year in lease payments (\$1,500.00 per year total). The purchase price would have been \$45,000.00. There are also discussions regarding partnerships with the Village of Somonauk for sharing the rental costs if this is done (\$1,000 per year Forest Preserve District, \$500 per year Village of Somonauk or other donor). Mr. Dewey is asking for a 5 year lease.

Mr. Hannan noted that since the District would be putting at least \$25,000.00 in developing the trail, it would need a significantly longer lease period, say 10-15 years. However, there may be advantages for the District to the lease option since this land may well be developed in the next 10 to 20 year period and the trail could be part of a subdivision sidewalk / trail. Also, there could also be assistance from the Highway

Department on building the trail and from the city of Somonauk for mowing and trail maintenance and patrolling.

Mr. Hannan asked for the Committee's thoughts on Mr. Dewey's lease proposal. Mr. Anderson asked if all of the partnerships obtained would be in writing. Mr. Hannan responded that would be the case. Mr. Augsburg asked if the \$500 per acre were a fair lease price. Mr. Newport responded that it seemed to be pushing the upper edges of the value, but seemed fair enough. Mr. Fauci noted that she would support a minimum of a 15 year lease period. Mr. Newport noted that if a 10 year lease were elected, there could be provisions included requiring reimbursement of costs if lease is less than 15 years.

By consensus, the Committee elected to move forward with the lease discussions.

Mr. Hannan then reported that PDRMA, the District insurance holder, had sent the District a letter acknowledging the Districts risk management efforts and awarding it a grade "C" and a \$500 premium rebate.

Last year the District scored an 86% and with that good score, the next loss control review will be in three years. PDRMA indicates the District is doing well on our safety and risk management efforts.

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The annual Winterfest activities will be held at the Natural Resource Center in Russell Woods on Saturday 1-21-12. If there is snow, North Central Cyclery will have a snow bike race at Afton on 1-29. This will be an experimental race with 75 to 100 racers participating.

Upcoming volunteer activities will include the April NIU cares day for student volunteerism.

Mr. Hannan then read a letter thanking the Forest Preserve Committee for their annual support for the MS Ride which uses District facilities for bike rider rest stops. The organization noted the critical importance of the funds raised during this ride to the MS society.

He commented that 2 bald eagles have been spotted at Potawatomi Woods and Russell preserve and was included in the annual Christmas bird count.

Al Roloff does a monthly natural resources report that is included in each County Board packet. This includes natural resource work in all preserves plus an extensive review of the work done at the new Prairie Oaks site. Mr. Hannan noted that while it is a very lengthy review, it will be very useful in the applications and awarding of future grants to demonstrate the District's good grant performance record of doing what we agreed to do as per the grant award guidelines and on - site inspections & reviews by grantors.

Ms. Fauci noted that if the Committee does not meet next month, the budget transfer normally done then will be moved to March. There were a number of long overdue improvements done using wetland bank dollars. The wetland bank did well for the district in 2011.

CHANGES TO THE DOG ORDINANCE

Mr. Anderson noted that he had an addition to page 2 of the submitted ordinance language. He asked that there be clarification to the statement that if there are repeated offenses, there may be closure of the off leash areas to the offenders, not full closure of the off leash areas in general.

Following discussions on how best to word that as well as discussions about the amendment to require owners to clean up after their pets in all areas (on and off leash) and a note that owners should never tie their pets to trees or shrubs, the Committee finalized the proposed language. Mr. Hannan noted that the Sheriff's office and Animal Control have agreed on the ordinance changes as well.

Ms. Fauci then read the final ordinance language to the Committee.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci reported that she had been contacted by local resident Barry Schrader with a request for the Preserve to assist an RV that Mr. Schrader would use to do local educational presentations. Since it appears the presentations would be more of a history mobile than a natural resources mobile, that this would not be a good use of District support.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Fauci then asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Mr. Anderson moved the Committee into executive session for the purpose of discussing potential District land acquisitions, seconded by Mr. Augsburger. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 1 absent.

Following the Executive Session, Mr. Anderson moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Ms. DeFauw. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 1 absent.

Following the return from Executive session, Ms. Fauci noted that since there would be pending business, the Committee will likely meet in February.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Anderson moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Deverrell. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr