

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
February 19, 2013**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday February 19, 2013 at 6:00 pm at the Administration Bldg, Conference East. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Mr. Cribben, Mr. Jones, Mr. Gudmunson, Ms. DeFauw, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Mr. Brown and Superintendent Hannan. Guests were Greg Milburg of the Farm Bureau and Donna Brown.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2013 meeting. Mr. Jones moved approval of the minutes, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously. Ms. Haji-Sheikh abstained as she had not received the minutes in time for review.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci asked for an approval of the evening's agenda. Mr. Cribben moved to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh and the motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan began by showing a movie to the Committee that documented the prairie and woodland burns that are done by the Preserve staff. He noted that the burn season will likely begin within the next month. The movie was created by local citizen, filmmaker and friend to the Preserves, Tim Murray who also composed and performed the music in the film. The movie features Forest Preserve staff explaining the advantages and purposes of burning to maintain the integrity and native plant diversity of the woodlands and prairies. They noted that this practice is vital to controlling the spread of invasive species, nutrients are recycled back into the soil in the form of ash and allows more sunlight into forest and prairies.

Mr. Jones asked if there were areas that are done every year. Mr. Hannan responded that there is a burn schedule as many of the invasive species require several years of burning activity to eradicate their seeds, some management areas are burned every year, others every one or two years or as needed.

Ms. Fauci asked if perhaps the Committee members could be notified when a burn will be taking place so they could observe. Mr. Hannan responded that such prior notification can be difficult as so many weather conditions such as wind speed and direction, humidity, and other factors have to be in place to do the burn safely.

Mr. Cribben asked if they had ever taken a temperature of the burn sites. Mr. Hannan replied that they did not, but that he and the staff are very respectful of the heat and fire and take great care. He noted that burn management is considered to be handled very well by the forest preserve staff. Training is done consistently to ensure that everyone involved knows exactly what to do. He noted that burning in DeKalb County is actually

somewhat safer than similar activities done in the suburbs due to the distance from populated areas or specifically sensitive sites such as major highways, residential and commercial areas, schools and hospitals. Mr. Cribben asked what the fire mops shown in the film were actually made of. Mr. Hannan responded that they were made of a hard rubber material. Ms. Fauci then asked when the Preserves first started using controlled burns. Mr. Hannan replied that he started approximately 25 years ago following information and guidance on prairie and woodland management he had received from the Morton Arboretum and Paul Sorensen from NIU.

Mr. Hannan concluded the presentation by noting that garlic mustard, is one of the most troublesome of the invasive species the Preserve fights, as it will crowd out and kill native species. Others include, honeysuckle, autumn olive, Canada thistle, reed canary grass, sweet clover, burdock and others. The annual burns and other management techniques are vital to maintaining these native plant communities.

FY2012 BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Mr. Hannan passed out the budget amendment resolution that will be given to the whole Board of Commissioners tomorrow night. He commented that these are annual book keeping measures done to finalize the prior year's budget and have been reviewed and approved by the Forest Preserve auditors. The document shows the funds needed to be transferred to and where the funds will be drawn from.

Mr. Hannan went on to say that the wetland bank expansion application has been started. He noted that the Rock Island Army Corps of Engineers, who approve the permit for the wetland bank, often cite DeKalb County Forest Preserve as an example of how to properly manage and maintain a wetland bank site.

Since 1997, the Wetland Bank has generated over \$900,000.00 in non-tax income for the District. He noted that this provides assistance with land management cost as well as helping with earlier land acquisition. Afton wetland bank mitigation area is from two watershed areas (Kishwaukee and Fox).

Mr. Brown asked if there are set rates between the developers and the District. Mr. Hannan responded that they use actual land and development values but do also negotiate. Some Counties closer to the city charge quite a bit more so the District tries to be as competitive as possible. Ms. Fauci noted this is why discussions of the actual rates and costs are generally held in Executive Session so the District can remain competitive and maximize their revenues from this source.

Returning to the budget adjustment discussions, Mr. Jones asked if these were adjustments made after the initial budget process. Mr. Hannan responded that there are often revenue sources that are not known and expense estimates at the time the budget is set each year. Ms. Fauci asked Mr. Hannan to note how recent purchases are often supported by grants. Mr. Hannan noted that grant funding helped acquire Prairie Oaks

(private foundation grant) and Hoppe Farm acquisitions. The Hoppe Farm acquisition was about a 2/3 grant partnership with NRCS, both grants resulting in about \$450,000.00 savings in Forest preserve land acquisition funds.

Mr. Hannan noted that one of the granting agencies, the Illinois Clean Energy Foundation sent the District a letter thanking the District for the good work and accuracy of the grant reporting and implementation process done by the District. He commented that this sort of recognition helps the District to be more successful with future Grant opportunities. He added that these non-tax sources allow the District to save tax payers money and also allow the District to maximize purchase opportunities.

Ms. Fauci noted that the money received for Wetland Bank activity is often directed toward bank management and other support activities.

Mr. Gudmunson moved to forward the FY 2012 budget adjustment resolution to the full Board of Commissioners, seconded by Ms. DeFauw.

Following a small clarification on the Natural Resource Education revenue adjustment, the committee voted unanimously to forward the adjustments.

SOMONAUK TO SANNAUK TRAIL

Mr. Hannan passed out copies of an email he had received from IDOT regarding the potential costs and requirements that would come with the trail if it went alongside the south side of the Route 34 r.o.w. Two of the major highlights were that if the trail were granted and Rt. 34 was ever widened, there could be potential problems and that the IDOT requirements regarding asphalt surfacing, drainage, engineering and trail width requirements could triple the costs of the trail.

Mr. Hannan noted that there are ongoing talks with the Somonauk mayor and the land-owner of the property where the trail is currently proposed along South County Line Rd., so tonight's information is being shared with the Committee for review and consideration only.

Mr. Hannan then passed around photos showing views of what the trail might look like as per photos of the completed trail along Dresser Rd from N. First St. in DeKalb west to the County Nursing Home. He commented that the Somonauk to Sannauk trail would be quite similar in look to the Dresser road trail location but not an asphalt surface, out trail would be limestone.

He noted that there are still issues to be resolved regarding whether the trail would go in front of or behind one section of private property along the route.

Ms. Fauci noted that the District has faced similar issues in the past during the creation of other trails and with good communication and the involvement of the property owners, a good solution can generally be reached.

Mr. Hannan noted that trail hours would be sunrise to sunset. Ms. Fauci commented that perhaps the Committee could meet at the Somonauk Library next month to discuss this further with the mayor and the other involved parties.

Mr. Hannan indicated that the DeKalb County Community Foundation has expressed interest in a grant application especially with all the partners working with the District and Village of Somonauk, the DeKalb County Highway Dept. and other partners to assist with the planning, engineering, construction maintenance and patrolling of the trail.

Mr. Gudmunson mentioned that perhaps the Committee could meet at one of the Sannauk Preserve shelters next month, weather permitting. Ms. Fauci commented to the new members that this is a “traveling” Committee and frequently meets at various Preserves in the warmer months.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked about the timing of the Somonauk Trail project. Mr. Hannan responded that if the Committee made a decisions next month, the work on the trail could begin by this summer. The previous FP Committee agreed to the S. County Line route, but decided to wait a year because of a possible land acquisition that may have benefitted the trail route, that did not happen so it is before the Committee again. Ms. Haji-Sheikh then asked what happens when the trail terminates at the library. Mr. Hannan noted that it then connects via trail to an adjoining subdivision. Ms. Haji-Sheikh then added that traveling could occasionally be a problem for her without a good deal of advance notice so she could readjust other Tuesday evening commitments.

Ms. Fauci then asked if the Committee wished to decide now where they wanted to meet in March. By consensus, the Committee agreed to meet at 6:00 pm on March 19, 2013 at the Somonauk Library.

Mr. Jones asked if in Mr. Hannan’s conversations with the landowners, were discussions related to the option to purchase land along Rt 34. . Mr. Hannan responded that the route currently indicated is what the landowners feels is in their best interest. Ms. Fauci reminded the Committee that one of the primary criteria for land acquisition is the existence of a willing seller. Ms. Haji-Sheikh then asked if they could inquire again if the landowners would be willing to consider selling additional land farther from the road. Mr. Hannan responded that he will ask the landowner, Mr. Dewey, to attend the March meeting so everyone can be clear about what is and is not an option.

Mr. Gudmunson noted that he had heard that if the trail became a Forest Preserve District trail, then the County Sheriff, not the local police would have primary jurisdiction. Mr. Hannan noted that the Sheriff’s department has been a great partner assisting with Forest Preserve patrols.

In response to comments about the remoteness of the trail, Mr. Jones noted that, in perspective, the proposed trail is no more or less remote than the Sannauk Preserve itself.

Ms. Fauci asked if Mr. Gudmunson knew what the speed limits were on Rte. 34 in comparison to West County Line Road. It was noted that Rte. 34 had limits of 35 to 45 MPH which were faster limits than those on West County Line.

Mr. Gudmunson commented that he remains concerned about possible trouble that could occur on the trail because of its remoteness. Mr. Hannan noted that along with the County patrol officers, all Forest preserve staff are asked to keep an eye out for anything questionable they might see while at work and reporting it to the appropriate authorities. Mr. Hannan closed by noting that the Preserve staff does all it can to keep the public Preserves safe for all of the public. The mayor of Somonauk also mentioned help with patrolling the trail.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan began by noting to the Committee that included in the Monthly Reports is information on programs, projects, maintenance and natural resource management.

He then added that Winterfest at Russell Woods was again a success this January with very good attendance and Maple Syrup day at Russell Woods is March 2nd. Sledding, snowmobiling and cross country skiing activities enjoyed by many with February snows.

Mr. Hannan then closed by noting that the Northwest Suburban Astronomers had released their 2013 schedule of their private club viewing activities as well as two public viewing opportunities on June 8, 2013 and November 2, 2013 “Star Parties “ at Afton. He added that groups who conduct regular activities like these also help with Preserve safety and security by their presence and observations esp. at night.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci noted that she has been attending meetings regarding the restoration of the DeKalb Park District Nature Trail with Park District representatives, Com Ed and trail neighbors and noted that Mr. Hannan and Mr. Roloff have been extremely valuable resources for those efforts. The forest preserve district and volunteers will help plant native prairie , shrubs and trees along the County Farm Woods forest preserve section of the trail. The DeKalb Park District will do the same along other sections of the trail.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh passed around a photo of signage she felt might be helpful in the County as they consider trails and other projects. She then commented on activities that are going on around the area related to bike trails and biking and commented on potential sources of funding that might be available. Ms. Haji-Sheikh then closed with commentary regarding Community Gardens activities she has been involved with as well.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Jones. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr