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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes
November 19, 2013**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday November 19, 2013 at 6:00 pm at Conference Room of the Administration Center. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Ms. DeFauw, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Mr. Gudmunson and Mr. Brown. Mr. Jones and Mr. Cribben were absent. Superintendent Hannan was also in attendance. Guest: Barry Schrader.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci called for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2013 meeting. Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved approval, seconded by Mr. Brown and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Gudmunson moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh and the motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Mr. Hannan began by noting that the FY 2014 Levy and Appropriations Ordinance will go to the Forest Preserve Commissioners tomorrow night. He commented that there was a change in the budget line item structure. Pete Steffen, the new County Finance Director, met with Mr. Hannan and suggested the change in format to bring it into uniformity with the other departments. There is no change in the budgeted and levy amounts. He noted to the Committee there is a motion needed to adopt the FY 2014 Levy and Appropriation Ordinance and forward both to the Forest [preserve Commissioners.

Ms. DeFauw moved to send the Levy and Appropriation Ordinance to the full Board.

Mr. Gudmunson asked for additional clarification on the land acquisition line item. Mr. Hannan gave the line item information to Mr. Gudmunson and Committee.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh seconded the motion.

The Committee then continued to review items from the FY 2014 budget proposal which has been in discussion since August. Mr. Gudmunson inquired for additional details on the \$7,000.00 budgeted for phone expenditures anticipated for the coming year. Mr. Hannan clarified that this line covers all cell phones used by Forest preserve District staff and Park managers as well as the computer line and land line at the Natural Resource

Education Center . He noted that the phones are for the staff to stay in communication, park managers reserving shelter, lodge and camping requests, safety and security or emergencies especially during burn seasons. Mr. Gudmunson asked how many phones are used. Mr. Hannan noted that there were 8 or 9 plus land lines in use. Mr. Gudmunson asked why the District couldn't just have the employees to use their own personal phones. Mr. Hannan responded that the numbers are published in the forest preserve brochures and on the forest preserve website for public availability. Ms. Fauci commented that the forest preserve district does not have an office secretary and Mr. Hannan handles all calls and e-mails to the forest preserve office. Mr. Hannan commented that he would get Mr. Gudmunson detailed information regarding his request.

Mr. Brown asked how the NREC (Natural Resource Education Center) actually shows up in the budget document. Mr. Hannan identified the 2 revenue line items, one the forest preserve contribution of \$20,000 annually and other revenue comes from program fees and donations that equal about \$25,000 annually. The U of I Extension picks up the remaining expenses for NREC staff Peggy Doty and Connie Handel. With this partnership the forest preserve district offers educational field trips and classroom visits to about 5,000 grade school students per year and NIU and Kishwaukee College students as well. Mr. Hannan noted that the University of Illinois Extension match has decreased over the past few years, however this partnership has been a very cost effective way to provide an important part of the Forest Preserve District mission of " providing education to the public" .

The question was then called on the vote to send the FY 2014 Levy and Appropriation ordinance to the Forest Preserve Commissioners that was moved by Ms. DeFauw and seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh. The motion passed unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan noted that the project and maintenance and attendance reports and minutes were in the Committee County Board packets as well as the monthly Natural Resource Management report reports as well as the NREC activities and photos from the annual Jeff's Tree's volunteer tree planting event at Afton.

Mr. Hannan then reported that there was good local press on the Genoa to Russell Forest Preserve Trail project telling about the grants and donations that have been received by the City of Genoa for the project. He also gave the Committee the schedule for the Northwest Suburban Astronomers who meet most weekends at the Afton and Potawatomi Preserves.

Mr. Hannan then commented that the Preserves had some wind storm damage from the storms the preceding weekend, but nothing compared to other areas of the State.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked about the District Seed Collection efforts and how they were doing in comparison to prior years. Mr. Hannan responded that with the increased involvement of the volunteer land steward program (under the direction of Mr. Roloff)

the amount of seed collected was up significantly this year. Mr. Fauci added that she had been participating in the seed collecting and processing and that Mr. Roloff has greatly enhanced the processing, storage and distribution methods used. She noted that the land stewards work each Wednesday morning.

Mr. Hannan noted that they were attempting fall burns in the Preserves if weather and wind conditions are good for safe burning. March and April will be here soon for early spring burns in prairie and woodlands.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh then asked for an update on the DeKalb Park District Nature Trail restoration project.

Mr. Hannan noted that there is a new DeKalb Park District Board who has elected to take a more “hands off” stance on the project. This resulted in a divergence of opinion regarding the best ways to maintain the property going forward, specifically the adoption of lower profile vegetation to prevent a repeat of the issues that led to the initial problems. Mr. Hannan noted that since this is fully Park District property, it is certainly their right to make their own decisions, however this has led to a reduction in cooperative efforts on the project. Mr. Fauci asked if it might be a good idea to dissolve the intergovernmental agreement that was adopted at the start of the restoration. Mr. Hannan agreed that would be a good idea at this point.

Ms. Fauci then asked if Mr. Schrader wished to speak to the Committee. He began by thanking Mr. Hannan for letting his Ney Grange group meet at the Miller-Ellwood Cabin and also for letting them play a role in the cabin’s development.

He noted that the Illinois State Grange has \$30,000.00 available to Ney grange for projects. He noted that he would like to discuss using some of the funds to offer support for a historic marker at the cabin site to point out the many historical aspects of the cabin and the County.

Mr. Schrader noted that Ney Grange is actually the last standing Grange in DeKalb County. The name comes from an old Methodist church on Eisenhower Road north of Genoa which was their former Grange Hall where some Grange members are buried in the adjoining cemetery. Ms. Fauci commented on the role of retirees in organizations such as the Grange and the District and how valuable their time and service can be.

Mr. Schrader noted that he is also vice-president of the DeKalb County Farmland Foundation. He commented that they will be seeking advice from the Forest Preserve regarding how to acquire easements in the County as a way to preserve farmland.

Mr. Brown asked if there was a community garden at the Ney Grange site. Mr. Schrader noted that there has been some work done by community members, but it has not been something the grange has assumed responsibility for.

Mr. Brown noted that there has been a discussion regarding local community and gardens and one located near the Miller-Ellwood cabin and it really points up the opportunities for cross publicity between the cabin and the gardens.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted there were also efforts to develop a year round food program and expansion of the community gardens across the County. This year over 7 tons of food was grown this year and distributed to food programs. They have also recently opened a food pantry program.

Mr. Hannan noted that years ago the Pierce Town Hall was moved to Merritt Prairie as a way to preserve it. The old Pleasant Hill Rd. Schoolhouse (called Maple Grove School or Miller School) might be eligible to move to the Hoppe cabin site with a partnership with Ney Grange.

Mr. Hannan noted Dan Kenney from DeKalb County Community gardens will be at the next Committee meeting to discuss a flood prone 5 acre property at Old State and Five Points Road that will likely be transferred to the County at some point in the future. He commented that there is some interest in using the area for a community garden site that might focus on edible fruit and nut bearing trees along with some native plant species habitat restoration .

Ms. Fauci commented that might be an interesting new view with a small acreage Preserve area used for food production and not recreation solely.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that the community gardens can play a strong role in enhancing the local economy.

MS Haji-Sheikh also commented on the county - wide bike friendly programs and will discuss further at up coming meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr