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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes
September 17, 2013**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday September 17, 2013 at 6:00 pm at the Natural Resource Education Center at Russell Woods. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Mr. Jones, Ms. DeFauw and Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Mr. Gudmunson arrived after the call to order and Mr. Brown was absent. Superintendent Hannan was also in attendance. Guests: Peggy Doty of the NREC.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci called for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 18 and August 13, 2013 meetings. Mr. Jones moved approval, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Ms. Haji-Sheikh also wanted to note to the Committee that the final results of the America in Bloom competition (mentioned in the minutes previously) were to be announced on September 19, 2013.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Mr. Hannan began by noting that the 2014 Budget documents have been out for the past month and he asked the Committee if anyone had any questions at this time. He reminded the committee that there would be more discussion next month and that the budget would go to the full Board in November.

Mr. Jones asked if there were anything in particular that Mr. Hannan wanted to bring to the Committee's attention.

Mr. Gudmunson arrived.

Mr. Hannan responded that there was an item in the budget to bring Mr. Roloff to full-time employee status. This is being done at this time as there is an opportunity to use non-tax wetland bank revenues to fund the extra hours rather than tax dollars. Therefore, it would represent a 0% increase in the budget.

Ms. Fauci then noted how much of a tremendous value Mr. Roloff has been to District, especially in his work with the Stewards Program. She commented that these are a group of extremely knowledgeable individuals whose work for the preserves has been very beneficial.

Mr. Hannan added that he believed Mr. Roloff will also be extremely valuable in the work with the upcoming Evergreen Village restoration project and other future land acquisition and restoration projects and wetland bank expansion work. The volunteer hours value and other work like seed collection more than compensate for the added expense.

Ms. Fauci added that it is appropriate to use the wetland bank money for this as Mr. Roloff had been instrumental in the creation of the wetland bank along with Mr. Hannan and bank and has been responsible for managing the wetland bank many other forest preserve improvements through the years, including assistance funding for Potawatomi Woods acquisition.

Mr. Jones asked where the salary for this position is currently located in the budget. Mr. Hannan responded that it currently comes from the 10% fund set aside from land acquisition referendum revenue for land management. Mr. Jones asked if that would continue to partially fund the position. Mr. Hannan noted that was the plan.

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any additional comments on the budget. Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that she felt this was the most rational and logical budget she has seen with the monies allocated very reasonably.

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any capital outlays that needed to be discussed. Mr. Hannan noted that there was a snowplow attachment in the budget. There is also a backhoe attachment for the bobcat.

Mr. Gudmunson asked what the fund balances are and the land acquisition fund balance. Mr. Hannan responded that as per 2012 audit land acquisition is now in excess of 3 million dollars. However, he cautioned that there are 2 future properties that will involve first rights of refusal for the forest preserve district and that 3 million in reserve should be set aside for these future land acquisition opportunities. Mr. Hannan also explained fund balances in the wetland bank fund and other funds and would get Mr. Gudmunson the details in the forest preserve audit.

Mr. Gudmunson asked where the property is that has been willed. Mr. Hannan noted that would have to be answered in Executive Session as the owner wishes to remain anonymous.

Mr. Jones asked how many fund balances the Forest Preserve controls. Mr. Hannan itemized the funds and noted that he will bring a sheet from the recent audit that lists all of the reserve funds as per our auditor. He added that they are in form J of the budget information.

Mr. Jones asked if no land were acquired, how high the fund could go each year. Mr. Hannan noted the general fund tax rate is capped at .06 % with .03% of that going to land acquisition including the 10% fund set aside for land management . Mr. Jones noted that meant that the County was able to run the full remainder of Forest preserve needs and activities solely on the remaining .03% and commented how fiscally well managed the forest preserve operates.

Ms. Fauci commented that the .03% referendum amount is a fund for land acquisition purposes. However, this has been used quite wisely and has resulted in there being no bond indebtedness of the Forest Preserve. This stands in contrast to what other county's Forest Preserves have done as far as using Bonds to raise capital.

Mr. Jones then asked for additional clarification on form I of the budget document and its attachments and asked why Land Acquisition wasn't noted. Mr. Hannan noted that it is roughly half of the General Fund and then directed the Committee to form B-2 for the detailed budget line items showing the land acquisition line item.

Mr. Jones commented once again that it is admirable that Mr. Hannan and staff can manage the District on roughly \$1,500,000.00 (including land acquisition funds) without requiring any bonds indebtedness. Ms. Haji-Sheikh added that it is really amazing.

Mr. Jones asked if Mr. Hannan were ever tempted to pull more acquisition money over to the General Fund since we haven't seemed to have done a great deal of acquisition. Mr. Hannan mentioned that the 10% fund was an estimate at the time of the land acquisition referendum and may need to be adjusted upwards especially for trail projects and the cost of trails is more in the construction costs than in land costs.

Ms. DeFauw countered that there have actually been substantial purchases made since the acquisition referendum occurred. Ms. Fauci noted that the Committee also must be cognizant that land prices could fluctuate in the future should development pick up again. Mr. Gudmunson commented that they have gotten very good value on the purchases that have been made. Ms. Fauci noted that the application of supplemental grants has also helped tremendously.

Mr. Hannan commented that he would get the land acquisition criteria list to the Committee for their information. He added that he agreed that the District has done very well leveraging grants and donations to minimize land acquisition expenditures.

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any other comments or questions on the budget. Hearing none the budget will be placed on file in October.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan noted to the Committee that the usual reports, minutes and use figures are in their packets. He added that Afton Preserve continues to be used by the Sycamore and N.I.U cross country teams both at the high school and university level. Small Mouth Bass fishing at forest preserves is also highlighted in the activities report.

Mr. Jones asked how the visitor counts are obtained. Mr. Hannan noted that with the shelter and camping permits and then an estimate is made by the staff and park managers through observation. Mr. Hannan noted that he does the DeKalb/Sycamore trail use figures as well as use on the Great Western Trail.

Mr. Hannan reported that he had recently met with a donor that had been discussed in Executive Session last month. At this time, the plan has changed and the triangle property will not be used as they had thought, but will be replaced with a plan to extend the trail along the old railroad right of way west with a plan of a trailhead and parking area. Taking this revised approach will result in the opportunity for a much larger parking and visitor area as well as only requiring the District and donor to work with a single land owner. Additionally, the triangle property had several other problematic issues, beyond size, involved. The donors are supportive of this plan change and still willing to provide monetary assistance.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Haji-Sheikh noted that she had met with Debbie Armstrong from the local tourism bureau regarding cycling tourism. She noted that Ms. Armstrong may be reaching out to Mr. Hannan on the subject as well. She indicated that they are quite eager to enhance eco-tourism opportunities.

Mr. Cribben noted that after reviewing the expenses for the month in the monthly reports, he had a few questions. First, he asked about a \$4,845.00 expense to Dan Josh. Mr. Hannan responded that Mr. Josh's company A & I did sandblasting, pressure washing, primer, paint and trim on the outside and inside of the Pierce Town Hall at Merritt Prairie as well pressure washing, sand blasting and primer, painting the shelters at Shabbona, the shelters at MacQueen and the house at MacQueen, also been working on barn repairs at the Afton barn.

Mr. Cribben asked if this work were put out for bid. Mr. Hannan responded he did not know of anyone local that does this kind of work who has the scope, variety and craftsmanship that A&I Enterprises (Mr. Josh's company) does.

Mr. Cribben then asked for details on the Tort and Liability line item. Mr. Hannan noted that this is to pay for items the District insurance company and risk manager, PDRMA, identifies as potentially problematic. One example was the recent storm damage repairs of the trail bridge between MacQueen and Potawatomi Preserves. Mr. Hannan noted that it is for this work, also this fund is for other risk management expenses.

He added that the PDRMA risk manager does an annual assessment and makes recommendations for the District public and staff safety and risk management. PDRMA

insures 130 other Park Districts and 8 Forest Preserves District's in Illinois. They recommend not only building and grounds improvements, but also provide training and certification opportunities for forest preserve staff.

Ms. Fauci commented that the District used to be self-funded, but since moving to PDRMA have seen tremendous value from the training and additional services that they supply.

Mr. Cribben then closed by asking why First Bank of Omaha is on the report of expenses. Mr. Hannan responded that these are the credit card expenses for the District. He noted that he will get Mr. Cribben a breakdown of the vendor the credit card payment went to.

Ms. Fauci closed by noting that the IMRF Fund for the County will be fully funded by 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Jones moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Gudmunson. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr