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DeKalb County Government  
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes  
September 16, 2014**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday September 16th, 2014 at 6:00 pm in the Conference Room East of the Administration Bldg. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Mr. Jones, Mr. Gudmunson, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Mr. Brown, Mr. Cribben and Ms. DeFauw. Superintendent Hannan arrived after the call to order. Guests included County Board member Diane Leifheit.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Fauci called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 19th, 2014 meeting. Mr. Gudmunson moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Jones and the motion passed unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Ms. Fauci noted that there would not be a need for Executive Session this evening and so called for a motion to approve an amended agenda. Mr. Gudmunson moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh and the motion passed unanimously.

**MONTHLY REPORTS**

Ms. Fauci began by noting that Superintendent Hannan might be absent but had sent the monthly activity packet. She noted that on 9-13-14, the Northwest Suburban Astronomers held a public Star Party at the Afton Preserve. Ms. Fauci also attended a picnic and tour for members of the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Board who granted \$200,000.00 toward the purchase of Prairie Oaks Forest Preserve. At this event, she discovered that the Foundation does have grant funding available to be used for Preserve volunteer land management work, but the catch is that the money cannot be given to a taxing body, only a non-profit organization. There are now discussions to contact local non-profit agencies in an effort to capture the possible \$20,000.00 grant opportunity. If grant is approved to the non-profit, the funding then can be transferred to the District. Mr. Cribben asked where the Clean Energy Community Foundation is based. Ms. Fauci responded that when Commonwealth Edison went through their past divestiture and became Excelon, one of the arms created was the Clean Energy Community Foundation. She reminded the Committee that when they were making the Prairie Oaks purchase, they had partnered with The Conservation Foundation. Ms. DeFauw suggested that perhaps The Conservation Foundation could be partnered with again to receive the funding. Ms. Haji-Sheikh also suggested the possible use of the DeKalb County Community Gardens organization (DCCG) who is also structured as a non-profit.

Mr. Hannan then arrived.

Ms. Fauci then reported on a fossil find at Prairie Oaks Preserve, a coral fossil thought to have been carried and deposited by glacial movement. The fossil was located during a weed pulling activity held by the Land Stewards at the Preserve. Board member, Jeff Metzger will be bringing the fossil for display and discussion at tomorrow's County Board meeting and Al Roloff will be giving a brief talk on its history.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh reported that the DCCG have begun planting at the new Forest Garden site. Mr. Hannan said there have been approximately 100 + plantings at the site so far ( hazelnut, walnut, oak trees, and other nut and berry producing trees and shrubs. The field tile has been repaired, the property cleaned up, the steel barn cleaned inside and painted, electrical brought up to code and water well repaired.

Mr. Jones noted that he feels the old fence needs to still be taken down. Mr. Hannan noted the old fence will be removed ( chain link fence will stay) and that the thistles had been cut by the DCCG.

Ms. Misty-Sheikh noted that the Seeds of Change Company had donated \$20,000.00 to the DCCG following a Facebook Challenge. The \$20,000.00 was used for the plantings. Mr. Jones asked again about weed control at the location. Mr. Hannan responded that they would be doing weed control at the Forest Garden. Mr. Brown asked if thistles are still considered a noxious weed. Mr. Hannan responded that they were. Mr. Brown then noted that there were literally several acres of thistles growing around the local Schnuck's grocery store, but that there doesn't seem to be anyone policing private property areas for that.

Mr. Brown then asked for a clarification regarding how the lost Blanding's turtle was located. Mr. Hannan noted the turtle had migrated a couple miles N.E. to Mr. Dale Gommel's pond. The turtle has since returned to Afton's wetlands.

## **FY2015 BUDGET**

Ms. Fauci noted that the goal for tonight's budget discussion is to vote to place the budget on file for public review. She reminded the Committee that vote would not be an approval of the budget, but simply opens it for public availability.

Mr. Hannan noted that there are some new budget form pages being handed tonight to place into the Committee's budget books.

He highlighted a paragraph related to the tax levy . The General Fund levy is estimated at about 2.5% less than 2014. He then illustrated the breakdown that leads to an estimate of the Forest Preserve Total Levy for FY 2015, a 0% increase over last year. He closed by noting that the forest preserve property tax still represents less than 1% of the property tax to County residents.

Mr. Hannan reminded the Committee that the resolution to put the FY 2015 budget on file would then go to the full County Board Forest Preserve Commissioners tomorrow

night. The final vote to approve the FY 2015 budget and levy would not occur until November 19th.

He then directed the Committee to Budget Form I for Tort and Liability. Mr. Gudmunson asked about anticipated upcoming expenses in this regard. Mr. Hannan noted that in addition to insurance premiums, at all preserves they will need to cut and remove dead and damaged Ash trees due to the Emerald Ash Borer disease that are located near public use areas (trails, roads, picnic areas, shelters, natural resource center, etc.) for public safety. Additionally, three old railroad culverts and field tiles under the Great Western Trail will need to be replaced. There are also overhead electrical lines at Potawatomi Woods Preserve that need to be placed underground. Other projects include playground equipment replacement, addition to prairie and woodland burn safety equipment, trail surface safety improvements, water control structure improvements at Afton, electrical improvements at the Natural Resources Education Center. Mr. Hannan noted that he had spoken to Mr. Hanson and Finance Director and that any money not expended will be placed into a risk management reserve fund.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked why the line item for the DeKalb Sycamore Trail/Great Western Trail had gone from \$10,000.00 in 2014 to \$25,000.00 in 2015. Mr. Hannan responded that these funds will be used towards new asphalt along the 3 mile Peace Rd. section of the DeKalb / Sycamore Trail planned for 2015 and other trail improvements. The Forest Preserve District will be partnering with the Highway Department to put this trail work into their road bid process to get the best price possible. Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked how Mr. Hannan can achieve what he has proposed with the reduced funding levels. Mr. Hannan responded that they will work within the budget limitations and use other non-tax revenues and grant opportunities.

Mr. Gudmunson asked how much of the General Fund is for land acquisition funding. Mr. Hannan noted as per the referendum guidelines 50% for land preservation and a 10% fund for land improvements and natural resource management.

Mr. Brown asked what the Farm Licenses are? Mr. Hannan responded that these are the land licenses allowing agricultural use on portions of District land. Mr. Jones asked if some of the 10% fund could be used for paving. Mr. Hannan responded that it could be and that in his opinion the 10% fund could be flexible to address needs of trail construction, land improvements and natural resource management work.

Mr. Jones asked if any of the \$500,000.00 could be used for starting the restoration activities on the Evergreen Village property. Mr. Hannan responded that it could be possible but further discussions need to take place after the property is vacated and cleaned up by the County and FEMA grant.

Mr. Fauci asked about the opening of the Hoppe Farmstead / 1835 Miller Ellwood Cabin and South Branch Prairie. Mr. Hannan noted that this area is open. There is access if you hike the west trail from Russell Woods to the South Branch Prairie and 1835 Miller Ellwood cabin site, also if the gate is closed on the entrance road off Pleasant Hill Rd.

people can walk back to the site. The 1835 Miller Ellwood cabin restoration work will continue this Fall and Winter as time permits for forest preserve staff.

Mr. Gudmunson moved to place the FY 2015 Budget on file, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Ms. Fauci reported that she had recently viewed a movie on the life of landscape architect Jens Jensen who was one of the designers of Huntley Park in DeKalb. She noted that he was a fan of Native American culture, using native Illinois plants in landscaping and often created “Council Circles” in parks for gathering of individuals and ideas. She noted that it might be a good future project to create such a Circle in his honor.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted again that the DCCG is going very strong and will be holding an upcoming fundraiser and Food Tasting event on 9-28-14 at local restaurant Tapa La Luna. The DCCG will supply the locally sourced food for the evening and 100% of the evening’s profits will go back to the DCCG.

She noted that they have also had a booth at the Sycamore Sunday Farmer’s market that has been very successful and have also had events at the local food co-op, Duck Soup. Another activity the DCCG began this year is the creation of a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program.

Ms. Leifheit asked how many people are participating in the DCCG. Ms. Haji-Sheikh responded that they have 40 gardens and there are about 50 individuals who attend the meetings – but there is also a very large group of volunteers.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh than noted that there is a building next to the Alumni Center at NIU that was a Glidden home but that has fallen into disrepair over the years. She noted that local historian Barry Schrader is going to be leading an effort to obtain funding and support for building renovation and if successful, they might do some garden activities on the property. She noted she will report back how the efforts are going.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson  
Forest Preserve District Committee  
JF:kjr