

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Forest Preserve District Committee at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*

DeKalb County Government  
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes  
July 28, 2015**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday July 28, 2015 at 6:00 pm at the Legislative Center Gathertorium. In attendance were committee members: Mr. Brown, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Ms. Turner, Ms. Polanco, Mr. Emerson, Mr. Metzger and Superintendent Hannan. Guests included Peg Dordal and Frankie Benson from the DeKalb County Trail Riders,

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Turner called for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 26, 2015 meeting. Mr. Metzger moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Polanco and the motion passed unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Ms. Turner called for a motion to approve an amended agenda. Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Emerson and the motion passed unanimously.

**MONTHLY REPORTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Mr. Hannan noted that the May minutes and June activities reports are included in the packets. He went on to note that the recent Bike MS 150 fundraiser used Merritt Prairie for a rest stop during the event.

Mr. Hannan commented that the prairies are also now in bloom and very attractive if you can survive the mosquitos. He further noted that a Bald Eagle was sighted in the Afton farmstead area. Eagles are commonly seen at Potawatomi Woods and Russell Woods. He also showed a photo of a son and his father-in-law, both veterans hiking with their family at Afton The father-in-law is 95 years old and WW 2 veteran, the son –in law a Vietnam veteran.

Me. Hannan noted that there is an Eagle Scout project being done by the younger of the Searls brothers. He noted that the Searls have a special connection to Afton they both did their eagle scout projects at Afton planting oak trees.....and 20 years ago Kenny McGirr was driving through the preserve with Royal Searls (the boys' grandfather). When they were stopped, they commented that they were looking for their initials that they had placed in the concrete of the Afton Bridge in the 1940's.

Mr. Hannan extended a sincere Thank You to the DeKalb Highway Department for the assistance they have provided in hauling and grading gravel at many of the Preserves. Jimmy Quinn and Nathan Schwartz have been extremely helpful and cooperative. Mr. Hannan noted that the Peace Road Trail was scheduled for re-paving a couple of weeks ago, but the excessive rain has delayed the work. They hope to try again this week, weather permitting. He complimented the engineers from the DeKalb County Highway Department that are assisting with the project.

Mr. Hannan reported that there was a barn fire in June at the Afton metal barn caused by electrical problems on the John Deere tractor. Tractors, Bobcat, mowers, snow plows, log splitters and the barn all sustained damage. He noted that PDRMA will cover the barn and all equipment replacements.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked if there was any estimate yet of the total amount of the damage. Mr. Hannan noted that the barn will be approximately \$26,000.00 to replace with the barn structure, On the mowers and equipment, PDRMA will pay the difference between the value of the equipment as is and new. He estimates they are looking at approximately \$70,000.00 "as is" value for barn and equipment, plus replacement value covered by PDRMA.

Mr. Hannan noted that he had recently applied for and received a \$10,000.00 grant for the next section of the Genoa-Kingston Trail from the Com Ed/ OpenLands Green Region grant program.

He closed by noting that the Sycamore High School Cross Country Track Team will be holding an alumni run at Afton preserve on August 8, 2015. They will then hold the Sycamore Invitational on September 1, 2015 and the Conference meet will occur on October 17, 2015 at Afton.

#### **FY2016 BUDGET**

Mr. Hannan noted that the FY2016 budget will be due on 8-3-16 to the Finance Dept. All Committee members will receive a copy of the draft budget. He commented that the District will be budgeting for the same amount of tax dollars as in 2015.

He went on to note that in light of recent retirements and new land acquisitions, he will be reviewing and updating district job classifications and descriptions.

He closed by noting that a vote will needed in September to place the budget on file for review.

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Ms. Turner asked Mr. Hannan to address a topic that had been in the news of late. Mr. Hannan noted that there has been a great deal of questions regarding the Blanding's turtle that has gone missing from the Afton Preserve.

District Naturalist Al Roloff has reached out to local news outlets to clarify the situation. He has noted that the Forest Preserve, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Northern Illinois University were tracking the turtle in a cooperative effort since the turtle was identified as an endangered species. Unfortunately, the antenna used for the tracking was removed by a well-intentioned citizen who thought the turtle had been injured. The release of the information regarding the turtle's disappearance has had some unfortunate consequences with local residents disturbing other turtle habitats in an effort to locate the Blandings. This was exacerbated by the offer of a reward for the turtle. Again, while the efforts are well-intentioned, they do seem to be leading to the disturbance of the habitats of other species. He closed by noting that only IDNR staff are authorized to handle or capture an endangered species.

Ms. Turner noted that she has been turning all inquiries on the topic over to Mr., Hannan or Mr. Roloff for response and encouraged the Committee members to do the same.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that there are two new members of the Pedal Pals network, P.J.'s and The Forge in Sycamore are now displaying the Pedal Pals signage.

Ms. Turner invited the guests from the DeKalb County Trail Riders to address the Committee and bring the new Committee members up to speed on who they are. . Frankie Benson requested to hand out a flyer that explained who the group is and what they do. Ms. Benson noted that they have been working with Shabbona Lake State Park to expand riding trails and commented that because forest preserve lands are somewhat small in size for horse trails, they look to expand opportunities whenever they can at larger park sites.

Mr. Metzger asked if the group had members from different parts of the County. Ms. Benson replied that they have 40 members representing almost every area in the County.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Ms. Turner then asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Mr. Metzger moved to take the Committee into Executive Session, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh. A roll call vote was held with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative.

Following the Executive Session, Mr. Metzger moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh. A roll call vote was held with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative.

Following the move from Executive Session, Mr. Metzger moved to accept the offer for the Conro property at \$6,050.00 per acre and with an accompanying application for a grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, seconded by Mr. Polanco and the motion passed unanimously.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Emerson moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Polanco. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Turner, Chairperson  
Forest Preserve District Committee  
AT:kjr