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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes
November 24, 2015**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday November 24, 2015 at 6:00 pm at Gathertorium of the County Legislative Center. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Turner, Mr. Emerson, Mr. Metzger, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Mr. Brown, Mr. Bagby and Superintendent Hannan, Ms. Polanco was absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Turner called for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 27, 2015 meeting. Mr. Metzger moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Emerson and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

MONTHLY REPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

Mr. Hannan began by pointing out that there is a list of the former Evergreen Village Land Improvement Plan items in the monthly packet. He added that an anonymous \$100,000.00 donation for land improvements at the former Evergreen Village project and trail connection to the Great Western Trail will be donated to the Forest Preserve before the end of the year. This donor has previously contributed for trails, handicapped access and picnic shelters in other preserves.

Mr. Metzger asked if the donor was determined to remain anonymous or if they would let the Committee know who they were so they could express their thanks. Mr. Hannan noted that the donor wished to remain anonymous. Mr. Metzger than noted for the public record thank you from the Forest Preserve Committee and DeKalb County citizens for this generous gift.

Mr. Hannan then called the Committee's attention to a photo from the monthly reports of a Bald Eagle at Knute Olson Jr. Preserve.

He went on to comment that older (30 plus years) play equipment is being replaced at Afton and MacQueen Preserves in 2015 and 2016. He also noted that the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation has awarded another grant (\$122,000.00) to the District for 50% the Conro property cost. Their other grant was a 50% land acquisition grant for Prairie Oaks Forest Preserve in 2011.

Mr. Hannan commented that they were able to do a few fall controlled prairie burns at Afton Forest Preserve prior to the recent snowfall. He added that Mr. Roloff's Natural Resources Management report and the monthly visitor use reports were also included in the packet.

He noted that the District will close on the 1.5 acre Ward property (adjacent to the former Evergreen Village) before 12-6-15. The Phase 1 Environmental Assessments will be finalized soon and closings on the 37 acre Conro property and adjoining 1.3 acre Christensen property in December are planned.

PDRMA SAFETY MANUAL RESOLUTION

Mr. Hannan began by reminding the Committee that PDRMA (Park District Risk Management Agency) is an organization that insures 150 Park Districts and 8 Forest Preserves in Illinois and that they are very proactive in safety training and risk management. One of their requirements for park and Forest Preserve Districts is to prepare and adopt a safety manual public safety and employee safety. Employees will be provided the safety manual and sign off that they understand the requirements therein. Mr. Hannan noted that he will have a final version of a DeKalb County manual and resolution for the full board next month, and will need the Committee to move the resolution forward to the Forest Preserve Commissioners at this meeting.

Mr. Hannan noted that they had received 100% cost replacement from PDRMA for the building and equipment damaged in the June 2015 Afton barn fire.

Mr. Metzger asked if they needed to address chemical usage as well. Mr. Hannan replied that they do address that. He added that PDRMA sends a staff member to do an annual loss control review and that the District has achieved a score of 86%. He noted that the District staff does monthly safety checks of buildings and grounds of all preserves. The District staff also must be controlled burn certified and also be certified for pesticide application and usage.

Formed in 1984 in response to a volatile commercial insurance market, PDRMA provides risk financing and risk management programs tailored to the unique needs of park and recreation agencies - and remains a respected leader in risk management more than 25 years later. Our members partner with us to govern the Property/Casualty and health programs, sharing responsibility for direction and continued growth.

PDRMA supports members with a variety of services:

- **Risk management** - *Our expert staff provides consultation to help members develop Property/Casualty programs customized to each agency's size, operations, and facilities. Our health program manages member's risks with a variety of wellness initiatives, including an annual, comprehensive, onsite Health Risk Assessment and semiannual Healthy Habits for Life programs.*

- **Education and training** - Our annual Risk Management Institute, Human Resources and Employment Liability Program, Workshops for Benefit Coordinators, and regional and online training programs provide education across all member departments and all PDRMA coverages.
- **Legal services** - Our staff attorneys offer legal consultation at no additional cost.
- **Claims administration** - Our in-house claims team expertly handles Property/Casualty claims on members' behalf.
- **Web-based resources** - Our loss-control and health-information resources, training programs, health forms, and model policies put risk management information at members' fingertips.

Mr. Bagby asked if PDRMA had any particular issue they encouraged the District to address. Mr. Hannan noted that they want to see a formal safety manual completed and implemented. He noted that they also are focused on public and employee safety. Mr. Hannan commented that the total annual premium including liability is \$18,000.00.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved Resolution FP-R2015-) to approve the establishment of a Safety and Risk Management Manual for the DeKalb County Forest preserve District, seconded by Mr. Bagby. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Metzger noted that he has been working to contact a property owner in southern DeKalb County about a possible land preservation. He noted that he will continue to try to keep open the discussion.

Mr. Brown commented that he knew the District tried to acquire land that was adjacent to existing preserves and wondered if there were any studies regarding how many total acres per population count would be a good goal.

He noted that the answer is really more a function of the desires of the community. In DeKalb County, if you added all the acreage of the Forest Preserves, the 2 State Parks and the various City, Village and Township Park Districts, the total acres would be only about 1% of the total land in the County.

Mr. Brown asked what the District considers when purchasing land (below is the Forest Preserve land evaluation process)

Considerations when evaluating land acquisitions and donations:

- Willing seller or donor.
- Natural resource value, protection of rare, endangered and threatened species habitat.
- Adjacent to existing forest preserve.
- Greenway and trails connection potential to parks, forest preserves, schools, homes, and businesses.
- Land along waterways or floodplains protecting water quality and flood control.

- Restoration potential for forest, prairie and wetlands.
- Grant potential, and other ways to leverage more funding to assist in acquisition and improvement costs.
- Selling price, bargain sale, charitable contributions and donations.
- Economy of scale if adjacent to existing preserve, less travel time with maintenance equipment, patrol time, easier to manage larger sites than a number of smaller sites. Larger sites can have more plant and animal natural resource value also.
- Minimize development and maintenance costs. If adjacent to existing Forest Preserve, does existing Forest Preserve have access, water, electric, toilet, shelter, roads, trails, parking, nearby maintenance equipment, etc., that would not require more work and reduce land improvement costs at newly acquired site.
- Land complies with federal, state, county and private foundation land preservation, recreation, conservation and watershed plans.
- Clean title, no liens or encumbrances
- *Forest Preserve Supt. and Natural Resource Manager will advise Forest Preserve Committee on natural resource value considerations, restoration potential, greenway and trail connections, grant opportunities and landscape design.*

He noted that the current District holdings are now 18 Forest Preserves and about 1600 acres and land that has been willed to the County in the future or there is first right of refusal options.

Mr. Metzger noted that the budget for neighboring DuPage County Forest Preserve District is equivalent to the entire DeKalb County budget. Mr. Emerson agreed that he has seen DuPage County land acquisitions at extremely high costs. He noted that he has been very happy with how DeKalb County has handled acquisition costs and processes. He noted that Kane County has also had some very high dollar acquisitions.

Mr. Bagby asked what percent of DeKalb County land is forest. Mr. Hannan noted that it is approximately 5% forested. He added he could send additional land statistics to the Committee members.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,



Anita Turner, Chairperson
 Forest Preserve District Committee
 AT:kjr