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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes
October 27, 2015**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday October 27, 2015 at 6:00 pm at Gathertorium of the County Administration Building. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Turner, Mr. Emerson, Mr. Metzger, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Ms. Polanco and Superintendent Hannan, Mr. Brown was absent and Mr. Bagby arrived after the Call to Order. Guests included Lynnette Spencer of Adventure Works.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Turner called for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 22, 2015 meeting. Mr. Metzger moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Emerson and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Turner noted that the agenda for the evening would need to be amended to add approval of a Health Insurance Cafeteria Plan item and called for a motion to approve the amended agenda. Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Polanco and the motion passed unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

Mr. Hannan noted that the monthly reports included the usage figures and projects report for the month. He also pointed out photos from the Evergreen Village project and noted that the contractor has now concluded their portion of the work so the Forest Preserve can now begin their next land planning steps. He noted there was a handout in the packet that outlines the plans for the Evergreen Village site and commented that he recommended to name the site Sycamore Forest Preserve in honor of the Sycamore tree, the Sycamore community and the Potawatomi name for Kishwaukee River or "big tree". However, he noted to the Committee that any decision regarding naming the site would not need to be made until next year. He further commented that some of the access roads and concrete pads were removed and that they had done some mowing and litter removal as well. Next spring there will be planting in the open spaces of Sycamore and Swamp White Oak trees and some existing dead trees and other trees will be trimmed or removed. There 30 acre floodplain prairie will be seeded late 2015.

Work on cleanup will continue in the area and they will also be working on the connection to the Great Western Trail. Mr. Hannan noted that the fall prairie and forest burns will be starting soon and signage has been posted to explain the process to visitors.

Photos and documentation regarding the process are also included in this month's packet along with Mr. Roloff's natural resources report.

Mr. Hannan then reported that Tom Robbins, local nature photographer, has embarked on a project of time documentation at the Prairie Oaks Forest Preserve. He will be taking a photo with the same view every 5 weeks for a year to document the changing seasons. Below is his first photo taken in September. Tom has also taken many beautiful photos of the all the forest preserves.



Mr. Metzger then read a note sent by J. Miller, a resident of Somonauk expressing his enjoyment using the Sannauk Preserve. The note was extremely complimentary of the maintenance at Sannauk Forest Preserve.

Mr. Hannan reported that Sycamore High School hosted the Big Nine Conference Cross Country meet at the Afton Preserve.

Mr. Bagby arrived.

Mr. Hannan will meet with Sycamore area trail advocates who have expressed interest in the Evergreen Village project and the expanded biking and hiking opportunities in the area.

He then closed by noting that the Conro and Christensen land acquisitions (Prairie Oaks Addition) will have their surveys completed soon with a goal of closing on both properties by the end of 2015. The Ward property purchase (small strip of land next to Evergreen Village) will begin after these purchases are concluded.

FY2016 BUDGET

Mr. Hannan noted that he had brought the draft Appropriation and Levy Ordinances that need to be forwarded to the full Board of Forest Preserve Commissioners for a November vote.

Mr. Metzger moved to forward the FY 2016 Appropriation Ordinance, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh, and the motion passed on a unanimous roll call vote.

Mr. Emerson moved to forward the 2015 Forest Preserve Levy for FY 2016, seconded by Ms. Polanco and the motion passed on a unanimous roll call vote.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh again thanked Mr. Hannan for doing a good job with the budget and the District finances and resources.

Mr. Hannan then noted that, beginning this year, the District is receiving non-tax funds from the Waste Management Host Fee Agreement that are designated for environmental education and natural resource management work. He then introduced Ms. Lynnette Spencer from the DeKalb County Adventure Works program to the Committee to discuss the recommendation by Mr. Hannan that Adventure Works be granted \$7,000 annually from this non-tax fund. She opened by thanking the Committee for considering the request and noted that the purpose of the Adventure Works program was to assist at risk youth in the County through outdoor behavioral healthcare using adventure therapy. She noted that in the past 5 years the group had served approximately 300 youth. She noted that they focus on children who are from homeless or impoverished situations and range in age from 6 to 18. The group runs programming from Monday through Saturday and generally takes groups of 8 children and 2 facilitators. She noted that the informational packet she brought also contained graphs that define the demographics of their population they serve; Adventure Works focuses its resources on DeKalb County youth.

The organizational mission is “to assist youth in overcoming challenges and becoming healthy adults through adventure-based counseling.” DeKalb County’s natural resources and forest preserves provide an excellent environment for this work. Assisting youth in navigating and understanding the environment through education and interaction with nature is a primary goal within the scope of the program.

They have seen very positive outcomes with reductions in both mental illness and behavioral issues. Ms. Spencer commented that she is very open to speaking with any Committee member who may have questions about the program and highlighted some of the public service work the group has done as well. She concluded by noting that they are very excited to be a part of the progress of the Evergreen Village project.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked if the \$7,000.00 support will be renewed annually. Mr. Hannan noted that this will need to be considered annually as part of the budget. He went on to note that the group embodies the principles and activities that this funding is to be used for.

Mr. Metzger encouraged the creation of guidelines to assure that future funding requests are handled prudently and fairly. He noted that it might be good to set a specific annual timeframe when the requests could be submitted and a format for those submissions.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked if the Adventure Works group tracks the progress of their program participants on a long term basis. Ms. Spencer noted that they have recently begun to develop and “alumni” group who come back to help inspire and encourage new students in the program. She notes that many do make it through high school, but struggle in their first year of college. She feels that these activities will help empower both the younger and older participants.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh commented that she encourages teachable moments for the youth she interacts with in her Community Gardens work.

Ms. Turner asked if the Committee felt approval for this funding could be done by consensus or if a formal vote would be preferable. The Committee opted for a formal vote.

Mr. Emerson moved to grant Adventure Works a \$7,000.00 grant of support to be funded by the Host Fees Agreement provided by Waster Management and to establish an annual review process to be developed to address and future requests for support, seconded by Mr. Metzger and the motion passed unanimously.

*Founded in 2010, Adventure Works strives to make use of the natural environment as a means to a healthy way of living for at-risk youth. Our mission is to “**assist youth in overcoming challenges and becoming healthy adults through adventure-based counseling.**” The use of the natural environment is reflected in the very definition of the work we do:*

*“Adventure therapy (AT) ... is the prescriptive use of adventure experiences provided by mental health professionals, often **conducted in natural settings** that kinesthetically engage clients on cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels.” (Gass, Gillis, and Russell, *Adventure Therapy Theory, Research and Practice Text*, 2012.)*

DeKalb County Forest Preserves certainly assist us in reaching our goals. Since our first youth outing in November 2010 our program utilizes the forest preserves four to five days per week. Our youth are making survival shelters, building creative river crossings, taking hikes and orienteering through the forest preserves, playing games, building fires, cooking, and many more activities within the preserves. All of these activities assist us in obtaining our clients’ mental health goals.

Within the adventure therapy and outdoor behavioral healthcare field of practice there are two essential components that demand our attention to the environment: environmental education and environmental stewardship. Our educational component includes the incorporation of the Leave No Trace Seven Principles, which are integrated in every group we run. The stewardship component includes a programmatic goal of teaching the youth to give back. To meet this goal, our youth and Adventure Works youth and volunteers have participated in prairie restoration, tree planting, clean-up days, as

well as most recently writing a youth-led grant to purchase supplies for the installation of several benches.

A primary goal this year is to develop a group specifically around the value of volunteerism. This will be a weekly group that participates in planning and assisting the Forest Preserve District in accomplishing various tasks. The Evergreen Village conversion project is of special interest to our organization as most of our youth live in DeKalb and Sycamore. It will be a great opportunity to see how a forest preserve and prairie land are developed and what this will do for the environment and the community. The biggest impact of our efforts to education and assist youth in becoming good stewards of the environment comes through the consistency in which we expose, educate, and reinforce these principles. The average young person is in our service for six to nine months, but many have a one to two year (or more) length of stay. This allows Adventure Works staff to teach and reinforce the information 2-3 hours per week, year-round for up to two years or more.

The long term, consistent exposure to these ideas contributes greatly to healthy living and helps to form life-long positive habits of environmental responsibility. I look forward to many years of teaching and helping to develop environmental stewards in our County, which is just "good medicine" for our vulnerable youth.

Lynette Spencer

WETLAND BANK RESOLUTION

Mr. Hannan noted that the Army Corp of Engineers has established a new requirement necessitating a formal resolution to establish or add to existing wetland bank parcels. He provided a draft resolution and noted that it states that the land cannot be sold without the express approval of the Army Corp of Engineers. Ms. Polanco moved to pass the Wetland Bank Resolution, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh and the motion passed unanimously.

CAFETERIA PLAN DOCUMENT AMENDMENT RESOLUTION

Mr. Hannan then presented a draft resolution to add the Forest Preserve to the County Health Insurance Cafeteria plan.

Mr. Metzger moved to approve the Cafeteria Plan Document Amendment Resolution, seconded by Mr. Emerson and the motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that she will be meeting soon with a new intern of the Kishwaukee Wellness program who will be providing some support and assistance to the Pedal Pal project. She noted that there needs to be additional information disseminated to the community and biking enthusiasts to explain what the Pedal Pal designation means.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anita Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anita" being more prominent than the last name "Turner".

Anita Turner, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
AT:kjr

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District



Former Evergreen Village Plan:

My recommendation is to name the area *Sycamore Forest Preserve* to honor the Sycamore community named after the Sycamore tree and the Sycamore tree that grows in floodplains.

Kishwaukee is a Potawatomi word meaning “big tree” or “sycamore”. The east branch of the south branch of the Kishwaukee River flows through this site.

After relocation of residents removal of all mobile homes, concrete pads, underground utilities and some of the access roads in 2015, the transition from DeKalb County to the Forest Preserve District will have the following work plan:

2015

Mow future picnic areas and litter clean up.

Remove dead trees and small “clumps” of trees in picnic areas and trim lower branches of trees to open up the view through the picnic areas.

(in the future plant Sycamore and Swamp White Oak trees in picnic areas)

2 herbicide treatments and weeds mowed on 30 acre former farmed area and plant floodplain wetland and prairie seed mix in late 2015.

As with all forest preserve land acquisitions, have Phase 1 Environmental Survey completed to assure no contamination issues.

2016 - 2017

Work on connecting the Great Western Trail to *Sycamore Forest Preserve*.

Develop picnic areas.

Develop parking area near RT 64 and trailhead near parking area.

Develop access road to pond for fishing and picnic area

Develop hiking and cross-country ski trails.

Have *Sycamore Forest Preserve* area open to public in late 2016