

Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Forest Preserve 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 Operations Committee Minutes
March 23, 2021**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve Operations Committee met virtually via Zoom and in-person at the Russell Woods Natural Resource Education Center in Genoa, Illinois on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. Chairman Roman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Those Members present were Ms. Mary Cozad (virtually), Mr. Patrick Deutsch (virtually), Mr. Tim Hughes (in-person), Ms. Maureen Little (virtually), Ms. Terri Mann-Lamb (virtually), Ms. Suzanne Willis, and Chairman Craig Roman (in-person). A quorum was established with all seven Members present.

Others present included Forest Preserve District Superintendent Terry Hannan and Ms. Peggy Doty.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Ms. Cozad and seconded by Mr. Hughes to approve the agenda as presented. Those Members voting yea were Ms. Cozad, Mr. Deutsch, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Little, Ms. Mann-Lamb, Ms. Willis, and Chairman Roman. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Mr. Hughes and seconded by Ms. Mann-Lamb to approve the minutes from the February 23, 2021 Meeting. Those Members voting yea were Ms. Cozad, Mr. Deutsch, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Little, Ms. Mann-Lamb, Ms. Willis, and Chairman Roman. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

MONTHLY REPORTS & ACTIVITIES

Forest Preserve District Superintendent Terry Hannan thanked County Engineer Nathan Schwartz for letting the District go in with the Highway's Bid Lettings for the hot-mix resurfacing of the road at Russell Woods. The gravel drive has been a long-time maintenance issue for District Staff. He added that changing the road from gravel to asphalt will additionally be most cost effective in the long run as well.

He also reminded that the 60-year-old bridge there at Russell Woods is scheduled to be replaced later on this year.

Beginning Monday, April 5th, construction crews will be working near the west end of the Great Western Trail (near East Old State Road) removing a 100-year-old former R.R. drainage culvert and installing a new drainage culvert under Great Western Trail. Trail users will be able to travel around the construction site.

Construction will be continuing on the Great Western Trail Extension through Sycamore Forest Preserve.

Lastly, the Sycamore Lions Club will be doing their Annual Great Western Trail Cleanup on April 16th. He believes this is the 20th year they will be doing the cleanup and would like to invite them to an upcoming County Board Meeting to be recognized their long-standing efforts in keeping the trails clean for the citizens of DeKalb County.

NATURAL RESOURCE EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee welcomed Ms. Peggy Doty, Extension Educator, Environmental and Energy Steward with the University of Illinois Extension. Ms. Doty has worked as the Executive Director of Education at the Natural Resource Education Center at Russell Woods for almost 22 years where she performs countless educational classes and activities with students, campers, children, and adults. Ms. Doty is the only person in the State of Illinois that partners with a Forest Preserve District to provide education in a satellite office of the District's space. She described to the Committee the multitude of things she does for Boone, Ogle and DeKalb Counties.

As a brief history, the Natural Resource Education Center was built in 1963 as a temporary science station that was used by 5-6 school districts. There was a full-time teacher and other staff that were employed to the Center. Many surrounding-area school districts came to visit the center but one by one the schools dropped out due to funding issues. The Forest Preserve District owns the land and the DeKalb School District built the building with their funds and paid a \$1 per year rent. After the building had sat vacant for a year or two, Mr. Hannan went to the DeKalb School District Superintendent at the time and offered to buy the building for \$1. The Forest Preserve District now owns the building and for a number of years there were volunteers who helped educate until the District partnered with the University of Illinois Extension. Now, with U of I Extension funds and Forest Preserve District Funds, they have hired a full-time educator, Peggy Doty. Pre-COVID, the Natural Resource Center served about 5,000 school kids a year. Northern Illinois University and Kishwaukee College would also utilize the facility for classes.

Ms. Doty described how her role as an educator has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. One positive of utilizing Zoom has been that she is able to reach a much larger population virtually who may have not been able to come to her classes in-person. She noted that she could see the virtual classroom piece sticking even after we all resume to the "new normal".

She additionally shared new staffing that will be coming to the Natural Resource Education Center and Ms. Doty described how the Center by the end of the year will be utilizing volunteer Master Naturalists to turn the Natural Resource Education Center into a Public Nature Center that can be open for set hours for more citizens to visit and benefit from.

Ms. Doty thanked the Forest Preserve Committee and the District for the continued use of the Nature Center at Russell Woods. Mr. Hannan noted that he receives nothing but compliments on Ms. Doty's work at the Natural Resource Center. Visiting the Center provides memories for a lifetime.

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The Committee thanked Ms. Doty for joining them and providing some great information about the Natural Resource Education Center.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Ms. Cozad and seconded by Ms. Mann-Lamb to adjourn the Committee Meeting. Those Members voting yea were Ms. Cozad, Mr. Deutsch, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Little, Ms. Mann-Lamb, Ms. Willis, and Chairman Roman. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Roman, Chairman

Tasha Sims, Recording Secretary