

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
April 27, 2021**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve Operations Committee met for their regularly schedule monthly meeting at the Afton Forest Preserve in DeKalb, Illinois on Tuesday, April 27, 2021. Chairman Roman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Those Members present were Ms. Mary Cozad, Ms. Terri Mann-Lamb, Ms. Suzanne Willis, and Chairman Craig Roman. Those absent were Mr. Patrick Deutsch, Mr. Tim Hughes, and Ms. Maureen Little. A quorum was established with four Members present and three absent at the time of roll call.

Others present included Forest Preserve District Superintendent Terry Hannan.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by Ms. Mann-Lamb, seconded by Ms. Cozad and approved unanimously by voice vote to approve the agenda as presented.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Cozad moved to approve the March 23, 2021 minutes as presented. Ms. Mann-Lamb seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

Mr. Tim Hughes arrived.

MONTHLY REPORTS & ACTIVITIES

Forest Preserve District Superintendent Terry Hannan presented and reviewed the Afton Forest Preserve Nature Trail Guide that he wrote many years ago and that has been recently updated. He also handed out the newest version of the Forest Preserve District Brochures.

Mr. Hannan additionally reviewed his monthly Forest Preserve District Report from February, March, and April 2021. He highlighted the following:

- The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District in our efforts to manage prairies, wetlands, and forests will use restoration practices that include controlled burns, cutting and selective herbicide in management areas to help reduce non-native invasive plant species. These “weed” species include thistle, burdock, sweet clover, wild parsnip, purple loosestrife, bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, reed canary grass, garlic mustard, buckthorn and others. These non-native invasive plants can establish large populations and out compete native prairie, wetland and woodland plants. If you see areas that have been managed with fire, plants cut and use of herbicide, the Forest Preserve District is working to improve the balance and diversity of the environment. Before this land was settled, wildfires set by lightning and Native Americans were frequent and unchecked. These fires actually shaped our landscape and local habitats. Over time many non-native plants were introduced to America and can

be destructive to native plant environments. In Forest Preserve management areas, under safe and controlled conditions, trained Forest Preserve staff, contractors and volunteers will conduct restoration management practices to help preserve and restore DeKalb County's rich natural diversity and history at Forest Preserve management areas.

- Construction started in early April on the removal and replacement of a 100-year-old former railroad culvert and cattle tunnel under the Great Western Trail. Field tile repairs under the culvert were also completed.
- An annual letter from Adventure Works thanking the District for their support. Adventure Works has served 180 unique youth clients over the past year and conducted 2,785 client appointments. In a routine year, this equates to approximately 4,500 forest preserve visits and between 4,500 and 13,500 hours of exposure to our area's natural resources, exploring DeKalb County Forest Preserves.
- Mr. Hannan has been a guest speaker at many local service clubs. He recently spoke with the Sycamore Kiwanis Club at the DeKalb Taylor Municipal Airport Main Hangar. They are donating a bench to be placed along the Great Western Trail Extension at Sycamore Forest Preserve. Mr. Hannan passed along their many compliments to Forest Preserve staff and Forest Preserve District Commissioners regarding our beautiful well maintained and managed forest preserves in DeKalb County. They were very supportive of all we do.
- Forest Preserve Natural Resource Management staff and Wildlife Ecologist Patrick McCrea recently hosted a Public Wetland Ecology Education Day at Wilkinson Marsh. More of these events will be scheduled for this year.
- During the week of Earth Day, The Sycamore Lions Club had their 26th Annual Great Western Trail Clean Up. 99.9% of litter blown onto the Great Western Trail is from Rt.64 traffic. Additionally, the Kishwaukee Kiwanis will complete litter clean up on a section of the DeKalb/Sycamore Trail behind Walmart.
- April begins mowing season at all preserves and other forest preserve shop projects and maintenance projects.

Mr. Hannan also noted that the 2021 Spring Natural Source Management Report, the Spring 2021 Prescribed Fire Report, and the January, February, March 2021 Wildlife Highlights Report are all attached to the meeting materials for the Committee to review at their leisure.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Hughes moved to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Land Acquisition per 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(5) at 6:28 p.m. Ms. Mann-Lamb seconded the motion and it carried by a 5-0-2 roll call vote. Those Members voting yea were Ms. Cozad, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Mann-Lamb, Ms. Willis, and Chairman Roman. None were opposed and Mr. Deutsch and Ms. Little were absent.

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The Committee entered back into their Open Meeting at 6:36 p.m.

AFTON FOREST PRESERVE / WETLAND BANK HISTORY

Afton, DeKalb County's largest forest preserve (316 acres), acquired as a worn-out farm in 1973 (\$800/acre), was developed as a forest preserve during the 1970's and 1980's. Since 1988, about 212 acres have been converted back to native plant communities – prairies, wetlands and woodlands. The 104 acres not in native plant communities offer many park-like features: lots of mowed open green space, evergreen and hardwood tree landscapes, a playground, numerous benches, observation deck, several open-air shelters, one enclosed shelter, dozens of picnic table sites and a network of over 10 miles of hiking trails, including almost a mile of handicapped access trails. Cornell University's Ornithological Lab, a premier bird research center, recognizes Afton Forest Preserve as a "National hot spot" for bird watching, with over 245 species of birds observed there since 2004. The mix of prairie, trees, shrubs, wetlands, stream, pond, grasslands and open space has provided a great habitat for birds (and birdwatchers).

Mr. Hannan provided a brief history of how the Afton Prairie Wetland Bank was started. Additionally, in 2007, DeKalb County Forest Preserve District (DCFPD) purchased a 76-acre parcel of farmland located at the southeast corner of Crego and McGirr Road in Afton Township, DeKalb County, Illinois (subject property). The 76-acre property straddles Little Rock Creek located directly south of DCFPD Afton Forest Preserve and its operational Afton Prairie Wetland Bank. The future purpose of this parcel was to eventually construct Afton South Prairie Mitigation Bank. The subject property is located below the headwaters of Little Rock Creek, which is located in the Fox River watershed. Wetland is currently selling for \$60,000/acre. This is a great source of non-tax revenue, Mr. Hannan expressed.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Ms. Willis and seconded by Mr. Hughes to adjourn the Committee Meeting. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote to adjourn the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Roman, Chairman

Tasha Sims, Recording Secretary