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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve Operations Committee Minutes
May 25, 2021**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve Operations Committee met for their regularly schedule monthly meeting at the Sycamore Forest Preserve's Lions Shelter in Sycamore, Illinois on Tuesday, May 25, 2021. Chairman Roman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Those Members present were Ms. Mary Cozad, Mr. Tim Hughes, Ms. Maureen Little, Ms. Terri Mann-Lamb, and Chairman Craig Roman. Those absent were Mr. Patrick Deutsch and Ms. Suzanne Willis. A quorum was established with five Members present and two absent at the time of roll call.

Others present included Forest Preserve District Superintendent Terry Hannan and Greg Millburg.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Cozad moved to approve the April 27, 2021 minutes as presented. Mr. Hughes seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

Mr. Pat Deutsch arrived.

MONTHLY REPORTS & ACTIVITIES

Forest Preserve District Superintendent Terry Hannan shared of the very unfortunately passing of Mr. Bob Wood. Mr. Hannan shared that He developed a wonderful friendship with Mr. Wood over the past three year. He did a lot of amazing acts of kindness and generosity quietly with no attention wanted from the local community. The Riverwood Forest Preserve would not have been possibly without his vision, work and generosity. Mr. Hannan spoke at Mr. Wood's private memorial service thanking his family and friends and all partners for this land conservation legacy.

Mr. Hannan reminded that the beautiful newly acquired land east of the Kishwaukee River is now called Riverwood Forest Preserve. This land acquisition and preservation project has been a wonderful partnership with support from the citizens of DeKalb County, DeKalb County Forest Preserve Commissioners (County Board) and the former land owner, the Wood Family. The Wood Family made many donations and many work hours along the way including: a generous monetary donation, maintenance shop, parking area donations, removing former clubhouse, mowing and cleaning up site, removing some tee boxes and sand traps, taking down many dead ash trees and also donations for future tree plantings and donating a future split rail fence that will be installed around the boundaries to designate public and private land ownership. The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation awarded a 50% Grant to the Forest Preserve

District to help with this acquisition (the 4th, 50% land preservation grant from ICECF awarded to the District to assist with land preservations). These conservation partnerships are very appreciated and important with keeping land acquisition costs affordable and assist the Forest Preserve District with other public land acquisitions in DeKalb County. The 103-acre acquisition closed on June 30, 2020. The total Forest Preserve tax rate is less than 1% (7/10th of 1 %) of a homeowner's property tax bill.

With the Committee being at the Sycamore Forest Preserve, Mr. Hannan provided a brief historical timeline of how the forest preserve came to be. The sixty-acre preserve opened October 16, 2017. The land was formally known as the Evergreen Village Mobile Home Park and was subject to flooding almost every year, often more than once. A Federal FEMA Grant helped acquire the property, relocate residents, remove some roads, all the mobile homes and other structures and remove a sewage treatment plant. Floodplain prairie habitat was planted in the back 30 acres, and the front 30 acres will feature two open-air shelters, new asphalt roads parking and bike trail, picnic areas, hiking/cross-country ski trails and a fishing pond. The Great Western Trail was extended another half mile west into this new preserve and is now the new trailhead area. The East Branch Kishwaukee River flows along the preserve's western flank. The Sycamore Forest Preserve also has: Shelter Houses, Picnic Areas, Wheelchair Accessibility, Hiking, Cross-country ski trails, Fishing, Biking (Great Western Trail western trailhead), Birding, 30 acre prairie area, and near downtown Sycamore businesses and Sycamore Park District Golf Course.

On Thursday, May 27th, between 10 am and 2 pm at Sycamore Forest Preserve. Patrick and Damon with DCFPD along with Nick from Sycamore Park District, Al Roloff and Carl Von Ende will be there to shed some light on the creatures that share Sycamore Forest Preserve and the surrounding areas with us. The event is open to the public and part of the "Pop-up Naturalist Sessions" that District Staff have been doing at the various forest preserves.

Mr. Hannan also shared that on Wednesday, June 2, 2021, at 10 am at Prairie Oaks Forest Preserve, Frances Kane, Associate Grant Program Officer of the Natural Areas from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, will be touring the Haines Creek Conservation Corridor (Prairie Oaks, Swanson Grove, Nelson Prairie and Haines Prairie) with Forest Preserve Natural Resource Maintenance Staff. Afterwards, they will be having a picnic lunch at Riverwood Forest Preserve and tour that grant award site as well.

GREAT WESTERN TRAIL EXTENSION UPDATE

A new segment of the Great Western Trail that is under construction will connect downtown Sycamore to Kane County, expanding the historic railroad trail which traverses two counties and beckons bicyclists and hikers alike. The project, which is expected to be completed this fall, will connect the Sycamore Forest Preserve to Page and Pleasant streets near downtown Sycamore. A pedestrian bridge has been already been constructed along the trail over the Kishwaukee River.

The project was made possible through an intergovernmental agreement between the DeKalb County Forest Preserve District and Sycamore Park District, with federal grant funding through the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program. Construction is managed by the Illinois Department of Transportation. A second extension project will link the trail to Old Mill Park on Mt. Hunger Road.

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Once the first and second segments are completed and connect to existing trail systems, there will be nearly 2.5 miles of off-road trails between Sycamore Forest Preserve and Leon D. Larson Park. The trail will also connect to Sycamore Middle School, Old Mill Park and Sycamore Lake Rotary Park.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Ms. Little and seconded by Mr. Hughes to adjourn the Committee Meeting. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote to adjourn the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Roman, Chairman

Tasha Sims, Recording Secretary