

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District
August 17, 2004
DRAFT

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, August 17, 2004 in the Legislative Center, at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Metzger called the meeting to order with Mrs. Fauci, Mr. Gudmunson, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Rosemier in attendance. Mr. Sands, Mr. Hannan, Mr. Bockman, Mr. Hanson, Mr. Haines, Mr. Dlabal and Mr. Milburg were also in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Mr. Rosemier, seconded by Mr. Gudmunson, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from last month.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Metzger added 2 items, vice chair nominations and Cliff Simonson memorial, these items were approved and added to the agenda.

Moved by Mr. Rosemier, seconded by Mr. Gudmunson, and it was carried unanimously to approve the amended agenda.

Vice Chair nominations, Mr. Rosemier nominated Julia Fauci and Mr. Johnson nominated Mr. Gudmunson, Chairman Metzger called on them to give their reasons for interest in vice-chair.

Mrs. Fauci spoke of her qualifications for the position of Vice-Chairman for the DeKalb County Forest Preserve District. Mrs. Fauci stated that she has attended KREP (Kishwaukee River Ecosystem Partnership) meetings, has become a member, and has been involved in water drainage and recharge issues. She has volunteered for numerous forest preserve volunteer days, along with the late Mr. Cliff Simonson. She stated that she started the "Ladies Garlic Mustard Brigade", a group that hopes to mitigate the noxious weed on a yearly basis in the county's forest preserves. She is on the Executive Committee of the DeKalb County Greenways and Trails Coalition. She is also the chair of the DeKalb Citizen's Environmental Commission where she meets monthly with DeKalb city and Park District officials. She attends Executive Committee meetings representing the Forest

Preserve District. Forest Preserve. This gives her professional relationships that she hopes will help her coordinate future projects with the Forest Preserve District.

Mr. Gudmunson spoke of his qualifications. Mr. Gudmunson stated that he has participated with Federal and State Government for wildlife facilities on his own farm. He added that he has promoted wildlife on his farm with detention areas. Mr. Gudmunson feels that he is conservative in nature. He also added that he always looks at the bottom line in both Forest Preserve and County business, and feels we can always do better.

Mr. Metzger asked if anyone had any objections or questions for either of the candidates. No one responded. Mr. Metzger asked for a show of hands for the nomination of Mrs. Fauci. Two Committee members raised their hands (Mr. Rosemier and Mrs. Fauci for Mrs. Fauci). Mr. Metzger asked for the show of hands for the nomination of Mr. Gudmunson. Three Committee members raised their hands. (Mr. Metzger, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Gudmunson for Mr. Gudmunson). **As a majority rule, Mr. Gudmunson replaces Mr. Simonson as Vice-Chairman of the DeKalb County Forest Preserve Committee.**

CITIZENS GROUP TO DISCUSS FUTURE FOREST PRESERVE LAND ACQUISITION REFERENDUM

Mr. Metzger stated that the Forest Preserve Committee has formed some ideas about preserving future open land space by meeting with a couple of eastern counties. Mr. Metzger stated that a private non-for-profit group has approached the Forest Preserve Committee about supporting a future referendum.

Mr. Michael Haines, former County Board member, introduced himself to the Committee. He stated that Mr. Morreale and Mr. Dlabal, both former Chairman of the Forest Preserve Committee and former County Board members, were also part of this citizen's group. Mr. Haines stated that he remembers when precious land would come for sale, and the Forest Preserve District did not have the funds for such land. Some times, if the District was fortunate, Mr. Hannan would secure grant monies to purchase land. This required a lot of dedication and foresight. The Forest Preserve District has had to borrow money for land acquisition. He stated that he was also worried

that if the land couldn't be preserved through Forest Preserve funds, that the land may be developed as the result.

Mr. Haines added that this citizen's groups goal the first year was to get the support of the Forest Preserve District, then the County Board, and eventually the tax payers.

Mr. Haines mentioned that the late Mr. Simonson was very passionate about any pristine DeKalb County Soil getting developed and forever covered in concrete.

Mr. Haines spoke of a potential "land bank" similar to the "wetland bank" idea. He shared a draft resolution that has been passed by Kane and Kendall Counties. Mr. Metzger stated that DeKalb County has only 82 people per 1000 forest preserve acres and the lowest tax rate in the County. He added that the referendum amount proposed was approximately \$10,000,000.

Mr. Haines reiterated that securing open space, protecting land, preserving the quality of land and wildlife was their number one focus.

Mr. Metzger asked what timeframe they were considering. Mr. Haines stated that it was too late to add it to the 2004 fall election. He said that there are two possibilities, the April election in 2005 and the April election of 2006. In order to get on a ballot in 2005, the County Board would have to approve it by January 2005.

Mr. Haines stated in closing that this amounted to less than \$40.00 a year for a residential tax payer. That is less that \$1.00 a week.

Mrs. Fauci asked if there were any economic benefits of forest preserve acquisition. Mr. Haines responded that Forest Preserves do make an area more desirable. Mr. Hannan added that a study was done by the Illinois Recreation Association that shows forest preserve or park systems do add quality of life issues and economic values.

Mr. Sands asked if the \$10,000,000 would be spent right away purchasing land, or sit in the bank for some time.

Mr. Haines stated that the Conservation Foundation would be helping to get this referendum. Mr. Haines thought there was a legal limit to how long you could hold the money once it is collected by a referendum.

Mr. Metzger asked what the current bond rating as a Forest Preserve District. It was pointed out that the Forest Preserve has never had a bond. Mr. Bockman responded that the County has an excellent rating.

Mr. Rosemier asked if a referendum would hurt or enhance getting future grants. Mr. Hannan stated that it would enhance a grant. He stated that there are matching grants and that you have to have the money to get it matched.

Mr. Rosemier asked if the public knew we had this referendum money, would it effect the land donations, or the price of the land we pay to private owners. Mr. Hannan responded that most people give a gift of land with have high conservation ethics behind their thoughts. It is usually out of the goodness of their heart and for future generations to enjoy nature.

Mrs. Fauci pointed out that it is also a charitable contribution.

Mr. Dlabal stated to look at the sprawl, and that people are just begging for the open land to be preserved now.

He stated that the citizens of DeKalb County need to look ahead before they are looking back realizing they missed this opportunity. We need protect the agricultural land natural resource land before it is gone. We need to protect it for our future generations. He stated that it needs to happen now. He is asking that the public gets to be heard. The tax payers will decide if they want this opportunity or not. He believes in the stewardship of the land.

Mr. Haines stated that it could be any amount determined by the Committee. The \$10,000,000 was just a figure. He stated that this initiative passing is the important part. Their goal is to inform the public so they can have an educated choice.

Mr. Rosemier asked Mr. Milburg if he had any opinion. Mr. Milburg stated he would like to go back to his Committee before speaking on the topic.

Mr. Rosemier asked how this tax would affect the farmer. Mr. Gudmunson stated he thought he was paying approximately \$18 an acre for total taxes of bare farm ground with no buildings on it. He added that about 2/3 goes to the School District.

Mr. Hannan stated that right now the Forest Preserve District is about one-third of one percent of the total tax bill.

Mr. Metzger asked how land acquisition would impact staff and equipment. Mr. Hannan stated that he would like to add a maintenance position and a natural resource staff person in the future to help maintain and manage the new land and that could be a separate question on a referendum ballot.

Mr. Metzger stated that this citizen group has done a lot of work on this. He stated it was a good concept and it would be up to the

Committee, the Board and the tax payers. He stated that he would be interested in a study group.

Mrs. Fauci stated that the land use policies for the last twenty years are good, but need to be updated so that we can save open land for our children.

Mr. Gudmunson asked about farm land trading (the 10/31 exchange) for residential and if eventually the Forest Preserve could trade land.

Mr. Sands stated that the development has been along the river. He is concerned about major flooding issues and feels that storm water management needs to be in the plan.

Mr. Metzger requested a study group by the Citizens Committee. There was no objection. Mr. Sands thought a Subcommittee may be in order.

Mr. Dlabal stated that the Forest Preserve is worth far more today than it was 40 years ago. He felt it is an investment not an expenditure.

Mr. Metzger asked for an update at next months meeting. He thanked all who attended.

BID OPENING: PHASE 1 AFTON WETLAND BANK CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Hannan stated that he had some bids to open for phase one of the Afton Wetland Bank. He reminded the Committee that they are now required to start building the wetland with the pre-sold acres. He stated that there were three bids:

Fischer Excavating Incorporated:	\$32,601.00
Dashney/Gusftason Incorporated:	\$20,620.00
Bish Excavating Incorporated:	\$28,200.00

Mr. Metzger moved, seconded by Mr. Rosemier to take a role call vote to approve the recommendation for the Dashney/ Guftason bid. All members said yea.

OSLAD and OTHER GRANTS UPDATE

Mr. Hannan stated that a lot of conservation grants have been dismissed by the Governor through the OSLAD program. Mr. Hannan stated that there was huge support of these grants. Mr. Hannan read

aloud a letter he received from Senator Burzynski and Representative Pritchard. He stated that they supported the Forest Preserve District and the OSLAD grant money. With many letters and political support the OSLAD grant program was kept at full funding. Mr. Hannan stated that he has applied for an OSLAD grant for Potawatomi Woods improvements and right now the District has about \$70,000 in donations from the DeKalb/ Sycamore Sunrise Rotary Club, DeKalb County Community Foundation and an anonymous donor for matching grant dollars for Potawatomi Woods. This OSLAD is a matching grant for another \$70,000. It is also very competitive, but hopeful for approval in 2005.

Mr. Hannan stated that the IDNR C-2000 grant has also been very helpful to the FP District. This grant money is for natural resource restoration, such as removing invasive, non-native species.

Mr. Hannan spoke of the DeKalb County Greenways and Trails planning grant and the O.L.T. capital improvement grant as other very important Forest Preserve improvement assistance grants.

These grants have been very successful for DeKalb County and Mr. Hannan thanked the Committee and the Commissioners for past and future support.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan stated that Paul Nolan has retired after 20 years with the Forest Preserve District. Mr. Ken Ehrhart has replaced him as permanent part time Park Manager. Mr. Hannan stated that he felt a tree planted for Cliff Simonson and one dedicated to Paul Nolan for their dedication and efforts.

Mr. Sands has given plaques to these past employees.

Mr. Rosemier felt a bench with a plaque would be a nice idea for Cliff Simonson.

Mr. Metzger stated that a tree would be the least they should do.

Mrs. Fauci recommended County Farm Woods for a location due to its locality to Mr. Simonson's District and he has done volunteer work there. Mr. Metzger asked to have Mr. Hannan ask Mr. Simonson's family for their feelings on the location. Mr. Hannan agreed.

Mrs. Fauci stated that she started a Commemoration Tree Bench and Bike Loop Program at NIU in the Campus Security Environmental Quality Committee. She stated that it was possible to do something that way.

Mr. Metzger stated that he felt the County Forest Preserve ground would be the most appropriate.

Mr. Hannan stated that Mr. Nolan was unable due to his health to perform some of his job duties. Mr. Bulkley has been helping for the last year until Paul's retirement and a replacement hire could be in place. Mr. Hannan recommended \$800.00 for Mr. Bulkley for his extra work at Chief Shabbona Forest Preserve during Mr. Nolan's illness.

Mrs. Fauci felt that \$800.00 sounded good to her. Mr. Rosemeir seconded the motion. Role call was taken. All Committee members said yea.

Mrs. Fauci stated that there has been a large calling for an equestrian trails in all the three sections of the County in the planning stages. Mrs. Fauci stated that she knew someone who was an expert in equestrian trails. She stated that it was quite different than maintaining a bike trail. She stated that everything was considered in the open meetings. Mrs. Fauci read aloud some ideas and a letter.

Mr. Hannan stated that the Forest Preserve District should put up signs that read "Please do not pick the Garlic Mustard". He felt that would solve it's overgrowth problem.

Mr. Hannan stated that Mrs. Fauci had formed the Woman's Garlic Mustard Brigade. Whese woman volunteered their time at Nehring. He added that every bit of help is appreciated.

Mr. Rosemier stated that this was the second time he was asked to serve on the Board of the U of I Extension and that the partnership with them for natural resource education with the FP District was very good..

FY 2005 BUDGET (DRAFT)

Mr. Hannan passed out a draft copy of the FY 05 budget for their review prior to next month's meeting. Mr. Hannan stated that the final committee vote will be in October.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Rosemier, it was unanimous to adjourn the meeting.

Chairman, Mr. Metzger