

**AD HOC OPEN SPACE STUDY SUB-COMMITTEE
MINUTES
NOVEMBER 22, 2004
@ 7:00P.M.**

The Ad Hoc Open Space Study Sub-Committee met on Monday, November 22, 2004 @ 7:00p.m. in the DeKalb County Administrative Building's Conference Room East. Chairman Jeffery Metzger called the meeting to order. Members present were Julia Fauci, Julia Fullerton, Terry Hannan, David Baker, Michael Haines, Frank Van Buer and Joseph Wiegand. Members absent were John Acardo, Kevin Braden and Gary Hanson. Mr. Greg Millburg was also present.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Moved by Mr. Hannan, seconded by Mr. Wiegand, and it was carried unanimously to approve the minutes from October 2004.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by Mr. Wiegand, seconded by Mr. Haines, and it was carried unanimously to approve the agenda.

Before beginning the meeting Chairman Metzger asked Mr. Van Buer, Mr. Baker and Mr. Haines to introduce themselves to the committee since they were absent at the October meeting.

ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM LAST MONTH'S MEETING

Chairman Metzger read off the 7 questions that still needed to be answered from last month's meeting. Those were: 1.) How do we want to define open space? 2.) If we are going to increase taxes to buy public land shouldn't the taxpayer know what land we are purchasing? 3.) What is the percentage of open space that we have in relation to other counties? 4.) We're looking for – What acreage? What year? What dollar amount? What the economic development benefits for future open space would provide for the county? 5.) What our priorities are when it comes to tax dollars? 6.) What other funding mechanisms are available for preserving future open space? and, 7.) Determine as a committee, to allocate funds to do research on this issue, and if so, how much are we willing to spend to investigate this?

Mr. Hannan, DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Superintendent, explained to the committee what open space means. He explained that a public open space would include parks, forest preserves, etc. A city park would be a park that is active, meaning recreation areas, picnic areas, softball, baseball, basketball leagues, etc. The higher end of open space would be the Department of Natural Resources where people come from miles around for 1 day or so. The Forest Preserves fall in the middle, where they are conservation oriented. They

have picnic areas, hiking trails, biking trails, canoeing, shelter houses and are situated where most people can get to within a half hour's drive. On the private side, there are incentives privately for people like conservation preservation, erosion control, tree planting, etc.

Mr. Hannan continued by stating that in county run areas 90% or more of land is put in conservation preservation or restoration, wetlands and trails, while 10% is put in recreational.

Mr. Hannan said that in Kane County they do try to keep the 90% for preservation and restoration, but the Kane County Cougars stadium is owned by the Kane County Forest Preserve. Another example is the riverboat on the Fox River that own 550 feet of parking space that generates \$500,000 a year for Kane County Forest Preserve.

What type of funds did Kane County use to purchase the property for the stadium? Mr. Hannan said that he didn't know.

Chairman Metzger asked if the funds could be appropriated for the use of a stadium, a landfill or a golf course? Maybe this is a question that needs to be asked on the referendum.

Mr. Wiegand said that in Ogle County one of the issues that they looked at was the former reclamation plant and what to do with it. One thing that came up while they were researching this was that there were a significant number of quarries that could be used to create parks. Maybe we could look to see if DeKalb County has any underutilized quarries that could be used as recreation areas, said Mr. Wiegand.

Mr. Haines said that he feels that on a level of priority that the committee needs to look at is defining high quality natural lands and recreational lands. Another priority is that we need to find willing sellers. Finally, we also need to prioritize land that is contiguous to existing forest preserves.

Ms. Fauci said that the committee needs to address the waterway system, too, and look at how it is burdening our streams and waterways. That is, there is a natural system of waterways that we are burdening. We need to allow them to overflow without damage being done to property that we need to keep open, continued Ms. Fauci.

Mr. Van Buer said that the county needs to protect farmland. He is interested in looking at development rights. His concern is that we are going to be watching DeKalb County disappear in the future.

Chairman Metzger then asked the committee if they felt that we should have a referendum?

Mr. Haines said that our county has the lowest percentage of open space and the lowest tax levy than other counties around us.

Mr. Hannan said that in years past there was a list compiled called Vision 2000 that spoke about items that our county should be looking at for forest preserves and conservation in the future and he has referred to it over time. He continued by saying that the bond referendum would be for \$10 million dollars and \$5 million would be available for land acquisition. We would need to spend at least 50% of it in the first 5 years. He currently knows of 500 to 600 acres of land that is available to purchase for the forest preserve district.

Chairman Metzger said that he felt that the committee was not going to define what open space means on a referendum this evening, but that they would like to have a better idea of each of the questions. We are going to speak later this evening about a person from the Conservation Foundation to come and visit with the committee about their experience in referendums. The committee discussed whether or not they should have the referendum in April of 2005 or wait until April of 2006. The majority felt that if there was going to be a referendum that the committee needed to do more research on it and that the date of April 2006 would be better.

The committee discussed how much pressure is there from the public for more land use conservation? Mr. Haines said that his group (the citizen's group) was formed because of conservation concerns in the county and that there is a group of people who are concerned about future development growth in Sycamore. He also said that his group is willing to work with the county on the referendum and get the word out there. Mr. Hannan stated that he receives phone calls from people who are in favor of land use conservation, too.

Mr. Wiegand asked about the comprehensive plan and recreational space, trails and the rail spur in Shabbona. Could they all be tied together? Mr. Hannan and Ms. Fauci said yes, they could be. Mr. Wiegand asked then, what sort of dollars are involved if a railroad abandons the tracks? Ms. Fauci said that they haven't abandoned any in DeKalb County that she knows of because they still make a lot of money off of them. She said to look at railroads as linear parks and that it would be great to have one go all the way south to the state park in Shabbona.

Mr. Hannan said that it could be a possibility and that the trails really don't cost much money. The DeKalb/Sycamore Trail had donations from Com Ed, who donated easements, Ideal Industries in Sycamore, the School district, DeKalb County Farm Bureau, etc.

Mr. Wiegand said that in 1996 the Land Acquisition Fund failed and then the Community Foundation created a fund for conservation. Mr. Hannan said yes, and that they do have some seed money equal to \$50,000 at one time for conservation. Twenty thousand dollars is also allocated for education. Currently they have \$4000 in the fund.

After further discussion the committee agreed that if they would do a referendum that it would be for March of 2006.

FUTURE MEETING DATES AND FREQUENCY

The committee agreed that they would meet every other month until summer and then it would be every month, that is, January 2005, March 2005 and May of 2005. Then when summer starts in June, they would meet every month. The next meeting date will be January 24, 2005. They will invite Mr. Brook McDonald of the Conservation Foundation to come and speak with the committee about his referendum experience.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Wiegand, seconded by Mr. Haines, and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Jeffery Metzger

Mary C. Supple, Secretary

J:AD HOC OPEN SPACE STUDY SUB-Comm 112204.doc