

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
December 19, 2006**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, December 19, 2006 at the Conference Room East of the County Administration Building at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were committee members, Ms. Fauci, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Turner, Mr. Rosemier, Ms. DeFauw and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Gudmunson and Mr. Lyle were absent. Guests included Richard Stewart, representative for Illinois, Indiana, Iowa FFC (Foundation for Fair Contracting), Chris Houser, DeKalb County Land Steward for the Nehring Forest Preserve.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Fauci began by asking if there were any changes to the November 14, 2006 minutes. Hearing none, Mr. Rosemier moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any additions or corrections to the agenda. Ms. Turner moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Ms. Fauci noted that the majority of the faces on this 2007 Forest Preserve Committee were the same as in the prior year, however Ms. Sally DeFauw is a new addition. Ms. DeFauw noted that she was very happy to be a member of the committee and serve the interests of her constituency. Ms. Fauci asked if any of the other members wanted to state why they had rejoined the committee this year. Mr. Anderson noted that a number of exciting things had been started in the 2006 year, such as the referendum on land acquisition, and he wanted very much to see the process continue. Ms. Fauci noted that there was a very strong balance of talents and regions represented on the committee.

Ms. Fauci then recognized guest Richard Stewart who noted that his organization monitors fair contracting practices and was attending tonight's meeting to verify the validity of the bid opening process as it had a financial impact on local taxpayers. Mr. Stewart noted that there was a two hour discrepancy between the bid closing at 4:30 this afternoon and the bid opening at this 6:00 meeting. Ms. Fauci noted that as the Committee was meeting this evening in regular session, it seemed most prudent to wait and conduct the opening at the regular meeting rather than to gather the Committee once at 4:30 and again at 6:00. Mr. Stewart noted that it would have been more appropriate to call the bid closing at 6:00 p.m. and the bid opening at 6:01 in the ideal. However, he noted that since this was a primarily volunteer organization, he understood how the decision had been made and that his group is simply always alert to irregularities that occur during bid opening processes. Ms. Fauci thanked Mr. Stewart for his diligence and noted that for future bids – the Committee would call for the bid closure at 6:00 prior to the meeting time.

## **FOREST PRESERVE ORIENTATION & PRESENTATION**

Ms. Fauci began by commenting that the orientation would be lead by Mr. Hannan who has done this quite a few times in the past. Mr. Hannan noted that this evening they would be hearing from one of the volunteer land stewards who were working with the District on land restoration and preservation activities. Mr. Hannan introduced Chris Houser who is one of the first volunteers focusing on oak savannah restoration at the Nehring Forest Preserve. He went on to note that he and volunteers have been working fairly steadily one weekend every month for the past several months.

After noting that all of the Committee members had seen Mr. Hannan's orientation presentation except Ms. DeFauw, Mr. Hannan then turned over the floor to Mr. Houser. Mr. Houser than gave an introduction to the Committee on his background and interests in ecological restoration. He went on to discuss how he had first become aware of the vast restoration potential in the Nehring Forest Preserve. He commented that after he and Superintendent Hannan had determined the priorities of the work, he selected the best location to begin regular work activities and began the efforts of rescuing the native oaks and wildflowers who were being shaded out by over populated species that ran rampant when natural forest burns and past grazing ceased.

He noted that once the canopy has been cleared and the native plants are given a chance to thrive in open light, he hopes to see a healthy re-growth of a healthy diversity of species. He commented that there are very few restored floodplain forests in Illinois and Nehring can stand as a rare example of a high quality restored floodplain forest.

Mr. Rosemier asked why there are so few in existence. Mr. Houser noted that many were absorbed into large farms or by being in remote areas of the farms became so over-shaded as to be unrecoverable.

He went on to note that in addition to clearing the canopy, his group has also been introducing additional native plantings and seeds and removing old remnants of barbed wire left over from the days when cattle grazed in the Nehring area. Mr. Anderson asked if the barbed wire were salvageable or if it had any historical value given the areas history.

Mr. Houser then gave a photo presentation of the area before and during the restoration process so far.

Mr. Rosemier asked if Mr. Houser had an opinion on whether trees that have fallen to decay should be removed or left as habitat. Mr. Houser noted that while he prefers to see that excess lumber cleared, and leave some deadfall, the current scarcity of habitat necessitates leaving it.

Mr. Hannan noted that the bur oak, if allowed to grow to its natural potential, will become as wide as it is tall. This demonstrates that they have not been inappropriately shaded. He noted that Mr. Hannan and FP staff can perform a controlled burn (as time and weather permit) when the area is ready and the new native seeds he has introduced

have a chance to become established. He commented that all seeds introduced have come from within DeKalb County.

Mr. Houser (an ecologist with Kane County Forest Preserve District) closed by commenting on the arrival of the emerald ash borer within the year and how it has completely redirected the priorities and efforts of some Chicago area forest preserve districts. He noted that in Kane, a number of trees demonstrated infestation and were subsequently destroyed. He shared his fears that given the scope of the Kane infestation, that DeKalb County would be affected as well. The committee then discussed whether there are any natural approaches to ash borer removal that have been successful. Mr. Houser responded that there have not been any broadly successful approaches discovered. Ms. Fauci asked if there are any preventative measures the District could take to be better prepared for the arrival of the borer. Mr. Houser replied that thinning out thicker concentrations of ash trees would be a good beginning. Ms. Fauci asked if there were any other concentrations of ash trees in the County aside from Nehring. Mr. Hannan noted that the ash is typically a flood plain tree and therefore there are many areas where the tree has established itself. Mr. Rosemier asked how much longer it will take until Mr. Houser feels his restoration is complete. Mr. Houser commented that he sees more work ahead as they spread away from the beginning area and move toward the river. He noted that there will be some areas that will need more professional equipment for clearing than the volunteer force can provide. He noted that there might be granting opportunities to assist in funding these professional efforts.

Ms. Fauci thanked Mr. Houser for his presentation. Mr. Hannan commented that the goal of the steward program is to have a group like Mr. Houser's at each Forest Preserve. He noted that he has placed an ad in the Daily Chronicle and Midweek and has received some calls with interest. Ms. DeFauw asked if Kane were doing similar activities. Mr. Houser noted that there are and land steward volunteers are working in many Forest Preserve District's in the state.

Ms. Fauci commented that it might be beneficial to have the District arrange for more general education programs for county residents to help them fully understand restoration efforts or to partner with area schools to share the message of restoration education.

#### BID OPENING –

Mr. Hannan commented that three bids have been received for Phase 2 of the Afton wetland construction. He noted that each bid should contain a one page summary sheet showing the name of the bidding company and summarizing the work and total cost. Ms. Fauci began by opening the bid for the Stenstrom Excavation and Blacktop Group and noting that the total cost for the work and rock would be \$121,200. They further noted that any add or deduct of materials would apply. Sean Reinink is the contact for this company. Ms. Fauci verified that the required \$1,000 bid bond had been included in the bid.

Ms. Fauci opened the second bid, from Dashney-Gustafson Incorporated in Kirkland. The bid bond was verified and the total for this bid is \$45,100. Ms. Fauci commented that this company has been used previously.

The thirds and final bid was opened and the bid bond verified. This bid was from Bish Excavating Company of Hinckley with a total bid amount of \$44,701.

At this time, Ms. Fauci noted that the totals appear to indicate that Bish Excavating will be the successful bidder. She asked Mr. Hannan if they had ever worked for the Forest Preserve District previously. He replied that they had not, but Mr. Anderson noted that he had used them privately for work done at his farm and they did a good job. Mr. Rosemier commented that it was good that the successful bidders were local companies. Ms. DeFauw asked if it were the practice of the Committee to automatically take the lowest bid. Ms. Fauci noted that if all things are equal and there are no extenuating circumstances, the low bid would prevail. Mr. Anderson asked if Bish had done any Forest Preserve work previously. Mr. Hannan commented that he was not aware that they had, but that he would be the project manager on site and felt that the specs were specific enough to make for a clear project. Mr. Anderson asked if this work would be starting immediately. Mr. Hannan noted that there would be another approval required by the full body of Commissioners and would then proceed in the winter and spring with completion targeted for April, 2007.

Mr. Rosemier moved to accept the bid of Bish Excavating Company at \$44,701, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan noted that the monthly reports would be in the Forest Preserve Minutes. He highlighted the fact that the early heavy snow made for quite a bit of snowmobilers and sledding activity. Mr. Rosemier asked if the preserves had any problems with them. Mr. Hannan noted that there had been some, but they have been relatively few.

Mr. Hannan then noted that the \$70,000 grant check has been received from OSLAD for Potawatomi Woods improvements. He went on to note that the IDNR grant officials had also recently inspected and approved the site as a fully compliant recreational facility.

Mr. Hannan then drew the Committee's attention to a letter received from Mr. Hansen, the County Financial Officer, noting a change in IMRF Salary Recognition Relating to Flexible Benefits. A resolution has been prepared by the Finance Committee addressing this for all of the County employees except the Forest Preserve, since the District is a separate legal entity. Mr. Hannan noted that the issue is that for an employee electing to participate in the medical flexible spending account, the flexed money is to count towards the employee's pension salary.

Mr. Rosemier commented that the issue had not been made terribly clear when it presented at the Finance Committee meeting. He commented that it would have been helpful to have more transparency in the numbers on the proposal and the principal that this was adding a new benefit to employees. Ms. Fauci asked if there were a deadline in getting this done or whether the Committee can have some additional time to discuss the issue. Ms. Fauci reviewed the minutes of the Finance Committee and noted that the

general rationale was that a majority of governmental entities were taking this course. An extensive discussion then ensued regarding the issue. Ms. Fauci asked if the Committee wished to take any kind of a formal stance on this. Ms. DeFauw noted that she was not comfortable making any decision given how unclear the issue appears to be. Ms. Fauci noted that there may have been some budgeting constraint that is requiring immediate action. Ms. Fauci will discuss this with Mr. Hanson at the next County Board meeting and the Committee will continue discussions next month.

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Ms. Fauci presented Superintendent Hannan with a holiday ornament as a token of appreciation for his and staff Forest Preserve work.

#### **LAND ACQUISITION UPDATE**

Prior to the beginning of the discussion, Ms. Fauci asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Ms. Turner moved the Committee into executive session for the purpose of discussing current information on District land acquisition activities, seconded by Mr. Rosemier, and a roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 5 Committee members voting in the affirmative and none in the negative. Following the Executive Session, Ms. DeFauw moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Ms. Turner and a roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 5 Committee members voting in the affirmative and none in the negative.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Turner moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson  
Forest Preserve District Committee

JF:kjr