

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
JULY 18, 2006**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, July 18, 2006 at the Afton Forest Preserve Shelter at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members Ms. Fauci, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Turner, Mr. Rosemier. and Mr. Gudmunson. Guests included Greg Milburg, Frank Beierlotzer and Nancy Sherman. Superintendent Hannan was absent due to illness.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any additions or correction to the minutes of June 20, 2006. 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. Hearing none, Ms. Turner moved to accept the amended agenda, seconded by Mr. Rosemier and the motion passed unanimously. Ms. Fauci introduced the evening's guests and noted that Ms. Sherman, a Trustee from Cortland Township would be asking to speak during the section regarding Land Conservation and land priorities in Cortland Township. She then introduced Mr. Milberg, in his new position as President of the DeKalb County Farm Bureau and Mr. Beierlotzer, candidate for the DeKalb County Board 9<sup>th</sup> District.

**RESOLUTION – TRUCK BID REVISITED**

Ms. Fauci reviewed what had occurred with the truck bid process to date. She noted that a bid had arrived before the filing deadline, but had been delivered to an incorrect office and was not discovered until after the last meeting. The office it had been delivered to had also partially opened the envelope before realizing what the document was. Ms. Fauci then asked Mr. Anderson to formally receive and open the bid from Rock River Ford in Rockford, Illinois.

The bid from Rock River was \$23587 for a 2007 ¾ ton pickup truck with snowplow and plow package. The CMS bid received prior to the last meeting came in at a slightly higher figure of \$23,880 for a 2006 truck. It was noted that the original bid specs called for a 2006 truck, but that Rock River had elected to alter and update the truck to a 2007.

Discussion then ensued among the committee with Mr. Anderson and Mr. Gudmunson reviewing the truck specs attached to the Rock River bid to assure that they met the needs the original bid spec had outlined.

Mr. Gudmunson moved to accept the Rock River Ford Bid, seconded by Mr. Rosemier.

Discussion continued with Mr. Anderson asking for assistance in determining if the truck was a 4x4. It was determined that it was following additional discussion.

Mr. Rosemier asked if the motion could be voted with the contingency that it be verified that they intended to deliver a 2007 vehicle and a confirmation that the bid included a full towing package.

The motion was passed unanimously.

## **RESOLUTION – HIRING DAN LOBBES, CONSERVATION FOUNDATION**

Ms. Fauci began by reminding the Committee that they have now heard presentations from individuals whose services are available to assist the Forest Preserve District in land acquisition activities. She noted that the acquisition process would be accelerating fairly soon and that someone must be available to hold discussions with potential sellers, the public as well as with State, Federal and local entities who may be involved in the process. Superintendent Hannan's recent unfortunate absence should make it clear to the Committee that staffing is stretched to a premium and clear, predictable backup must be developed.

To this end, she commented that conversations should begin regarding the Committee's sentiments on hiring an individual who can assist in these activities and negotiations. She noted that after hearing the presentations, the value and cost-saving potential of having individuals with long experience in the delicacies of negotiation as well as the intricacies of grant work became extremely clear to her.

Ms. Fauci noted that she had contacted two of the references provided by Mr. Lobbes of the Conservation Foundation. The representative from Will County was extremely complimentary and noted that the benefit of having Mr. Lobbes act on their behalf was to "take the government out of the land dealing process", noting that was not only attractive to many land sellers, but was also protective for the County staff as well. He further noted that while they, like DeKalb County, had very knowledgeable and well-respected staff members, the additional assistance was a genuine and valuable relief that prevented the staff from becoming over extended in the process. This allowed staff to deal with their new activities as well as their existing duties. He closed by noting that Mr. Lobbes was highly skilled in handling delicate conversations, consistently treated landowners with the utmost of respect and was the man they assigned to all of their cases with long historical ties to the County.

Mr. Anderson countered that it was his belief that a local individual can always do a better job than someone hired in from the "outside". Ms. Fauci acknowledged his concerns, but added that there will be long-term, day-to-day activities that must be dealt with and Board members may not always have the time to devote to these activities. She further added that even Mr. Hannan, with his long affiliations to the County would still have his full compliment of duties to maintain while handling the acquisitions.

Ms. Fauci then reported on the results of the second reference, a Mr. Jason Pettit who had worked with Mr. Lobbes on several projects. He began by echoing several of the comments that Will County provided regarding Mr. Lobbes' care and delicacy in dealing with the landowners. He went on to add that he was consistently impressed with the breadth of Mr. Lobbes knowledge and his ability to prepare clear reports with solid and reliable recommendations.

Mr. Anderson commented that the monies for the purchases won't be available to the District until the 2007 tax year. He then asked if it would be intention of the District to enter a formal contract with whomever the individual might be. Ms. Fauci noted that a formal contract would be absolutely essential. Mr. Anderson then asked if the \$85 per hour that Mr. Lobbes had quoted to the Committee as his standard rate included all costs (such as mileage, meals with prospective sellers, etc). Ms. Fauci noted that such details would be clarified prior to entering into any formal arrangement,. But that tonight's discussion was simply to begin the determination of whether the District wished to hire assistance for these activities or not.

She went on to note that the reason some of the Committee members were leaning towards Mr. Lobbes as a possibility was his familiarity with rural, long-term residents and his consistent success in treating them with dignity and care while concurrently maximizing the benefits for the buyers through grants or other assistance.

Mr. Anderson asked if there were any other companies who did this work, aside from the two who spoke to the Committee. Ms. Fauci said that Mr. Hannan had identified one other company, Core-Land, but that it did not work in DeKalb as we were too far away from their general area of operation.

Mr. Rosemier indicated that he would like to see a draft of a contract but he did support Superintendent Hannan's recommendation of starting the individual hired off with an \$8500 lump sum (100 hours approximately) and then determining if the contract would be extended.

Mr. Gudmunson asked if the lands could be identified and decided on prior to hiring anyone to do the negotiations. Ms. Fauci noted that the issue still must begin with a decision by the Committee whether or not they wished to hire anyone at all. She then recommended that the Committee go into Executive Session at the next meeting to discuss the hiring issue.

Mr. Rosemier noted that in addition to the issue of whether an outside consultant should be hired for these negotiations the Committee needed to also solidify all criteria that will be used to eliminate any questions regarding the integrity of the process. This will assure that whomever is involved in the process will be on the same page.

Ms. Fauci reminded the Committee that during the referendum process, a former County Board member had raised the issue of having acquisitions tainted by the direct involvement of current sitting Board members.

Mr/ Anderson clarified that what he had meant by his earlier statements was that there were simply things that many of the Committee members could accomplish as well as Mr. Lobbes, but he acknowledged that there were other things they would not be as adept at. However, he rejected outright the issue of having Board member involvement interpreted as tainting the process.

Mr. Rosemier commented that it is simply a time and environment where involvement by elected officials in land purchases leaves itself open to questions.

Mr. Anderson commented that these discussions should probably be continued in the Executive Session at the next meeting.

#### **LAND CONSERVATION PRIORITY CRITERIA**

Ms. Fauci handed out a revised version of the criteria and reminded the Committee that Mr. Hannan had developed this from a document used successfully by DuPage County. It breaks the criteria down into six categories with the first three representing those required by statute. The six base criteria are:

1. What is the Natural Resource Value of the land?
2. What is the size and configuration of the land with respect to purpose, connectivity, value as a buffer zone, etc.
3. Open Space, recreational value?
4. Operation and maintenance viability?
5. Urgency of the purchase?
6. What grants or other funding can be obtained to assist with the purchase of the land?

The criteria document suggest that 10 points be allocated to each item of the six listed and then a numerical value assessed to each property being considered.

Ms. Fauci then recognized Ms. Sherman who wanted to make a few comments regarding land acquisition in Cortland Township. Ms. Sherman began by noting that from her perspective, there was quite a bit of urgency regarding securing some lands in the Township for Forest Preserve use. She commented that the rampant development was rapidly diminishing the natural farm areas and that

something must be done to preserve them. She then commented that she did not think the size of the parcel should be a primary criteria for determining the viability of a purchase. Ms. Fauci noted her opinion, but reminded her that this item was one of the three statutorily required requirements. Ms. Sherman then noted that it was critical that the District get the word out that they are seeking lands for preservation so that willing sellers can come forward. She recommended that the Committee consider doing a news story of sending a mailing to individuals in the County who might have particularly attractive parcels. Ms. Fauci reminded Ms. Sherman that the referendum contained language that prohibited the County from directly soliciting land for this purpose. Ms. Sherman noted that she did not believe many people were aware of the desire by the County to preserve land. Ms. Fauci noted that the Committee would take the question of public meetings or press releases into consideration. Ms. Sherman then commented that Cortland Township would certainly meet the criteria regarding urgency given how rapidly the area is being developed.

Mr. Rosemier asked if there were any particular land in the township that would be good for a Forest Preserve site. Ms. Sherman commented that many of the areas she could think of are family farms and that they might be quite willing to listen to a preservation offer. She commented that the local coffee shop circuit would be one way of getting out the word that land is being sought. She closed by commenting that the purchases would best be started by someone who had some history with the County, was respected and could be confided in. Mr. Rosemier pointed out that Mr. Hannan, after 30 years of service to the County, certainly would fit that criteria. Ms. Sherman commented that she had discussions with Senator Burzynski regarding the establishment of an impact fee on new homes for the Township, but had not received an answer. She asked why the County did not place an impact fee on new homes. Ms. Fauci noted that the provision for such a fee exists, but only applies to developments within the County which are in unincorporated areas. However, the County's strict adherence to their Comprehensive Plan, which states that developments should only occur in incorporated areas with access to city services, no developments have been approved in unincorporated areas for several years. Ms. Sherman noted that it would be useful to have an impact fee earmarked for addition strain on the roadway system as well.

Ms. Fauci thanked Ms. Sherman for her comments and directed the Committee back to a discussion of the criteria document. Mr. Rosemier complimented the form noting that it was simple and clear and easily understood. His only comment was to make the criteria listing uniform throughout the document.

Mr. Gudmunson asked if there was a definition of "open space". Mr. Rosemier commented that a definitions section might be helpful. As to the issue of who will be the arbiter of the various criteria, the recommendation would be that the issue of urgency would be decided by the Forest Preserve Commissioners, the first three items would be determined by a combination of the Superintendent, the contracted consultant, the State IDNR and ecologists with the IDNR weighing in most heavily on item one, Natural Resource Value.

Ms. Fauci noted that she would work with Superintendent Hannan on a final draft of the criteria document for the next meeting.

#### **FIREWOOD BAN – DEKALB COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES**

Ms. Fauci began by reminding the Committee that the nearby threat of the Emerald Ash Borer has necessitated firewood restrictions at the County facilities. She then reviewed the ordinance (copy attached) draft which had been proposed to effect the firewood ban. She commented that at the Executive Committee, Board Member Sue Leifheit had made the point that if firewood is purchased from County staff at the preserves, isn't it the owners prerogative to do with it as they like. To evade that issue, the State's Attorney's office recommended that there not be an outright sale of the wood, but that it be a "user fee" instead. She went on to note that firewood would only be available and allowed at camping sites, with a requirement that charcoal be the only fuel used in the other sites. The

user fee for the firewood will be attached to the camping fee to keep things clear and all transactions will be clear that the firewood cannot be removed from the site.

Mr. Rosemier asked if the signs had been posted at the preserves noting the ban on outside wood being in effect. Ms. Fauci noted that the sign language and layout was completed and 50 temporary signs are up at this time. Permanent signs are in process.

Ms. Turner moved to approve the ordinance with the phrase “user fee” replacing the word “fee” in point B, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **GENERAL DISCUSSIONS**

Ms. Fauci handed out a very thorough written report from the Superintendent. She noted that there had recently been questions regarding wetland mitigation acreages and values and that there are difficulties involved with revealing the acreage and dollar figure that are connected to the mitigation. Mr. Hannan will speak to this further when he rejoins the Committee.

Ms. Fauci noted that things are progressing on replacing the 31 year old tractor and that discussions have been resolved with Bill Lorence of the Highway department regarding the bridge at Potawatomi Woods. A structural engineer will look at the work and provide a report to Mr. Lorence and additional dredging will occur to satisfy Mr. Lorences’ site development requirements. The Highway Department is also providing assistance with the gravel work being done at Sannauk.

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBER DISCUSSION**

Mr. Anderson commended Ms. Fauci on the work she has done for the District in Mr. Hannan’s absence.

Mr. Rosemier commented that he was very pleased with the evening’s discussions regarding the value of consultants and how such positions are best defined so that staff is supported and not supplanted.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Attached are monthly reports and Forest Preserve activities.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson  
Forest Preserve District Committee

JF:kjr