

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
August 21, 2007**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, August 21, 2007 at Afton Forest Preserve at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members, Ms. Fauci, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Gudmunson, Ms. DeFauw, Mr. Rosemier and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Lyle was absent and Ms. Turner arrived shortly after the call to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci began by asking if there were any changes to the July 17, 2007 minutes. Hearing none, Ms. DeFauw moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Rosemier and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci began by noting that the evening's Executive Session would also contain some of the discussions regarding personnel matters and in specific, the Superintendent's annual evaluation. She then asked if there were any other additions or corrections to the agenda. Mr. Rosemier moved to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL DISCUSSION FY 2008 BUDGET

Mr. Hannan began by handing out the draft 2008 budget document for Committee review and discussion. He commented that the August and September meetings would be used for general discussions and questions and that there would need to be a vote of the Committee in October followed by a vote of the Board as a whole in November. He also reminded the Committee that this would be a 13 month fiscal year due to the change in the fiscal year cycle of the County as approved by the County Board.

He then began his report by commenting that he had met with Mr. Hanson of the County Finance Office and Mr. Hansen had indicated that the Committee had been very fiscally conservative last year, not taking the full \$.06 maximum allowed by statute. Mr. Hanson strongly recommended that the Commission adopt the full \$.06 level for land acquisition with additional funds requested for separate line items (FICA, IMRF and Tort). Mr. Hanson could attend the September meeting of the Committee to further discuss his rationale for this approach.

Additionally, Mr. Hanson recommend that the committee elevate the level they are currently using for IMRF pensions from the current \$32,000 annually to \$50,000 annually to more aggressively pay down the pension deficit within a 10 year period rather than the current projected 40 year period. His rationale for this is that it allows the use of current fund to retire the deficit rather than pushing them off into far distant future budgets.

Mr. Hannan then reported that the Forest Preserve District have been receiving a very generous low rate of \$6,000 annual rate for the tort fund for full liability for the Forest

Preserve District. While the District has never had a claim during this time, the \$6,000 rate is low by comparison to other Districts. For instance the Kendall County District (comparable in size and scope to DeKalb) pays \$13,000 annually for its tort fund liability protections.

Mr. Hanson has proposed that the District increase its rate from the current \$6,000 to a more in-line \$10,000 per year with a \$50,000 annual deductible placed on the coverage. This would align the district with other bodies, such as the Rehab and Nursing Center structure. The County's Tort Fund would then become the reinsurance program for the District. Mr. Hanson further noted that if no claims occurred, portions of this rate could be set aside and could, on occasion, be used to offset future loans from the County. Mr. Hannan mentioned that in past years, parks were often thought to be especially vulnerable to claims due the risk of attractive hazards. However, recent court decisions have made it clear that individuals using Forest Preserve facilities do so with the assumption of some risk themselves. Mr. Hannan complimented F.P. staff in helping maintain safe Forest Preserves.

After extensive discussions by the Committee members regarding the exact details of the current and proposed future costs and the perceived severity of such a cost increase in a one year cycle, it was determined that this was a topic that would need to be discussed with Mr. Hanson in person or by talking to him prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Anderson noted that it was especially troubling to this appeared to be using tax payer funds to add a new pool of land acquisition dollars above and beyond those approved in the recent referendum.

Mr. Hannan noted that from a risk management standpoint, the District sledding hills remain the most problematic despite legal advise that vigorous posting will ameliorate some of the risk.

Mr. Rosemier asked if there were a limit to what could be levied for Tort and Liability purposes. Mr. Hannan replied that \$90,000 was the approved upper limit, despite the fact that past Committees had approved much lower limits for several years.

Mr. Anderson asked what full coverage would cost if the the \$50,000 deductible were removed. Ms. Fauci then added that she wondered what full liability protection would be if the District went out on the open market rather than self insuring with the County. However, it was noted generally that the County has realized substantial savings by self insuring. It was then again noted that there were sufficient concerns of the Committee members to warrant holding additional discussions until Mr. Hanson could be present.

Mr. Anderson noted that he would like to see additional information about the premiums paid by like sized Districts in the state. Mr. Fauci noted that these were questions that had to be addressed before anything like this could be brought to the public. She also recommended that the Committee might want to consider asking a local expert on public exposure to risk, such as Irene Rubin of NIU, to speak to the Committee.

Mr. Hannan then went on to review several additional schedules of changes as proposed in the 2008 budget draft. He noted that the increased County EAV would result in an additional approximately \$200,000 more than last fiscal year for land acquisition in the 2008 year's budget. The Committee then reviewed the line items with some items noted for review and revision by the Superintendent. Ms. Fauci asked if the corrections could be sent electronically to the Committee members and Mr. Hannan indicated that they could.

Mr. Hannan closed his portion of the budget discussion by noting that even if the District adopted the increases as proposed, the total dollars would still be less than 1% of a person's County tax bill. It was also noted that he was arranging for "thank you" signs to be printed and placed in the new acquisitions that would acknowledge the contributions of the County taxpayers in acquiring the lands.

FOREST PRESERVE MONTHLY REPORTS.

Mr. Hannan reminded the Committee that Mr. Anderson had asked at the last meeting if the State could forcibly seize and clear private lands where the Emerald Ash Borer was discovered. He then presented the Committee with maps of the Ash Borer quarantine areas as provided by the Illinois Department of Agriculture. He noted that at this time, there are no lands in the DeKalb County limits shown as EAB locations. The IDA feels that their approach of cutting a ½ mile radius swath around an infected area are controlling the spread. Also they note that the location of recent infestations makes sense. For instance, one area in Lily Lake began around the home of a family who owned a summer home in Michigan near the major infestations and brought infected ash firewood home. The second was a rest stop and I-80 and Rte 251 where it would be logical that an infected source of wood could pass through. They also noted that woodpeckers are proving invaluable in reducing the Borer population, though sadly, there are simply not enough of them to eradicate the problem completely. The IAG also noted that several portable saw mills are popping up around the infected areas trying to assure that the wood harvested is made into something safe and useful after the cut. Some additional points of note:

- The borer can be in the tree for upwards of a 10 year period before manifesting symptoms.
- The Borers alone would only be capable of traveling roughly 3 to 5 miles in a year, but the major distances occur when a person places infected wood into a vehicle and drives several miles.
- The origin of the infestation has been determined to be pallets of wood from China arriving in Michigan through the Great Lakes.

Mr. Hannan went on to note that the Borer itself is a relatively small (1/2" by 1/4") green bug that makes a d-shaped exit wound in the tree. The USDA division of the IAG has

posters in many state locations in addition to the postings done by DeKalb and other Counties on the subject, warning of the dangers of transporting cut wood between sites.

Mr. Anderson asked if there were a way to use this wood in and end use capacity for ethanol production. He will address this question with the USDA Forestry Division contact provided by Mr. Hannan.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Rosemier noted that he was recently in Door County Wisconsin and that they have a 1200 acre preserve there with an extremely active volunteer group who did an excellent presentation on invasive species and their activities to eradicate them.

Mr. Anderson asked what the balance due is for the Opportunity Fund land loan to the County. Mr. Hannan noted that \$305,000.00 was paid in July and \$305,000.00 more will be paid in October after the second tax revenue payment is received. He noted that some wetland bank monies may be used or land acquisition funds in 2008 to pay down the remainder \$159,000.00 of the debt.

Mr. Anderson then asked what the Nature Conservancy costs were for the fees and costs on the land acquisition while they held the land. Mr. Hannan noted he would get those exact figures for the next meeting. Discussions were also held regarding the interest rate charges by the County for the Opportunity Fund land loans. Mr. Hannan pointed out that the County Fund charged 5% interest where almost all local banks would have charged a minimum of 8% on the money.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci recounted that she was recently discussing a massive influx of monarch butterflies that had come to the County several years before. In doing some preliminary research she found that if there were a loss of trees in their wintering sites in Mexico and a concurrent lack of food here (specifically milkweed and butterfly bush) the monarchs would not thrive. She wondered if the District could provide some sort of seed to local residents wishing to participate in such a program. Mr. Hannan noted that Butterfly Milkweed plant would be a good, non-aggressive and non-invasive native Prairie variety. He will speak with some local naturalists regarding such a program.

LAND ACQUISITION UPDATE AND PERSONNEL MATTERS

Prior to the beginning of the discussion, Ms. Fauci asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Ms. DeFauw moved the Committee into executive session for the purpose of discussing current information on District land acquisition and other activities, seconded by Ms. Turner. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 1 absent. Following the Executive Session, Ms. DeFauw moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Ms. Turner. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 1 absent.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr