

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 20, 2007**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, February 20, 2007 at the DeKalb County Administration Building, Conference Room East at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members Ms. Fauci, Mr. Gudmunson, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Turner, Mr. Rosemier, Ms. DeFauw and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Lyle was absent. Guests included County Board member Roger Steimel, Peggy Doty of the Natural Resources Education Center, Greg Milburg of the DeKalb County Farm Bureau and Land Acquisition consultant, Dan Lobbes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Fauci noted that since the Committee did not meet in January, there were no minutes for approval.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any additions or corrections to the agenda. Hearing none, Mr. Rosemier moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Ms. Fauci began by introducing tonight's guests, Mr. Dan Lobbes of the Conservation Foundation and the Committee's land acquisition consultant; Mr. Greg Milburg of the DeKalb County Farm Bureau, Ms. Doty of the Natural Resources Education Center and County Board member Roger Steimel.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

In the Monthly Reports section, Mr. Hannan noted that a monthly staff activities report was included with the most recent packet for the Committee as well as a wetlands mitigation study that will be forwarded to the Army Corps of Engineers.

Ms. Turner asked if the study would focus only on the plants with the highest rate of survival. Mr. Hannan responded that the focus would be to assure the correct percentage of plants would qualify to retain the wetland status. He went on to note that they had also done piezometer placement studies to determine water table depths and soil saturation levels. Mr. Anderson asked how deep the water table was. Mr. Hannan responded that there are areas from 2' in depth to areas that were simply spongy and some area with subsoil moisture -but that all the areas represented wetland habitats for certain species of plants.

Mr. Hannan also noted that there were photos in this month's reports from the recent Winterfest celebration at the Russell Woods Natural Resources Education Center. He went on to comment that the crowds were very good this year and that the event seemed very well attended.

Additional documents in the monthly reports were the monthly fee reports as well as documentation of the projects and general maintenance being performed by the staff. Specific projects noted were the indoor improvements of a shelter house at MacQueen FP as well as a new bridge decks at 2 Afton bridges.

Mr. Hannan commented that he had also recently applied for three new grants for the District. Two of the grants, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the DeKalb County Foundation would be used to help with new trees and plantings for the preserves and a C2000 grant would focus on the sedge meadow restoration at Potawatomi Woods, specifically the removal of reed canary grass and seeding and new plantings. He then closed by noting that a \$100 donation had been made to the endowment fund for the Natural Resources Education Center. An recreational accessibility grant partnership with DeKalb County Community Foundation is being explored.

When reporting on the Stewardship program, Mr. hannan reported that Chris Houser who had been the steward for the Nehring Woods Preserve had recently resigned after accepting a new position in Monterrey, California. He commented that there was interest by another volunteer in taking on Chris' duties with Nehring. He also noted that the DeKalb County Master Gardener's had volunteered to assist with restoration work at Adee's Woods and a local Scout leader had volunteered to assist with restoration work at Sannauk.

Ms. Fauci commented that at a recent volunteer event, there had been questions raised about the binding nature of the waiver signed by volunteers prior to beginning work. She noted that Mr. Houser had indicated that the waiver might not be binding and asked if there were any official legal opinion on that. Mr. Hannan commented that they use a form also utilized by the Nature Conservancy and that the form was reviewed by and approved by the DeKalb County State's Attorney's office. Ms. Fauci noted that the District did work diligently to reduce the dangers to volunteers during the events.

Ms. Fauci then noted that they had recently attended the Illinois Association of Forest Preserve and Conservation District's quarterly meeting in Chicago and were very pleased to be asked for referendum advice by Cook County.

Mr. Hannan noted that a television and the funds for a stand were recently donated to the Natural Resources Education Center by County Board and Committee member Bob Rosemier. Ms. Fauci noted that the gift was very appreciated by the Center and went on to comment that she had recently attended an event at the Center and found it very enjoyable.

Ms. Fauci then commented that a brochure had been finalized to use with individuals who might be interested in the District's land acquisition activities as well as future sellers.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS:

Mr. Rosemier noted that he was impressed by the report on other referendum activities in neighboring counties as well as the ideas presented for saving energy in County buildings. He noted that he had recently been in buildings owned by DuPage County that utilized motion detection devices for energy savings.

Ms. Doty of the Natural Resources Education Center noted that the facility they were using at Russell Woods has some fairly severe energy loss issues,(the building is old) but that they did work to practice energy conservation whenever possible. She noted that efforts are being made with the Center to upgrade lighting as a way to conserve energy. Mr. Hannan noted that the original building for the Center had been built in the 1960's and was not intended for long term use. Ms. Doty noted that they had been looking at the feasibility of capital improvement funds being directed to improvement on the facility duct works. Mr. Rosemier asked if they might be able to obtain a volunteer evaluation of the duct works by a local expert. He went on to note that perhaps local builders could consider donating insulation and labor to assist with the upgrades.

Mr. Anderson asked if the Committee were taking a position on legislation recently proposed to change the taxing structure for timberland parcels.

Mr. Milburg of the Farm Bureau commented that the legislation first proposed last year would have a minimal impact on DeKalb County parcels and would have a much more serious impact on parcels in the southern areas of the State. He noted that in these areas the parcels are utilized as recreational tracts for private hunting and camping. The current assessment practices treat the timberlands as having approximately 1/6 the value of farmland. This new legislation proposes to tax the lands at a higher level than farmland, however he noted that if the land were adjacent to a farm operation it would continue to be considered farmland value.

Mr. Hannan noted that a very comprehensive look at the issue had been prepared by Brent Manning current head of the DuPage County Forest Preserve and a former head of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Mr. Milburg noted that the Farm Bureau had been vigorously opposing the proposed legislation.

Mr. Lobbes commented that the Conservation Foundation had also been opposing the legislation and that many organizations for parks and wildlife were in agreement in their opposition.

Mr. Hannan noted that the most recent bill had been a Senate Bill number SB0017 and that it was not yet in a final state. A recent review by an adjacent county had noted that the only way to avoid being adversely impacted by the bill was to join the IDNR forestry plan (which has a current two year waiting list). Mr. Fauci noted that County governments definitely had a role to play and asked if it were the appropriate time to make the other Commissioners aware of the situation. Mr. Rosemier noted that it would also seem appropriate to make the Committee's opposition know to local legislators. Mr. Anderson noted that this should especially be brought to the attention of Senator Brad Burzynski.

Mr. Rosemier moved that the DeKalb County Forest Preserve Commissioners formally declare their opposition to Senate Bill 0017, seconded by Mr. Gudmunson and the motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Ms. Turner moved the Committee to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing land acquisition, seconded by Mr. Anderson. On a roll call vote, 6 members voted “yes” with no members voting “no” and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. DeFauw moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Mr. Rosemier. On a roll call vote, 6 members voted “yes” with no members voting “no” and the motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee

JF:kjr