

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
May 15, 2007

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, May 15, 2007 at Afton Forest Preserve at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members, Chairperson Julia. Fauci, Vice-Chair Anita Turner, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Gudmunson, and Mr. Lyle and Superintendent Hannan. and Mr. Rosemier arrived after the meeting had been called to order. Ms. DeFauw was absent. Guests included Mr. Mark Biernacki, DeKalb City Manager and Mr. Rudy Espiritu, DeKalb Asst. City Manager.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairperson Julia Fauci began by asking if there were any changes to the April 17, 2007 minutes. Hearing none, Mr. Lyle 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. Mr. Gudmunson moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Fauci welcomed the evening's guests, Mr. Biernacki and Mr. Espiritu who would give a presentation on proposed TIF district changes to the Committee. After Mr. Hannan handed out formal presentation materials to the Committee members, Ms. Fauci turned the floor over to Mr. Biernacki.

PROPOSED TIF DISTRICT CHANGES

Mr. Biernacki began by noting that the handout presented was an adapted summary version of the DeKalb Downtown Revitalization Plan which has been in discussion for the past several months. He noted that the plan's design was for the beautification and enhancement of the public ways as well as some enhancements of adjoining private properties. In order to accomplish the plan as proposed, TIF District funding would need to be utilized. However, some adjustments would also need to be made to the current TIF District timelines and boundaries.

Mr. Biernacki commented that the largest area of the plan is the Central Area TIF District which runs north to Northland Plaza and South inclusive of the DeKalb downtown area. However, the current TIF is set to expire in 2009 and it would be impossible to make any significant advances by that deadline, therefore it became obvious that some plan adjustments would be needed.

Mr. Biernacki then explained the two maps presented to the Committee, one showing the current District boundaries and the second showing a modified boundary proposal. He then discussed the boundaries and expiration dates of adjoining TIF areas. The residential TIF section south of the downtown area is set to expire in 2013. The County

Home TIF District, located west of Northland Plaza is set to expire in 2020. However, Mr. Biernacki noted, that District's obligations will actually be met in full within the next 3 to 4 years and the District will be given an early sunset date.

The new proposal is designed to extend the life of the Central District by an additional 12 years, taking it to the statutory maximum of 35 years. The plan initially also proposed to shrink the size of the District, targeting more critical areas in need of attention. However, upon additional review, it was determined that shrinking the District (and especially if the redefined boundaries did not include Northland Plaza) would render the funds insufficient to meet obligations. The shrinkage would have also involved Clinton Rosette Middle School, who would have been harmed by the removal of the TIF fund obligations related to their recent renovations. One final argument against shrinking the District related to the loss of State Sales Tax TIF by over one million dollars.

Therefore, since the City could not physically shrink the District, it opted instead to shrink the dollars involved with a promise that surplus funds would be returned to participating taxing bodies unencumbered dollars. The return however, would have to be delayed until 2010 to allow for the completion of certain capitol project obligations with other taxing districts.

The City is asking at this time for each taxing body involved in the process to sign an intergovernmental agreement with the City wherein the City would agree to guarantee a return of the surplus in 2010. In return the Forest Preserve District would provide a letter of support for the new District configuration. The letters are being requested to allow the proposal to proceed through the State Legislature. The General Assembly will not allow an extension of a TIF district unless the City involved can produce letters of support showing complete unanimity of agreement with the proposal from the involved taxing bodies.

At this time, Mr. Biernacki commented, the City has been meeting individually with all of the involved taxing bodies with an eye to completing the intergovernmental agreements by either August or September of this year. Once the agreements were in place and the letters received, the proposal would be tuned over to State Senator Brad Burzynski and State Representative Robert Pritchard for presentation to the General Assembly. If all of the plan's proposed steps proceed on schedule, the City would be able to move forward on a bond to begin improvements by July 2008.

Mr. Biernacki concluded by noting that it was important to recognize that even if the new TIF configuration falls in place as proposed, there could also be private redevelopment proposals that could require certain adjustments beyond the proposed 12 year extension.

Mr. Anderson asked for a recap of the major projects proposed for Downtown DeKalb. Mr. Biernacki directed the committee to the presentation documented and noted that major focus would be given to land acquisition, improvement of the public rights-of-way, streetscape enhancement with new lighting and a beautification focus on some private

property in the area. He also noted that there were developers expressing interest in becoming a part of the process with an eye to redevelopment.

Mr. Anderson then asked if the plan had any specific recommendations regarding truck traffic. Mr. Biernacki commented that there were discussions of narrowing the Lincoln Highway area through downtown to discourage truck traffic, but that proposal had received mixed reviews. However, the notion of making the route less attractive for large trucks does seem to be a common theme.

Mr. Rosemier asked if the plans to discourage truck traffic did proceed – where would the larger trucks opt to go? Mr. Biernacki commented that one idea was for a bypass to be created, but that this plan would require a very large monetary component, so the concept of making the route generally inconvenient seemed a better option to first pursue.

Ms. Fauci noted that there are also plans to expand development on the Locust street section rather than focusing solely on Lincoln Highway. She closed by noting that the County Farm redevelopment proposal had turned out quite well for the area.

Mr. Biernacki pointed out that another feature of the plan was to encourage a sizable amount of residential development in and around downtown. He commented that such development often induces retail opportunities as well as containing dense housing options in town rather than having them spread to outlying areas. This sort of plan encourages a sizable contingent capable of walking to the local businesses, thus not necessitating additional parking. He did note, however, that the plan does propose additional parking plans as well.

Mr. Anderson commented that it was his opinion that though it will be a somewhat unpopular move with the local residents, unless Fairview Drive is fully designated the alternative truck route; the plan will face significant obstacles.

Mr. Biernacki commented that, despite some anecdotal opinion, the City has never done a comprehensive plan on this scale before. Also, there appears to be the first indications of strong political will on the City Council as well as a large grass roots citizen's movement supporting the plan as well.

Ms. Fauci asked when the City would need the letter of support from the Forest Preserve District. Mr. Biernacki replied that August was their target to get all of the letters in place.

Mr. Rosemier asked where the school board stood so far. Mr. Biernacki replied that they are in discussions with the City and that the administration seems initially supportive, but that additional meetings still need to occur. He closed by noting that it did seem that the schools would have a greater return from the surplus than they were currently seeing with the existing District. Current projections place the total surplus at a potential \$42,000,000.00 by 2011.

Mr. Biernacki then commented that the General Assembly entertains about one half dozen or so proposals for extensions of TIF District every year, so this was a fairly common option that Cities explore.

Mr. Anderson asked if the Committee should direct any additional questions or comments to Ms. Fauci and Mr. Hannan for consolidation and dissemination to Mr. Biernacki rather than all of the members contacting him individually. Mr. Biernacki responded that he would prefer that approach.

Mr. Rosemier asked for additional details on the Lincoln Highway Bridge area near the University. Ms. Fauci asked if work done on the bridge would extend the bike path in that area. Mr. Biernacki responded that the proposal will allow for the expansion of the path from the Lagoon area to People's Park.

Ms. Fauci thanked Mr. Biernacki for his presentation and commented that she would be contacting him with additional Committee member comments or concerns.

FOREST PRESERVE MONTHLY REPORTS.

Mr. Hannan began by noting that Gary Hanson, the chief financial officer for the County has proposed to change the County fiscal year from its current December 1 to November 30 configuration to one that corresponds with a regular calendar year. He noted that such a change would have no effect on the statutory obligations for the filing of the Forest Preserve District's appropriation ordinance as that must be done in the first quarter of the year, a time period that would not be influenced by the one month change. Mr. Hannan noted that he would keep in contact with Mr. Hanson as this process progresses.

Mr. Hannan then reported that the grant to defer land acquisition costs had been submitted to Springfield. At this time the grant is set to be reviewed after 7-2-07 with award notifications made to successful applicants in December. This grant could potentially defer up to \$400,000.00 in costs for the District. Mr. Hannan closed by reporting that the Department of Natural Resources had granted the District's request for a Certificate of Reciprocity to allow the District to finalize its land acquisition [prior to the grant being awarded. Closing for the property is set for Thursday May 17, 2007.

He went on to note that the District had also been given a grant from the DeKalb Community Foundation with the \$4000.00 grant for help with prairie and wetland seeds and oak tree purchases to be awarded at an upcoming presentation event. He noted that he would extend the Committee's thanks at the time of the presentation.

Saturday May 19, 2007 is scheduled for the DeKalb Rotary Club's 8K run at Potawatomie Woods Preserve. Communications from the Rotary indicate that they have a very strong turnout predicted for this second year of the event. A "thank you" presentation to individuals who have donated to the Preserve will be held early that morning before the run.

Mr. Hannan then reported that phase two of construction has begun on the second phase of the Wetland Bank program. There is potential for about 4 additional acres of wetland for the coming year.

Mr. Rosemier asked if it was time yet to discuss raising the rates for the Bank. Mr. Hannan closed by noting that they could schedule such a discussion for the next monthly meeting.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Rosemier asked if the Committee had any particular size in mind when considering future acquisitions. Mr. Hannan responded that the key issue is often the location, connectivity and configuration of the land and the natural resource value, rather than its exact size.

Ms. Fauci commented that since she would be out of town, Ms. Turner would handle the land acquisition resolution at the upcoming County Board meeting. She asked that Ms. Turner express the Committee's thanks to the Commissioners for their trust and cooperation during the acquisition process. Mr. Anderson pointed out that there might be a small error in the map of the new property included for the Commissioner's consideration. As drawn, the map appears to imply that the District owned about 270 feet of creek frontage that was not included in the final bid purchase. Ms. Turner indicated that she would clarify that for the Commissioners.

Ms. Fauci noted to the Committee that she had recently asked Mr. Hannan to prepare a report of his successful grant activities during his time with the County. At this time, the total figure stands at over \$2,600,000.00 in grants with an additional \$500,000.00 in potential future grants within the coming year. (see attachment)

In other District activities, it was noted that a graduating NIU student, Lisa Murphy, recently completed work on a Natural Resources Information Guide for the District's use. This work was done in conjunction with a senior honors project. Ms. Fauci passed information regarding Illinois Conservation and Climate Initiative Credit information for Mr. Hannan's evaluation.

Ms. Fauci closed by commenting that she had been in discussions with Mr. Hanson regarding setting up a website location where interested individuals could make donations to the District via a credit card transaction.

LAND ACQUISITION UPDATE

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

roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative and none in the negative.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr