

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
December 16, 2008**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, December 16, 2008 at the East Conference Room of the County Administration Building at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members, Ms. Fauci, Ms. Turner, Mr. Newport, Mr. Augsburger and Mr. Anderson as well as Superintendent Hannan. Absent were committee members Mr. Gudmunson, Mr. Stuckert, Mr. Walt and Ms. DeFauw. Guests included Kevin Kane, Peggy Doty, Mitch Doty, County Board member Riley Oncken and Aaron Ruder.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci began by asking if there were any changes to the November 18, 2008 minutes. Ms. Turner moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci noted that there were individuals in attendance interested in the bid opening for the Afton Wetland Restoration Project and asked to have that moved up to item 3A on the agenda. She then asked if there were any other additions or corrections to the amended agenda. Hearing none, Mr. Augsburger moved to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Ms. Turner and the motion passed unanimously.

BID OPENING-AFTON WETLAND RESTORATION

Mr. Hannan noted that this was for phase three of the Afton project and represented the final phase. Future work will continue down the nearby creek. Ms. Fauci asked if the new Committee members understood the wetland bank process. Mr. Hannan noted that he had a presentation on that scheduled for later in the meeting.

The following bids were then opened by Ms. Turner and Mr. Anderson:

- 1) J.R. Dashney
 - a. \$12,800 for Excavation
 - b. \$6720 for Rip RapTotal: \$19,520

- 2) Anderson Bros, Inc.
 - a. \$37,000 for Excavation
 - b. \$8,000 for Rip RapTotal: \$45,000

- 3) V3 Construction Group Ltd.
 - a. \$55,600 for Excavation
 - b. \$17,280 for Rip RapTotal: \$72,880

- 4) Copen Haver Construction.
 - a. \$66,000 for Excavation
 - b. \$11,200 for Rip RapTotal: \$77,200 It was also noted that this bidder did not include the required bid guarantee check with the bid.

- 5) Yockey Construction
 - a. \$22,000 for Excavation
 - b. \$7,200 for Rip RapTotal: \$29,200

- 6) Wilkinson Excavating
 - a. \$18,000 for Excavation
 - b. \$5,120 for Rip RapTotal: \$23,120

- 7) C&H Excavating
 - a. \$24,150 for Excavation
 - b. \$10,115.40 for Rip RapTotal: \$34,265.40 It was also noted that this bidder did not include the required bid guarantee check with the bid.

- 8) Tracy and Ed Construction Inc.
 - a. \$40,000 for Excavation
 - b. \$16,000 for Rip RapTotal: \$56,000

- 9) Cooling Land Concepts LLC
 - a. \$16,600 for Excavation
 - b. \$6,480 for Rip RapTotal: \$23,080 It was also noted that this bidder did not include the required bid guarantee check with the bid.

- 10) DuPage Top Soil Inc.
 - a. \$82,900 for Excavation
 - b. \$6,400 for Rip RapTotal: \$89,300

Following removal of the bidders who had not presented the bid as required, the Committee began deliberations. Mr. Hannan noted that Dashney had been the successful bidder for Phase 1 of the project. Ms. Fauci asked if Mr. Hannan felt they had done satisfactory work on Phase 1. Mr. Hannan replied that they had done a very good job with the project.

Ms. Fauci noted that there was certainly a very wide range of bid values and noted that perhaps, since many of the bidders appeared to be from more suburban areas, that was the reason for their much higher bids. Mr. Hannan commented that there had been a fairly wide difference on the bids for the past phase as well. He reminded the Committee that the top two bids for Phase two were separated by only \$400 and the next lowest bid was much higher.

Mr. Anderson asked how the bids were sought and Mr. Hannan replied that they were advertised in local papers as well as construction trade journals. Mr. Anderson then requested that the Committee identify the top three bidders and look at them more closely. The three identified were Dashney, Cooling Land and Wilkinson. However, it was noted that Cooling was eliminated for lack of the bid guarantee check.

Ms. Fauci asked if Dashney was a local firm and Mr. Hannan replied that they were from the Kirkland area. Mr. Anderson asked if anyone was familiar with Wilkinson. Aside from the identification of a Princeton bank, there were no clear indicators of where the firm was located.

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any additional discussion on the two lowest bidders, Dashney and Wilkinson. Mr. Augsburger asked if the Committee were not required to take the lowest bid. Mr. Anderson noted that was generally true as long as the work of the lowest bidder was known to be good.

Mr. Augsburger moved to accept the bid of J.R. Dashney for the Phase 3 project, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

WELCOME TO GUESTS

Ms. Fauci welcomed the evening's guests.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci noted that she wanted to begin by laying out some groundwork for future meetings given the expanded size of the Committee. She encouraged Committee members to bring forth items they wished to discuss and noted that she believed in full and open discussions of issues, closing by saying that unless a motion or the question is called, she wanted all members to take whatever time they needed to feel sufficiently heard.

Ms. Fauci then asked the Committee members and staff in attendance to take a moment to introduce themselves and discuss the basis for their interest in the Forest preserve Committee.

Ms. Fauci then closed by reviewing the Committee member sign in sheets and provided a sample agenda. She requested that agenda items should be identified and added two weeks prior to the intended meeting. Mr. Hannan noted to the Committee that while it generally meets the evening before the full County Board, there are two instances in April and July where the meeting actually occurs the week after the full Board.

FOREST PRESERVE INFORMATION FOR NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Hannan noted to the Committee that the monthly reports were included with their County Board packets. He then gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Preserves and handed an informational packet out to the new and returning members. Mr. Hannan noted that the presentation is one he gives to local groups asking about the District. He commented that counties that contain healthy and growing Forest Preserve Districts tend to have an enhanced quality of life. He also noted to the Committee that not all counties have active Forest Preserves. Currently DeKalb County contains 14 preserves with 1,222 acres of land open all year for the public's use and enjoyment. He noted that by State Statute, 80% to 90% of the land must be used primarily for conservation or restoration with a maximum of 20% allowed for passive recreation. He commented that the Wetland Bank activities assist in maintaining and improving soil, air and water quality for the County as well as serving as a source of funding.

At this time, there is only 1/10 of 1% the original prairie left in Illinois and generally adjacent to railroads or in old cemeteries. He noted that a goal of the Preserve is to acquire and return land as much as possible to that original state.

Mr. Hannan then noted that there is a tremendous range of potential activities in the Preserves from hiking and biking on the Great Western Trail to family picnics, and bird watching in several of the Preserves. He commented that bird watching was the number one fastest growing outdoor activity and individuals came from far outside the County to enjoy the diversity of species found in the DeKalb preserves. He also noted that tent camping, photography, handicapped access trails sledding, horseback riding, fishing and environmental education opportunities for area schools, NIU and Kishwaukee College were available to County residents. A local astronomy group also frequented the Preserves due to the better light quality here farther from more dense urban populations.

Mr. Hannan noted that the Forest Preserve State Statutes also call for outdoor environmental education opportunities, which are very ably handled by Ms. Peggy Doty and the Natural Resources Education Center located at the Russell Woods Preserve. Currently 5,000 children per year pass through the programs and summer camps enjoying activities such as field study groups and recycling programs, Winter festivals, maple syrup creation and a Mother's day flower walk. The staff also works with Northern Illinois University Elementary Ed teachers to enhance their classroom experiences.

Mr. Hannan noted that all of the Preserve maintenance and natural resource management is handled by a very dedicated and skilled staff, as well as a loyal and committed group of volunteers and land stewards. At this time every Forest Preserve has a land management area to demonstrate what native forest, wetland and prairie restorations look like and what life they support. He commented that the work to restore areas to a native Illinois landscape is what DeKalb County and other Forest Preserves in Illinois do.

He then noted that Wilkinson Marsh is the only natural wetland in the District. 90% of Illinois wetlands are gone and 50% nationwide are drained and filled. For that reason, in the 1970's, the Clean Water Act restored value to the wetlands and created the wetland

preservation and mitigation process. The U.S. was mapped in a National Wetlands Inventory. Following the inventory, a person seeking to build on or impact a wetland area, must mitigate to replace the wetland area that will be impacted. This places a monetary value on the area where the mitigation or replacement will occur. Currently Afton Forest Preserve is a 57 acre wetland bank that has been a good source of revenue for the District as well as a good source of potential new wetland banks for the Preserves overall.

Mr. Hannan reported that the DeKalb Forest Preserve staff consists of himself and 2 full time staff members as well as 2 part time and seasonal workers. The maintenance staff mows, plows snow, grade roads, keeps the Forest Preserves clean, cuts firewood, maintains equipment, performs controlled burns, does water safety testing, does the majority of construction projects, plants trees, prairie and wetlands, as well as the maintenance and repairs of all buildings and grounds throughout the District.

He then noted that regarding the budget impact to the County, all of the Forest Preserve activities have a tax cost of approximately \$42 per year to a home with a market value of \$200,000 while concurrently enhancing the value and quality of life of the County overall.

In 2006 the Forest Preserve passed a land acquisition referendum allowing the District to access funds to purchase land from willing sellers and to use the funds as well to improve and maintain the holdings acquired. 90% of the money raised will be used for acquisition and 10% will go to fund maintenance and improvement.

Compared to other counties, DeKalb has a fairly small percentage of land in District holdings. DuPage County Forest Preserve District currently has 11% of the County in their Preserves. In DeKalb County, the combined holdings of the Forest Preserve, Park Districts, State Parks and local parks amount to about 1% of the County land overall.

Mr. Hannan then indicated to the Committee that there were also budget documents and other information on Preserve projects over the past 8 years or so available in the general information packet for the Committee members' review. Also for Committee members was a handout listing the received grants and donations to the District.

Wetland bank documents are also included in the packet that outline what a wetland bank is, how it is apportioned over Afton Preserve and how the financing of the bank is administered.

He noted that there was also a handout included on the Pizzo property that is in consideration for future purchase. A grant proposal has been submitted to the State to assist with 50% of the costs of the purchase and word on that grant will be received in the Spring. He commented that while things are fiscally precarious in the State overall, it is generally believed that the OSLAD grant program will remain a source of matching funds for acquisition and development projects.

Mr. Hannan closed by noting that he is always available to discuss any questions or details from the packets.

Ms. Fauci asked if any Committee members had any questions at this time. Hearing none, she noted again to the members that Mr. Hannan would be available to address any questions they may have.

FOREST PRESERVE MONTHLY REPORTS AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan again reminded the Committee that their monthly reports will be received with the County Board packet. Generally, the reports will show usage of the Preserves, number of visitors, staff reports and volunteer activities. He then commented that a local farmer had recently had a snowy owl sighting on their land. When the white owls pass down this far from the north, it is generally seen as a sign that food is scarce.

Mr. Hannan then asked Ms. Doty to discuss the upcoming Natural Resource Education Center Winterfest activities. Ms. Doty noted that the event will take place the 3rd Saturday in January and is designed to encourage families to find ways to enjoy outdoor activities in the winter. She noted that while snow is always helpful, it is not the focus of the Winterfest. She then commented that the 1st Saturday in March (3-7-09) the annual Maple Syrup activities will take place at the Center with participants shown how natural maple syrup is processed. Mr. Hannan and Mr. Prain will again be serving as the pancake chefs for the event so that participants can taste the results of their activities. A winter themed photo contest will also be held at that time.

The Mother's Day flower walk is scheduled for 5-9-09 and promises to have good attendance, weather permitting.

Ms. Doty noted that the Center is currently heavily booked for most of their activities and will be expanding this year to work on a workshop for non-formal educators in Illinois to assist with the No Child Left Inside initiative that has been proposed to supplement the No Child Left Behind Act.

She noted that outdoor education provides a wide spectrum of math, language, art and music skills and that the non-traditional settings of the Center often allow students to make critical connections that might not come as easily in a standard classroom setting. This is especially critical in a time when the U.S. is falling behind in the Sciences. She noted that Lake County will be holding the training events for formal educators and she will be focusing on the non-formal participants. It is hoped that grant opportunities to assist with this may become available if the No Child Left Inside Act is passed.

The workshops will be held at the Russell Woods Center the week following Winterfest and this has also represented a very good partnership opportunity with Northern Illinois University. It is hoped that the passage of the Act and activities such as this will result in a boost to outdoor education overall. She again noted that outdoor education represented a very valuable way to enhance students' skill sets and that there were many calls for expansion of these activities. The only difficulty lies in the scarcity of funding or

granting resources currently available. Mr. Hannan noted that the partnership between the District and the University of Illinois Extension has been the primary path for providing these services and functions.

Mr. Augsburger asked if the DeKalb County Community Foundation had been approached and Ms. Doty responded that they have been very helpful in providing funds to assist with upkeep of the facility.

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, seconded by Mr. Augsburger. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 5 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 4 absent. Following the Executive Session, Ms. Turner moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Mr. Anderson. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 5 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 4 absent.

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