

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
January 15, 2008**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, January, 2007 at the DeKalb County Administration Building Conference Room at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members, Ms. Fauci, Mr. Gudmunson, Ms. DeFauw, Ms. Turner, Mr. Rosemier, Mr. Lyle and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Anderson arrived after roll was called.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci began by asking if there were any changes to the November 20, 2007 minutes and reminded the Committee that there had been no December meeting. Hearing none, Mr. Lyle moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Turner and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any other additions or corrections to the agenda. Ms. Turner moved to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

TAX ABATEMENT POLICY DISCUSSION

Ms. Fauci reminded the Committee that she had previously discussed the need for a formal policy for the Committee regarding Tax Abatement requests. To begin those discussions, she had prepared a draft policy recommendation for the Committee's consideration. She further noted that no action was required on the policy at this time. She noted that this issue had come about due to the City of DeKalb's recent request to have the Committee approve a series of suggested abatements to a business interested in locating in the area. This request sparked a conversation regarding whether such requests highlight basic philosophical differences between the goals of the Committee and such abatement principles. She further noted that as the County's smallest taxing body, such abatements have the potential to cause a greater impact on the Forest Preserve District.

Ms. Fauci then asked the Committee to review the document for general principles and themes first and then discuss editorial changes. The Committee however, opted to begin with a few textual changes to the opening paragraph.

Mr. Anderson then asked why the document was even being discussed at this time. Ms. Fauci replied that in addition to the recent request from the City of DeKalb, the County had also made certain tax abatement agreements recently with DeKalb and Sycamore and taken together, the agreements appeared to be philosophically opposed to the basic principles of the District.

Mr. Rosemier noted that there are questions regarding how the area benefits from promoting development but also supporting preservation of open lands. Ms. Fauci

commented that this was the first year the District had been targeted for inclusion in such an agreement.

Mr. Anderson noted that allowing development would ultimately provide a greater benefit to the County and then to the District. Ms. Fauci responded that it was certainly an option for the Committee to simply not respond to the request for support, rather than support or oppose it. However, she added that she felt strongly that the District's goals are primarily for the preservation of open lands and farm land preservation. Mr. Anderson asked why Ms. Fauci was against this recent request when she had supported the previous request for abatements for the redevelopment of downtown DeKalb.

Ms. Fauci replied that the prior request was a situation of supporting a proposal that would enhance and revitalize an already developed urban infrastructure. Mr. Anderson then noted that if the District opted to say "no" to supporting abatements for development, but then took the enhanced benefits that such development might provide appeared to be a clear attempt to have one's cake and eat it too.

Ms. Fauci commented that her belief is that when a major corporation with more than ample resources and profits asks to be given relief from paying their fair share of the tax burden, it appears to be patently unfair. Mr. Anderson countered that if we refuse the benefits of increased industry, it will simply be taken elsewhere and the County would see no benefits.

Mr. Hannan asked why the DeKalb Sanitary District recently refused to participate in a recent abatement request. Mr. Rosemier responded that the District felt the costs of the services they would have to provide in terms of enhanced infrastructure could not be accomplished with the reduced abatement amounts.

Mr. Anderson noted that the District also accrues benefits from wetland bank benefits that often grow out of development. Mr. Rosemier noted that by agreeing to abatement in general, the District was not betraying the trust of the public as evidenced by the recent land acquisition referendum. He noted that supporting abatement did not mean that the lands in question produced any less taxes than they would have had they remained undeveloped.

Ms. Fauci commented that while they may not have been receiving less in taxes, they were receiving more in terms of the increased traffic and pollution that, say, a warehousing facility might cause. Mr. Rosemier commented that the developers typically do not concern themselves with the strength or value of a strong Forest Preserve District in the area because it simply is not that large a part of the overall scheme of things.

Ms. DeFauw noted that while the philosophies of the developers and the District may be at odds, it is true that the small size of the amount of taxes the District represents allows only the chance to make small recommendations on such issues as green construction.

Ms. Fauci asked if the Committee wanted to adopt a blanket “yes” to abatement as the County had done. However, she cautioned that these requests seem to be coming in increasing amounts. Mr. Gudmunson commented that it would seem mutually beneficial to approve, but also share suggestions on things that might mitigate the effects of the development.

Ms. Fauci asked if anyone had any sense of the dollar impact of either supporting or refusing to support such proposed abatement would be to the District. Following discussion, the Committee agreed that it would be good to do additional research on that question. Ms. Fauci noted that the issue would therefore be tabled until the next meeting.

FY 2007 BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Mr. Hannan noted that this is a discussion that usually occurs in December, but that had been pushed to January due to the recent change in the County’s fiscal calendar. He then proceeded to review the amendments on a line by line basis especially noting lines where new equipment was purchased as well as where the insurances coverages and premiums for District’s prior carrier and the new PDRMA coverage overlapped. Also noted were the funds received from FEMA following the summer’s flooding damage as well as private donations received throughout the year. He commented that program fees and donations for the Natural Resource Education Center resulted in slightly less than \$25,000.00 for the year. The transfers and amendments will balance the FY 2008 budget.

Mr. Hannan then closed with a review of the loan balance to the County (for the Afton Addition purchase) that will be paid off in July 2008 or sooner if the OSLAD grant is awarded. If the state opts to fully fund the OSLAD grant program at the previous years’ level of \$32 million the chances of the District receiving a full award of a 50% match are good as this year there are only \$30 million in total funds applied for. However, the difficulty currently is the fact that the grant program amount is stalled along with several other state budget outcomes due to the budget disagreements and financing problems in Springfield. This years OSLAD grant allotment is not known at this time.

Mr. Rosemier asked if this money could be matched with any other state money available to the District. Mr. Hannan noted that state dollars cannot be matched with other state dollars, but that the District was always looking for other grant sources that might be available.

Mr. Anderson asked what interest rates the County is giving the District in the retained loan balance. Mr. Hannan reported that it was receiving a rate of approximately 5%.

Mr. Rosemier moved the resolution to forward the budget amendments as recommended to the full Board, seconded by Ms. Turner and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hannan then reported that at a recent Ellwood House activity he was approached about a log cabin that had been owned by the Ellwood family that was currently located on the Nelson farm west of Russell Woods. The Ellwood Association had considered moving the cabin to the Ellwood House grounds, but there were space concerns that led

them to explore other options as well. The representative then asked Mr. Hannan if the District would be open to having the cabin relocated to the Russell Woods Preserve (a site fairly close to its current location). It was offered that the Association would pay the costs of the relocation. Peggy Doty, Director of the Natural Resource Center had proposed that it might be able to be located on the landlocked 40 acre flood plain area that was just east the Natural Resource Center and that the City of Genoa had been discussing with the Center.

Mr. Rosemier asked if the cabin were intact or whether it was enclosed within another structure on the farm. Mr. Hannan replied that it was quite common for early residents to put clapboard around the existing cabin structure. He closed by noting that the Association had asked him to come and look at the cabin with them before continuing any further discussions.

Ms. Fauci asked what kind of maintenance agreement would be in place to share the upkeep of the structure with the Association. Mr. Hannan replied that these were all discussions to be held after he had a chance to see if the structure appeared viable for a move and if the Ellwood Association would have volunteers to help with maintenance.

The Committee then directed Mr. Hannan to see the cabin and then report back to the Committee on the viability of the proposal and any additional information that he could bring.

FOREST PRESERVE MONTHLY REPORTS.

Mr. Hannan noted that the reports were included in the Minutes packet, but commented that the District had a very busy December due to the heavy snowfalls. He further commented that the annual Winterfest event was scheduled for January 19, 2008 at the Natural Resources Education Center. He added that the activities of the day will be dictated by the snow or cold conditions that apply that day. Maple Syrup Day at Russell Woods is Saturday March 1rst.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any Committee Member comments. Hearing none, she moved to the Chair's Comments.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci commented that she and County Board member Pat Vary were working on an environmental sponsorship event that would involve the local hospital and other large groups in the area and that there was a February 2, 2008 date set for the event at the Farm Bureau Building.

LAND ACQUISITION UPDATE

Prior to the beginning of the discussion, Ms. Fauci asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Ms. Turner moved the Committee into executive session for the purpose of discussing current information on District land acquisition, seconded by Mr. Lyle. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 7 Committee members voting in the affirmative and none in the negative. Following the Executive Session, Mr. Rosemier

moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Mr. Anderson. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 7 Committee members voting in the affirmative and none in the negative.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr