

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
July 15, 2008

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, May 20, 2008 at the Afton Forest Preserve at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were committee members, Ms. Fauci, Ms. Turner, Mr. Gudmunson, Ms. DeFauw, Mr. Rosemier and Mr. Anderson as well as staff members, Superintendent Hannan and Peggy Doty of the Natural Resource Education Center at Russell Woods. Mr. Lyle arrived after roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci began by asking if there were any changes to the June 17, 2008 minutes. Mr. Rosemier noted that the last name of Jerry Brauer was misspelled. Ms. DeFauw moved to accept the minutes with that amendment, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

WELCOME TO GUESTS

Ms. Fauci noted there were no guests in attendance this evening.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan noted that the "other property" that was to be used as the basis for the new OSLAD grant application had backed out at the last minute. Since the grant application deadline was 7-1-08, a decision was made to utilize another possible acquisition, the Pizzo property, for the grant's focus. A resolution formalizing that possible acquisition and approving the grant application to go forward will be presented to the full County Board tomorrow evening.

Mr. Rosemier wondered if this was "letting the cat out of the bag" by specifically naming the property owner since this had previously only been considered in Executive Session. Mr. Anderson inquired about the wording of the resolution as presented in the proposed resolution that calls for the "acquisition of a 40 acre parcel". He believed it would be more appropriate to state "to apply for an OSLAD grant" as no formal decision to pursue purchase had been made at this time.

Ms. Fauci noted that the wording of the resolution as presented in the current booklet is not the final wording that she intended to present to the Board and concurred that the resolution's intent is to approve the grant application process not the acquisition at this time. She then noted that the current discussion was veering into areas that should, more properly, be discussed in the upcoming Executive Session.

Ms. Turner moved to approve the resolution as amended, seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion passed unanimously. In further General Discussion, Mr. Hannan noted that the District campgrounds were recently inspected by the Illinois Department of Public Health and earned an "excellent" response and full licensing. The only issue that needed resolution was a small correction to the chlorination of a well in MacQueen Preserve needed to address a slightly higher coliform (SP?) reading than was optimal. Following a subsequent re-test, the readings are now fine. Mr. Anderson asked what exactly is chlorinated in this process and Mr. Hannan responded

that the lines from the well are what are focused on, and not the well water itself.

Mr. Hannan then noted that the Illinois Small Mouth Bass Alliance had recently donated \$300 in water willow plants to the District and that a Prairie Walk evening with local naturalist Al Roloff had been held in Afton Preserve. He commented that the Walk was very well attended and quite successful despite a small storm that passed through toward the end of the evening.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has again contacted the District to request permission to conduct planned removal and testing of the local deer population for Chronic Wasting disease. One deer in the Potawatomi Preserve and one deer in Winnebago had tested positive for the disease prompting the IDNR to recommend continuation of the program for this year. Last year 125 deer were removed overall with 19 testing positive for the disease, a number representing one half of the total number of deer testing positive over the life of the program. Mr. Tom Bissel of the Sterling IDNR office is again the contact for the program. Mr. Hannan closed by noting that he was bringing this to the Committee for informational purposes only at this time and that a formal request with details for the year's program will be made to the District at a later date.

Mr. Rosemier asked when the PDRMA contract is next up for renewal and whether anything had been discussed regarding a rate increase for the coming year. Mr. Hannan noted that the renewal would be in January and that at this time, nothing had been communicated regarding an increase. However, he did note that the District was on track to be fully claims free for the year and that PDRMA has been very pleased with the camp programs. Ms. Doty noted that she also takes out a small supplemental insurance policy on the campers through a program with the University of Illinois Extension office.

MEMBERS COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any Committee Member comments. Hearing none, she proceeded to Chair Comments.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci noted that she had found a book dated in 1971 by Paul Douglas that was published at the Northern Press on Open Lands that contained some very interesting and familiar topics. Additionally she brought the Committee a news article regarding Cook County Forest preserve staffers who were found to be operating Cook County vehicle yet had no Illinois driver's licenses. She further noted that the local newspaper had given the DeKalb District front page status for the story on the recent Prairie Walk event at Afton.

TAX ABATEMENT POLICY

Ms. Fauci then reported on the outcomes of her phone interviews with other Districts regarding Tax Abatement. She noted that of the group sampled, none were currently offering rebates at this time. Only Winnebago had a history of abatement participation but that their cooperation was driven primarily by a time of economic difficulties. Since their economic picture has improved, they have ceased participating in such programs. She further noted that most of the conversations she had were not with elected officials, but rather the financial directors and staffers. All of the interviewees were careful to note that they were reporting only on past voting patterns and trends.

Common themes that arose during the interviews included the fact that there were strong sentiments that there really were no good reasons to participate in abatement programs as Forest Preserves were, by their very presence, attractions to developers without the need to provide additional financial incentives.

Eight of the Boards had by policy adopted the stance that the support of TIF districts to encourage redevelopment of already existing urban environments was consistent with Forest Preserve missions as such redevelopments did not expand development into farm or natural land areas. However the Boards were not very consistent regarding the negotiation of trade-offs with developers, such as rain gardens, etc.

Ms. DeFauw noted that she felt the informal research presented represented a very good cross section of Districts. Mr. Anderson noted that he continued to be concerned that the District not pursue any course of action that could damage the Wetland Bank program.

Ms. Fauci closed by noting that many of the districts were not positive about the impact that tax caps have had on them and all had gone to their taxing bodies to ask for increased rates necessitated by rising costs. Given this fact that more dollars were needed, it was the consensus that it did not therefore seem reasonable to participate in programs that would lower their potential income.

FORESTPRESERVE MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan noted that as usual, the monthly Forest Preserve reports were included in the packet.

LAND ACQUISITION UPDATE

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr