

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

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday, September 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, Ms. DeFauw, Mr. Lyle, Mr. Rosemier and Mr. Anderson as well as Superintendent Hannan. Guests included Ms. Peggy Doty and Deputy County Administrator, Mr. Gary Hanson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

WELCOME TO GUESTS

Ms. Fauci welcomed Mr. Hanson to the meeting and noted that he was attending to address questions that had arisen during the Committee's first look at the budget for 2009. She then invited Mr. Hanson to join the Committee at the table.

GENERAL DISCUSSION – FY 2009 BUDGET

Mr. Hannan began by handing out a folder containing supplemental Forest Preserve information regarding activities, events, the annual tax letter and budget brief. He also noted that the documents contained the wetland bank balance and commented that there was an additional piece of land in review with the Army Corps of Engineers for wetland bank inclusion.

Mr. Hannan reminded the Committee that during this evening's proceedings they must vote to put a budget on file for review as well as a draft of the levy ordinance and budget ordinance for consideration by the full County Board.

Ms. Fauci then began the budget discussions with Mr. Hanson by noting that one area of particular concern was the large increase in the IMRF funding for the year. Mr. Anderson added that he also wanted to know if the money contributed would have to be sent to Springfield or whether it could be held in the County until required by IMRF.

Mr. Hanson responded that the County can opt either to send the money directly to IMRF or retain and invest it locally. Mr. Anderson then asked if the Governor's office could seize the funds in either situation. Mr. Hanson responded that it is his understanding that the constitution would prohibit such seizure and that he has always been told that such an action by the Governor's office cannot occur. Mr. Hanson then noted that it has been the

decision of the County to retain the funds locally. Ms. Fauci commented that it was the consensus of the committee that they agreed with that decision. Mr. Lyle noted that with the current instability in State government, the local retention is a very good idea.

Ms. Fauci asked if the County invested in similar ways to what the IMRF would do with the money. Mr. Hanson replied that the County relies on local bank investments rather than the larger market based investments favored by IMRF and other large funds.

Ms. Turner asked if the decision regarding the funds required any sort of direction by the Committee or County Board. Mr. Hanson noted that the decision resided with his office and that he would not require supplemental direction at this time.

Ms. Fauci then returned to the question of why the IMRF contribution levels had risen so greatly this year. Mr. Hanson responded that with the reduction in contributions to the County Tort Fund, it was determined that increasing contributions to other funds that would have future expenses would take care of the expenses today rather than deferring the costs into the future. He commented that such actions place the District on a very solvent financial footing. He then added that the funds retained can also be used to facilitate equipment improvements at the District sites as recommended as a risk improvement strategy by the District's insurer, PDRMA. Ms. Hannan noted that there is a great need to upgrade playground equipment especially, given the age of many of the facilities and the improvements in playground safety that have occurred in recent years.

Mr. Rosemier asked if there are other County bodies that are moving toward 1005 funding as this Committee is. Mr. Hanson responded that the District is on track to achieve full funding of its required obligations in about three years time, but that the County overall is actually closer than that.

Mr. Hanson commented that the District does an exceptional job overall from a budget standpoint. Mr. Anderson noted that credit for that should go to Mr. Hannan for being a very involved participant in the everyday activities of the District as well as an administrator, a sentiment echoed by the Committee overall.

Mr. Hannan thanked the Committee and also noted that credit be shared with Forest Preserve staff as we all work together to have well managed Forest Preserves. He then reviewed the Budget Resolution with a note that the budget must be placed on file at the October Commissioners meeting and a public hearing and final vote scheduled for the November 18th Committee meeting and November 19th Commissioners meeting.

Ms. Turner moved to place the budget on file, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Fauci noted that the public hearing would be advertised to occur at the October Forest Preserve Committee meeting to be held on October 21, 2008.

FOREST PRESERVE MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan reported that the Preserve areas took on a great deal of water during the recent heavy flooding experienced by the area, with road and spillway damage. The road at Afton is now open and two others still closed (Potawatomi and Shabbona). He noted that after last years flooding, the work done to improve wetland berms and spillways funded by IEMA and that those efforts did appear to have helped. He noted that there would likely be opportunities to seek additional FEMA funds this year due to the recent declaration of several areas of the County as official disaster areas.

Mr. Hannan then reported that following the relocation of the Ellwood Cabin, Mr. J. Ellwood Towle has sent a check for \$6,000.00 to help with the relocation and . A grant to provide additional funding for that project is still in consideration with the DeKalb County Community Foundation.

He noted that letters of support has also been received from State Senator, Brad Burzynski and State Representative, Bob Pritchard in support of the OSLAD Grant proposal to obtain the Leland property being considered for acquisition by the District.

Mr. Hannan commented that a recent state mussel study to determine the water quality in the Kishwaukee River was recently cancelled due to the recent flooding. However, before the study ended, it has concluded that there were several areas of the Kishwaukee that had high quality water resources.

He then closed by noting that over 100 people had recently attended a star gazing event at the Afton Preserve. He added that following comments from Committee member, Mr. Gudmunson, that there were some questionable characters at Sannak, he had begun working with Officer Kevin Hickey of the County Sheriff's office to step up patrols. He commented that the Preserves has always received exceptional support from the Sheriff's office on security issues.

Mr. Rosemier asked about a line in the budget noting that the new Afton addition showed the District expending \$760,000.00. He was curious as to why the OSLAD grant money that had been awarded was not reflected. Mr. Hannan reminded the Committee that while the money had been awarded, it was not yet received and therefore could not be used to reduce that figure until it was received and recorded. He commented that it is expected to be received in October or November.

Ms. Fauci then invited Peggy Doty to discuss the recent start of classes at the NREC at Russell Woods. Ms. Doty commented on a recent grant funded activity held at the Center in conjunction with the Kishwaukee College Family Literacy Program that encouraged involvement by low income and bilingual families. The program focused on GED/ESL families from the area and was titled "Cultural Diversity/Bio-Diversity". The concept was to demonstrate that the outdoors held great, affordable opportunities for learning. Following the event, a book was created for the participants to have as a

reminder of the lessons of the day. This book was created by Family Learning Center Coordinator, Carla Raynor with assistance from Gilda Madrid.

Ms. Doty noted that she had also been contacted by NIU to join forces for a grant for a program titled "Getting to NCLB (No Child Left Behind) with NCLI (No Child Left Inside)". This workshop would be designed to assist non-formal educators with incorporating the NCLI principles into their curriculums.

In addition, there are currently 1100 children scheduled into fall classes at the NREC but several of the NREC staffers have recently left due to transfers and illness. However, Ms. Doty reports that two new staffers should be coming on board shortly.

Ms. Doty asked if the staff had any additional questions. Hearing none, Ms. Fauci thanked Ms. Doty for her report.

MEMBERS COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci asked if there were any Committee Member comments. She then asked Mr. Rosemier if he had heard anything further from the U of I Extension regarding the Master Naturalist program that he had mentioned at the August meeting. Ms. Doty asked if she could address the topic. She noted that the program is currently piloting this year and she had requested that the Extension office not place DeKalb in the first test groups. She made this request due to the fact that the program pilot would require a dedicated 20 hour per week staff member and with the tight budgets, that participation at this time just would not be feasible. She noted that the pilot is a three year program and if funding and staffing could be resolved, DeKalb could enter at any time during the three years.

Ms. Doty additionally noted that program participants must absorb the often substantial costs for manuals and other program requirements and it was her hope that corporate sponsorship might be located to assist with the manual and materials costs.

Ms. Fauci commented that she was very supportive of the way the program encourages the Master Naturalists to "give back" to their counties after training. Ms. Doty added that it would be her hope that many of the successful graduates could be assigned to area schools as outdoor education resources, given the way budgets have been tightening and resources in this area have been greatly curtailed. Mr. Rosemier commented that he agreed that funding reductions were causing quite a few outdoor education programs to be in danger.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci noted that she had recently seen an article announcing that Robert L. Carter of NIU was the recipient of the 2008 Malcolm D. Swan Award for Outstanding Service from the Environmental Education Association of Illinois and asked the Committee if they thought it might be useful to ask Mr. Carter to speak at an upcoming meeting. The general consensus was that he would be a very appropriate future speaker. Ms. Doty commented that she would be seeing him within the week at the NREC and offered to carry an invitation to him from the Committee.

LAND ACQUISITION UPDATE/ PERSONNEL MATTER-ANNUAL EVALUATION

Prior to the beginning of the discussion, Ms. Fauci asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Ms. DeFauw moved the Committee into executive session for the purpose of discussing current information on District land acquisition opportunities as well as conducting the Annual Evaluation of the District Superintendent, seconded by Ms. Turner. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 1 absent. Following the Executive Session, Ms. Turner moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Ms. DeFauw. A roll call vote was held and the motion passed with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative and 1 absent.

Following the return from Executive Session, Ms. Fauci asked the committee for a consensus agreement to nominate Mr. Hannan for the Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame Award given by the Illinois Conservation Foundation. This award recognizes outstanding service in protecting natural resources and promoting natural resource education. The Committee wholeheartedly agreed and Ms. Fauci noted she would clarify application deadlines and notify the members when the next opportunity for nomination would occur.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr