

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
May 15, 2012**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday May 15, 2012 at 6:00 pm at the Russell Forest Preserve Natural Resource Center (NREC). In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Augsburger, Mr. Deverrell, Ms. Turner, Ms. DeFauw and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Newport and Ms. Fullerton were absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2012 meeting. Mr. Augsburger moved approval of the minutes, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci asked for an approval of the evening's agenda. Mr. Anderson moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Deverrell and the motion passed unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS/GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Hannan began by handing out the 2011 PDRMA report on the district and noted that it is, once again, very complimentary to the District.

He commented that he thought he would have a preliminary audit to pass to the Committee, but that it is not yet available.

He then reported that over 900 students attended programs through the NREC in April and May of this year. There were activities on worms, composting, forest ecology, nature crafts and more.

An Eagle Scout project is also underway and he noted that details were available in the monthly packet documents.

Local resident Barry Schrader recently did an article on the Northern Boundary marker that is located at the Sannauk Forest preserve. Mr. Hannan reminded the Committee that at one time, this marker delineated the original boundary between Wisconsin and Illinois.

Mr. Hannan then read the Committee a letter from St. Mary's School thanking the Committee and the District for allowing them to hold their "Hustle at Russell" run through Russell Woods. The event drew 190 entrants, and was quite successful.

The annual Kishwaukee Sunrise Rotary 8K run generally held in May at Potawatomi Woods will be held this year in the Fall to try to improve attendance.

Mr. Hannan noted that there was an extensive list and report on the Earth Day activities that had occurred throughout the Preserves in the monthly packet as well as additional detail on the generally great turnouts they have had at the Preserves in April.

After the meeting, the Committee will be heading down to view the progress on the Miller Ellwood cabin. Mr. Hannan passed out photos of the progress to date on the windows and chinking to the Committee. He noted that the large opening in one wall of the cabin will be filled with a fireplace built from locally donated limestone. He noted that Mr. Christianson donated the limestone which dated back to the 1870's Union Illinois fire station. The fireplace will be constructed by Mathey Masonry who are donating their labor and expertise to the project. Mr. Hannan passed out a drawing of the proposed fireplace prepared by Tim Kilby.

He noted that he had also recently met with Steve Reid who has offered to donate old tools and furniture to the cabin. He commented that there have been many people very supportive of the project and eager to help it toward completion.

Recently the Ellwood Association also invited filmmaker Tim Murray and Terry to speak about the project and to review the film Mr. Murray had been working on to chronicle the cabin reconstruction.

Mr. Hannan then reported that Pete Olson had held his Spring Bird Walks and it was a great success with over 60 attendees. A Scarlet Tanager was also recently sighted outside the Resource Center. He commented that there were a number of migratory birds on the Trails and in the Preserves at this time.

He noted that the permits and plans for the Prairie Oaks Preserve parking lot have been approved and that people are already starting to come out to the site even though it does not have an official opening until October.

However, he commented that there is a safety issue that needs to be addressed regarding the gazebo that is located on the property. Originally constructed just for the use of the properties owners, it is not sufficiently up to code to handle several visitors and the cost of reinforcing the structure would be prohibitive. Therefore, the District will have someone come and take it down and away. The structural integrity concerns were raised during a recent visit to the site by Building Inspector Toby Petrie and structural engineer.

Mr. Hannan then reported that the Wetland Reserve Program area at the Hoppe farm area has been making great progress. Herons, Egrets waterfowl and shorebirds and Bald Eagles have been seen in the area so far. Hr commented that they have also worked closely with the neighboring farmer to assure them that the tile work being done will not have any impact on his land.

The Hoppe property should also be nearing closing soon with the USDA WRP program and that the Forest Preserve closing will occur shortly afterward.

He reminded the Committee that on May 19, the Northwest Suburban Astronomers will be holding their next Star Party at Afton. These events open to the general public, allow the group to display their knowledge and demonstrate their (often handmade) telescopes to interested observers. Mr. Hannan commented that this is a very talented and interesting group of people who are very knowledgeable individuals who are frequent users of the preserves for their viewing activities. They do the Star Parties as a way to repay the district and the public for their usage of the Preserves.

There will also be a Scout troop having a camp out at Afton and Friday and Saturday the 19th and 20th. Their prior camp out date had been rained out.

He closed by noting that this year the percent of recent tax bill that will go to the Forest Preserve is .07%, a very good bargain for the County residents.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci reported on a strange even that had occurred recently at the Nehring Preserve. He husband had been panting bluebell tubers at the Preserve and when he finished, a local Sheriff's department officer showed up and said that they had reports of a man burying bones on the property. Apparently the individual who saw Mr. Fauci planting mistook the tubers for bones.

Ms. Fauci then noted that she had received more complaints about unleashed dogs. Residents Herb and Irene Rubin were also bird watching at Afton recently and were accosted by 8 small off leash dogs and one large one. These events indicate that the leash issue appears to be continuing. A discussion was held regarding whether signage at the Preserve should contain the number to call either the Sheriff or Animal Control so that citizens can report these events immediately.

Ms. DeFauw agreed that some follow up is definitely needed as people appear to be escalating their disregard for the leash restrictions. She commented that the Dog Ordinance debate had been given great, long and very public debate and that the final rules were developed with the consensus of a group of very diverse individuals. It is unfortunate that none of the most egregious violators had attended any of the opportunities for debate.

Mr. Augsburg commented that signage will likely not deter someone who is determined to be so aggressively irresponsible. Ms. Fauci agreed that unfortunately, if these individuals continue to cause complaints, that may necessitate and elimination of all off leash areas in the Preserves in the future. She commented that perhaps the District needs to consider also raising the fines for individuals who blatantly and repeatedly disregard the rules.

Mr. Anderson noted that the dogs belonging to individuals determined to be repeat offenders should be banned completely if their owners cannot comply with the rules.

Mr. Augsburger noted that any citizen witnessing violations can also bring that to the violator's attention. Mr. Hannan noted that there have also been injuries that have occurred to dogs of leash abiding citizens and that does anger their owners.

Ms. Fauci closed by noting that this really is a people problem rather than a dog problem and it is truly regrettable that a few irresponsible dog owners can cause so many problems.

MILLER ELLWOOD CABIN TOUR

The Committee viewed the cabin progress and also saw new signage that has been created by the same staff member Bob who created the 1870's wood pen from the original oak logs that was sent to Mr. Ellwood.

Mr. Hannan also pointed out the new mowed path that connects the cabin site to Russell Woods. He also showed the Committee where the new South Branch Prairie sign would be located. The parking area and path are also in very good shape.

The Committee then reviewed the cabin construction so far. Electricity has been installed, but hidden so it does not take away from the original appearance of the cabin. Some of the logs are from wood recovered from the MacQueen Preserve so that they would blend in with the original logs. Staffers Bob, Bill and Tim Kilby have also been working on window construction and those will be installed soon. A ladder will be placed to allow visitors to just be able to see into the loft area. There will also be two doors to the cabin with wrought iron hinges and latches.

The chinking used between the logs is a mixture of 1/3 lime, 1/3 mortar and 1/3 sand. This is also similar to what would have been originally used to seal the cabin against the elements.

Ms. Fauci extended the Committee's thanks to the many staff members and volunteers that have worked to make this project a reality.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. DeFauw moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Deverrell. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr