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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes
November 18, 2014**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday November 18th, 2014 at 6:00 pm in the Conference Room East of the Administration Bldg. In attendance were committee members: Ms. Fauci, Mr. Jones, Mr. Gudmunson, Mr. Brown, Mr. Cribben and Ms. DeFauw and Superintendent Hannan. Ms. Haji-Sheikh was absent. Guests included Naturalist Al Roloff, Dan Nolen, Jerry Foster and Jim Johnson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fauci called for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 15th, 2014 meeting. Mr. Brown moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. DeFauw and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Fauci noted that there would not be a need for Executive Session this evening and so called for a motion to approve an amended agenda. Mr. Cribben moved to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Mr. Jones and the motion passed unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan began by noting that he would review the reports and activities for the month and then the Committee would hear a report on the Shabbona Trail from the trail planning group from Shabbona.

He then noted that the Jeff's Trees project is in its 8th year and at the October event approximately 50 to 60 people from across the United States came to remember Jeff and plant 200 trees at Afton.

Mr. Hannan noted that there was a report on the dedication of the Miller-Ellwood cabin containing photos of the event. He noted that approximately 60 people attended the dedication. The Ney Grange 80th anniversary was also celebrated.

Mr. Brown asked if there would be any mention of the service award presented by Ney Grange at the event to Superintendent Hannan for his years of service to the forest preserve district. Mr. Hannan thanked everyone and noted that the forest preserve staff deserves credit also for their work.

He commented that it had been a very good year for fall colors and many people out enjoying this time of year. . Weather permitting, the staff hoped to be able to do some oak savannah and prairie burns and seeding this fall.

Mr. Roloff presented his reports and closed by discussing a turkey vulture who had recently “adopted” his family.

Ms. Fauci commented that Mr. Roloff and Mr Hannan have been meeting with the USEPA and Army Corp of Engineers staff who oversee Midwest Wetland Banks. They commented that the DeKalb County Forest Preserve Afton Wetland Bank is one of the 2 best managed for quality and plant diversity they have seen in their seven state region they oversee.

Mr. Hannan then introduced Dan Nolan who will give a presentation on the progress of the proposed multi-use path in Shabbona. He will be assisted by Mr. Foster and Mr. Johnson. He began by noting that he had met with the Committee previously, but that this time he came with more updated information.

He then noted how the proposed 3.1 mile path connects the village to the local subdivisions and would connect to Shabbona schools, Chief Shabbona forest preserve, Shabbona Lake State Park and Shabbona golf course.

He noted that they have made some small adjustments as they have worked with the local schools and other taxing districts and landowners. He notes there are still some discussions to be had on Indian Road near the golf course. They feel this is a very important piece from an economic development standpoint. One discussion involves using State Park winter snowmobile trails for family friendly bike routes. They hope to encourage people in the State Park to take the time to come to town for the restaurants, shopping and other amenities. And the more individuals see the connection between the Park and the town’s amenities, they believe this will strengthen tourism.

The group also met recently with George Belevic of the Department of Natural Resources who has been very helpful in mapping out potential trails through the State Park that would connect to the Shabbona trail. This connects to possible campground expansion as well.

Mr. Foster noted this came about as a safety issue. Many people are currently biking or running on the roadways. This creates a potential for danger sharing the roads with motor vehicles. They recently surveyed visitors to the State Park and discovered that many traveled more than 50 miles and are eager to find expanded lodging and activity options.

Mr. Brown asked about a connection between Indian Road through a private property, Mr. Nolan responded that they have been actually looking at property that would fall into the State Park as an alternative.

Mr. Johnson then discussed some things that have changed since last summer. He has been the groups document creator and did a draft resolution for the Village of Shabbona on the project. The Village Board recently approved the resolution. They will be bringing a similar resolution to the local school board and see no problem with it passing there as well.

He noted that they have also discussed with Mr. Hannan the possibility of having the Forest Preserve District become the ultimate overseer of the trail, The Village trustees wish to take the project through to completion, but then feel it should be managed by an entity who has relevant experience.

Mr. Hannan noted that the forest preserve district has done this in the past by being the manager of the DeKalb / Sycamore Trail, there were many landowners and partners on the DeKalb/ Sycamore Trail project and the forest preserve district manages the trail.

Mr. Johnson noted that the oversight would involve maintenance and security with the Village and the county Sheriff's department. They also feel that additional police support could be worked out with the Village.

Mr. Hannan noted that the forest preserve district takes care of the mowing of trail shoulders and repairs and maintenance on the DeKalb/ Sycamore Trail. However he stated that the proposed Shabbona Trail maintenance and management could be shared by local agencies and volunteers.

Mr. Foster noted that sharing annual contributions for future maintenance costs was approved by the Village. Mr. Jones asked if the trail would be all asphalt. Mr. Johnson responded that would hinge on what grants they were pursuing would require. He noted that smaller grants (generally in the \$200,000.00 to \$250,000.00 maximum level) would not create the long-term, long range project they have envisioned. So, they are opting to pursue larger grants to bring them closer to what they see as estimated total costs of \$900,000.00. The larger costs are primarily due to what they anticipate to include all engineering costs and requirements and construction.

Ms. Fauci stated they might want to look at partnering with the County Highway Dept. to assist with the engineering as well as helping with lower materials and grading costs.

Mr. Jones asked if the engineering costs are coming from the fact they have applied for the higher Federal grants. Mr. Johnson replied that this was the case as Federal grants come with very steep requirements. Mr. Hannan noted that when the District did the DeKalb/ Sycamore Trail project he experienced the complexity of Federal ISTEA grant requirements first hand. They are 80% grants but very time consuming and detailed work.

Mr. Johnson noted that they were hoping to capture about 90% of the overall costs via grants. Mr. Foster commented that there is very broad support legislatively for the project.

Mr. Jones asked if they were looking then at 2016 for the project then. Mr. Johnson replied that they would like to hope a start could happen in late 2015, but 2016 seemed more realistic.

Mr. Foster noted that they are planning for the best quality trail they can get because this gives them room to make adjustments as needed. He noted they are getting good private support as well. They have already secured one \$10,000.00 private supporter and will be doing marketing activities.

Ms. Fauci asked if they could get some support from the subdivisions. Mr. Foster replied that they will be looking for several partners on the project. They have even enlisted Pizzo and Associates to provide assistance in identifying ways to reduce vegetation maintenance along the trail.

Mr. Hannan commented that the District often uses local service groups for trail clean ups and activities and they may wish to do that for the trail as well. He went on to note that the District's insurer, PDRMA, also covers liability on forest preserve trails. This would be one advantage of having a principle overseer. He commented on how thorough PDRMA is and how they insist on proactive risk management and maintenance of all trails in the preserves. PDRMA rates are based on operating expenses and total budget, so if the District added a trail, they may only see an increase in insurance rates if their operating expenses increased.

Mr. Jones asked if all the group is asking of the District is to manage and maintain the trail.

Mr. Hannan noted that there would be private and public Shabbona partnerships formed contributing a minimum of \$1,000.00 per year to cover future trail maintenance costs. This maintenance money could be retained in a Forest Preserve Reserve fund earmarked for the Shabbona trail.

Ms. Fauci noted that the forest preserve district has wanted to focus on projects in the South county and this project fits that need.

Mr. Jones complimented the work of the group and noted their presentation was very thorough. Mr. Foster noted that the Village has committed that any future development will have to connect to the trail so there would not be a need for more fundraising and work in the future. He noted that there is also another possible phase (shoulder improvement on preserve Road) that would open the door to reaching out to Waterman and other preserves (like Afton). He commented that this would be a great future connection.

Ms. Fauci commented that Route 23 opens up great opportunities. Mr. Brown asked if they knew how many people generally are trying to get from Chief Shabbona to the town currently. Mr. Nolan commented that not many people attempt that on bike or foot as it

is treacherous. He noted however that they know that approximately 425,000 visitors annually travel to the State Park and many are not even aware the Village is nearby.

Mr. Johnson commented that both the preserve and Indian Road are just not generally amenable to walking or biking and so are eager to get people off the roadways and on an off road trail.

Ms. Fauci suggested they might check into some support from Get Healthy DeKalb or other organizations that could be good partnerships.

Mr. Gudmunson asked if they were going to have to purchase any right of way from private owners. Mr. Johnson replied that there will likely be some purchases from private land owners.

Mr. Johnson noted that they are just trying to do the best amount of organization they can in anticipation of grant approval. They want to maintain good cooperation with local landowners and to keep as many options for funding open as they can. Mr. Gudmunson asked about entering the preserve from the south gravel drive to the State Park and asked how that would line up with the dam. Mr. Foster noted that the trail would lie more north of that. However, he noted there were some good path options in the State Park that would be very family friendly and scenic. He noted this will especially be true after the improvements being planned on the camp ground.

Mr. Nolan then presented to the Committee for their review a copy of the draft resolution that was brought to the Village. Mr. Hannan noted to the group that the forest preserve Committee will be changing in December but hoped that this Committee would pass on a consensus of support that would help going forward. The forest preserve committee was supportive of the proposed project and the new committee will be updated on the project as it continues along. Ms. Fauci remarked that this was certainly a project that met many of the basic goals of the Committee and our Greenways and Trails Plan. Ms. Fauci then thanked the gentlemen for their presentation.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Fauci noted that there would be a new Committee membership by the December 2014 meeting and noted that she truly appreciated the work and efforts of all the Forest Preserve Committees she was privileged to have served with.

Mr. Hannan then indicated his thanks and gratitude to the Committee members for their support, activism, vision and service.

Mr. Jones expressed a return thanks to Mr. Hannan for his work and commitment.

The Committee expressed its thanks to Ms. Fauci for her leadership during her long tenure as Chair. She then expressed her happiness at having been of service to the residents of the County.

Mr. Brown expressed his thanks that the Committee had very few controversies to deal with over the past year.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Gudmunson moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Jones. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Fauci, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
JF:kjr