



1996 S. Kirk Rd. Suite 320
Geneva, IL 60134

Forest Preserve District, Planning and Utilization Committee Meeting Minutes

Chair Cheryl Strathmann, President Christopher Kious, President Pro Tem, Mavis Bates, Ron Ford, Michelle Gumz, Mike Kenyon, Anita Lewis, Mike Linder, Vern Tepe

Thursday, August 24, 2023

9:30 AM

3rd Floor Board Room

I. Call to Order

The Forest Preserve District Planning and Utilization Committee meeting was held Thursday, August 24, 2023 at the Administration Offices located at 1996 S. Kirk Road, Suite 320, Geneva, IL 60134. Chair Strathmann called the meeting to order at 9:58AM.

PRESENT	President Chris Kious Chair Cheryl Strathmann Commissioner Michael Kenyon Commissioner Vern Tepe Commissioner Michael Linder Commissioner Ron Ford Commissioner Anita Lewis Commissioner Mavis Bates
REMOTE	Commissioner Michelle Gumz

Also Present: Commissioners Allan (Remote), Juby (Remote), Molina (Remote), Roth; Exec. Dir. Habarthur; NRM Dir. Chess & staff Blackburn; CFO Petschke & staff Carrano, Marano; Chief of Planning & Land Mgmt. Rooks-Lopez; Marketing Coord. Kovach; Dir. of Ops. Pentecost; Chief of Police Burger; Attorney Hodge and Exec. Assist. Figliozzi, Admin staff Rafferty and members of the public.

II. Approval of Minutes from July 27, 2023

RESULT:	APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT
MOVER:	Vern Tepe
AYE:	Mavis Bates, Ron Ford, Michelle Gumz, Michael Kenyon, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Cheryl Strathmann and Vern Tepe

III. Public Comment (Each Speaker is limited to three minutes)

None.

IV. Bids and Proposals

A. TMP-23-1115 Resolution Approving Bids for Tree and Brush Clearing at Portions of Three Forest Preserves

NRM Dir. Chess presented the bids for the tree and brush clearing at portions of three preserves. The objectives of these projects are to remove non-native brush and small mesic trees in degraded oak woodlands, with an emphasis on bittersweet, and to greatly reduce their ability to invade the area via seed or re-sprouting. Bittersweet (Celastrus

orbiculatus) is a woody, perennial vine that grows as a climbing vine, up to 60 feet. As it climbs, the bittersweet overtakes native trees and shrubs, girdling trunks and branches. Dense vines weigh down tree canopies, leading to breakage. Other woody invasive species, such as Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and Bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.), are some of the other primary threats to biodiversity in Kane County's forests. These species create a thick mid-story cover that prevents light from reaching native understory plants. They also grow very well in shade; oak saplings do not. This adaptation prevents the regeneration of native trees. Mechanical removal of these invasive species, combined with chemical follow-up, will help to restore the woods to a healthier condition. This, in turn, will provide better habitat quality for the entire suite of wildlife that these preserves support. In particular, the habitat value for birds is greatly enhanced with the removal of these invasive shrubs. Native insects do not feed on buckthorn, so their coverage decreases the concentration of caterpillars across the sites. Additionally, their plentiful berries are nutrient poor and cause a laxative effect that makes them a starvation food. Contractors were sought to bid on clearing projects across three heavily infested forest preserves.

DISCUSSION: None.

RESULT: **MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE**
TO: Forest Preserve District Executive Committee
MOVER: Mavis Bates
SECONDER: Ron Ford
AYE: Mavis Bates, Ron Ford, Michelle Gumz, Michael Kenyon, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Cheryl Strathmann and Vern Tepe

V. New or Unfinished Business

B. TMP-23-1127 Presentation and Discussion of the Structure Subcommittee Tour

Dir. of Ops Pentecost presented a PowerPoint presentation of the current structures on Forest Preserve property. The structures include four houses and a barn that were part of land acquisition purchases. Staff would be seeking direction for either demolition or maintenance of each structure dependent on cost and best practice for land restoration/public needs.

The first site visited was **Millcreek Forest Preserve**, where the Sub-Committee toured the barn. This is located next to an existing project area that was awarded an Open Space Land Acquisition Development (OSLAD) grant for the development of an archery course. Staff recommends demolition of the barn as it is failing and would be too costly to restore and could cause potential hazard to the new archery range for the public.

DISCUSSION: *Chief of Planning and Land Management Rooks-Lopez noted that a similar barn was previously demolished in Plainfield Park District and the District had utilized a company that demos and reclaims the barn wood. She indicated that this would be an option to include with demolition to offset the cost and to recycle the timber. Commissioner Bates felt the District should save the barn, as there are fewer barns in Kane County.*

Commissioner Lewis felt that barns are important to save, however this particular barn has deteriorated to such a level that it should be taken down. She noted that salvaging the wood would be a great option.

Exec. Dir. Haberthur stated that the Millcreek barn had been assessed in 2015 by Williams Architects with an estimate of \$500,000 to stabilize; unfortunately, it was too costly at the time to restore. Haberthur noted that current restoration would include new walls, roof, floors, etc. The Williams report advised increasing their estimate 2% per year; it would cost over \$800,000 in today's market. There was discussion regarding the barn utilized by All Grass Farms in Brunner

Forest Preserve. Exec. Dir. Haberthur stated that the barn was in much better condition and that the District is getting a return on investment from the regeneration of the farmland. President Kiouss asked if the barn would affect the grant project. Exec. Dir. Haberthur responded that the barn is right next to the land drawn out for the project. This could create a potential hazard. Haberthur noted that the estimated \$800,000 is to stabilize the barn prior to any other kind of renovation.

There was consensus from the Committee to demolish the barn. Commissioner Bates stated she was not in favor of demolishing the barn.

The second site visited was **Dick Young Forest Preserve**, where the Sub-Committee toured the vacated staff residence. Ops. Dir. Pentecost discussed options of demolition or restoring the house. The demolition would cost an estimated \$15,000. If the Committee desired to keep the house, significant improvements would be required to bring the house up to livable standards. Construction improvements if scheduled to internal staff would be estimated at \$30,000. Dir. Pentecost opened the floor for discussion.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Tepe felt that the cost of updating the house would be closer to \$50,000. Dir. Pentecost noted that the updates to the home would be to meet livable standards, work would be done with internal staff; the appliances would only be replaced if they were not functioning. The house would not have current amenities; it would be cleaned and livable. Commissioner Kenyon commented that in the past, there was an advantage for the District to have an employee living on Forest Preserve property. Exec. Dir. Haberthur explained that a housing policy was established many years ago for an employee to be living on grounds in order to open/close gates, etc. The District has since installed solar gates and majority of the public own cell phones to call if there were an emergency at a preserve. Commissioner Bates noted it was like a "night watchman", Bates noted that it would not make financial sense to update the amenities.*

Commissioner Ford commented that the estimate for bringing the house up to livable standards did not include future maintenance expenses. He noted the importance of budgeting since owned property requires regular maintenance.

There was consensus to keep the house, move forward with improvements and budget regular maintenance. There was brief discussion regarding the housing program, Commissioner Tepe requested to review the agreement. Exec. Dir. Haberthur stated that staff is currently working on a draft agreement and would be provided to the Committee at a future meeting.

The third site was the **Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve**, where the Sub-Committee toured the soon to be vacated staff residence. The Sub-Committee concluded that the structure was in poor condition and required maintenance for it to be used going forward in the housing program. Based on past practices, structures requiring too large of a cost to get into good repair would be demolished and removed from the program. Based on the projected \$20,000 or more needed to get the structure in good repair, staff recommends demolishing the structure when funds and time are available.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Bates asked about the housing program and if it was considered a benefit. Exec. Dir. Haberthur noted that the rental rate would increase in the future, to be a percentage of fair market value. The housing program has been popular. Ops. Dir. Pentecost explained that in prior practice the housing program was designed for rangers to open and close the gates to the preserves manually. The District has since installed solar powered gates; therefore, the program is not a need essentially.*

There was consensus to keep and renovate the house. Commissioner Linder felt this house needed significant amount renovations and felt that the District should not invest in this one. Brief conversation occurred.

The fourth site was the **Stony Creek Forest Preserve**, where the Sub-Committee toured the recently purchased residence and out buildings referred to as the Neville property. The Sub-Committee has concluded that the residence and dairy barn are in good condition and should be preserved and evaluated for future uses. The Sub-Committee has determined that the red outbuilding is in poor repair and is not needed; staff recommends demolishing the structure.

DISCUSSION: *There was discussion regarding the house for the housing program. Exec. Dir. Haberthur noted this house would be dealt with differently due to the size. Ops. Dir. Pentecost noted that the silver barn would be utilized, as it was climate controlled. Primary District needs would be reviewed. Commissioner Strathmann asked if increments could be entertained within the changes of the rental rate adjustments with the fair market values. Exec. Dir. Haberthur stated that the timing of the updated agreement would be taken under consideration with the rates.*

Commissioner Gumz felt that increments within the rental rate would be ideal. She commented on the need for affordable housing in Kane County. Exec. Dir. Haberthur responded that the District is aware of the housing corners in Kane County and surroundings. The housing policy will be a future conversation with all the concerns addressed.

There was consensus from the Committee to keep the red barn along with the other structures.

The fifth and final site was the **Buffalo Forest Preserve**, where the Sub-Committee toured the recently vacated staff residence. Due to the condition of the home and the site constraints of the property, the Sub-Committee is considering demolition of the residence to add additional amenities for the public to the popular preserve.

DISCUSSION: *COP Rooks-Lopez noted the staff residence was vacated last year October. Commissioner Ford noted that it appeared to have possible mold and would need mediation. COP Rooks-Lopez commented that a shelter would add a great benefit to this preserve and that the topography leads to the same location of the residence for best practice. It is a popular preserve. Commissioner Ford noted that he was not in favor of demolition; however, parking needs to be addressed at this preserve, as it is a popular location.*

Commissioner Gumz was not in favor of demolition. Commissioner Ford state that this location could have a lot of opportunity and requested a master plan to repurpose the house as a shelter and address the parking. Commissioner Linder noted that staff would need to schedule time and budget for repairs; there was time to execute a plan for this location.

There was further discussion regarding maintenance needs and budget, Exec. Dir. Haberthur noted that the budget for maintenance was not in line with the current rent, and therefore would need to space out the needs per house.

Consensus from the committee was to keep all the houses, renovate to living standards and demolition the barn.

RESULT: **CONSENSUS TO MOVE FORWARD**
TO: Forest Preserve District Executive Committee
AYE: Mavis Bates, Ron Ford, Michelle Gumz, Michael Kenyon, Anita Lewis,
 Michael Linder, Cherry Strathmann and Vern Tepe

VI. Closed Session to Discuss Land Acquisition, License Agreements, Potential Litigation and Personnel

None.

VII. Communications

Marketing Coordinator Kovach provided a PowerPoint presentation of the recent events hosted. She reported on the Rusty Rodeo event held on August 12 starting at 10:00 a.m. at the Glenwood Park Forest Preserve. She noted it was a big success and shared photos.

The Great Orb Hunt event was discussed; the District and Fine Line Creative Art Studios have collaborated. The first round of hidden orbs are scheduled for Monday August 28, 2023, there will be an estimated 25 glass and ceramic orbs within LeRoy Oakes.

Kovach promoted the Fox River Days Cleanup event on Saturday September 16thm, 2023. Lastly, the District's Annual Fall Festival, Harvest of the Acorn Moon will be held on Sunday September 24, 2023. Upcoming programs were shared and a QR code was provided.

Exec. Dir. Haberthur reported that the Pingree Grove Wetland Scrape project was near completion, and has been an exciting project.

VIII. Chairman's Comments

None.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:21 AM.

RESULT:	APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE
MOVER:	Vern Tepe
SECONDER:	Ron Ford
AYE:	Deborah Allan, Mavis Bates, Ron Ford, Michael Linder, Bill Roth, Cheryl Strathmann, Rick Williams, Vern Tepe

Cheryl Strathmann, Chair
Forest Preserve District Planning and Utilization Committee
Forest Preserve District of Kane County

Respectfully Submitted,

Gabriella Figliozzi

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Recording Secretary