



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

Forest Preserve District Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

President Christopher Kious, President Pro Tem Mavis Bates, Treasurer Bill Lenert,
Secretary Myrna Molina, Dale Berman, Michael Kenyon, Anita Lewis, Jarett Sanchez, Cherryl
Strathmann, Vern Tepe

Thursday, September 7, 2023

8:30 AM

3rd Floor Board Room

I. Call to Order

The Forest Preserve District Executive Committee meeting was held Thursday, September 7, 2023. President Kious called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM at the Administration Offices located at 1996 S. Kirk Road, Suite 320, Geneva, IL 60134.

PRESENT President Forest Preserve District Chris Kious
Secretary Forest Preserve District Myrna Molina (Remote)
Commissioner Dale Berman (Arrived in person at 8:33 AM)
Commissioner Mavis Bates
Commissioner Michael Kenyon
Commissioner Cherryl Strathmann
Commissioner Vern Tepe
Commissioner Jarett Sanchez (Remote)
Commissioner Anita Lewis (Arrived in person at 8:42 AM)

Also Present: Commissioners Allan (Remote), Gumz (Remote), Juby (Remote), Roth; Exec. Dir. Haberthur; Chief of Plan. & Land Mgmt. Rooks-Lopez; Dir. of NRM Chess; Finance staff Carrano, Marano; Ops. Dir. Pentecost; Dir. of Comm. Affairs Metanchuk; HR Dir. Clough; Chief of Police & Dir. of Public Safety Burger; Exec. Assist. Figliozzi & staff Rafferty and Attorney Hodge.

II. Approval of Minutes from August 3, 2023

RESULT: **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT**
MOVER: Vern Tepe
AYE: Mavis Bates Dale Berman, Mike Kenyon, Myrna Molina, Jarett Sanchez,
Cherryl Strathmann and Vern Tepe
ABSENT Anita Lewis

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

None.

IV. Presentation and Approval of Bills and Commissioners' Per Diem from August 2023

RESULT: **MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE**
TO: Forest Preserve District Commission
MOVER: Mavis Bates

SECONDER: Michael Kenyon
AYE: Myrna Molina, Dale Berman, Mavis Bates, Michael Kenyon, Cheryl Strathmann, Vern Tepe, and Jarett Sanchez
ABSENT: Anita Lewis

V. Finance and Administration

None.

VI. Planning & Utilization

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

NRM Dir. Chess presented the following bid for tree and brush clearing. He explained the range of bid pricing for the various projects. 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 reinvade 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 don't 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.

The District advertised and sent bids to 33 vendors, with 9 responding. Funds totaling \$180,000 were budgeted in Fiscal Year 2023/24 for the Fiddlehead Woodland Restoration project. Sufficient funds totaling \$180,000 are available in the Fiddlehead Woodland Restoration project account to cover projects 1 and 2 at a total expense of \$160,820. Funds totaling \$100,000 were budgeted in Fiscal Year 2023/24 for tree-thinning projects at several preserves. Funds totaling \$100,000 are available in the Natural Resource Management Tree and Brush Thinning budget account to cover all of project 3 (\$33,245), project 5 (\$30,720) and project 6 (\$25,235) at a total expense of \$89,200. Sufficient funds are not available to cover the cost of project 4 at \$59,000. Staff will address this area later, possibly in-house.

DISCUSSION: *Brief questions were answered.*

RESULT: **MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE**
TO: Forest Preserve District Commission
MOVER: Michael Kenyon
SECONDER: Cheryl Strathmann
AYE: Myrna Molina, Dale Berman, Mavis Bates, Michael Kenyon, Cheryl Strathmann, Vern Tepe, and Jarett Sanchez
ABSENT: Anita Lewis

VII. New or Unfinished Business

A. Resolution Approving the Structures Subcommittee Recommendations

Exec. Dir. Haberthur presented the structures tour review with the recommendations provided from the Planning and Utilization Committee meeting. He listed the current members of the subcommittee and the five structures that were toured. The recommendation was to keep all four homes and remove the barn; however, consensus was not a unanimous. After the meeting, there were conversations to keep the barn. ED Haberthur provided information of a 2016 LWCF grant for the acquisition of the MillCreek greenway property and history of the barn. Restoration and site improvements are requirements of the \$750,000 LWCF grant award. These requirements effect the barn and surrounding acres.

The District was awarded a recent OSLAD grant to assist with the renovation and development project that includes an archery range. (*Commissioner Lewis arrived in person at 8:42 AM*). ED Haberthur explained that in 2016 Williams Architect was contracted to provide an estimate for restoring the barn. The cost totaled \$500,000 at the time with a minimum increase of 2% per year, bringing the estimate to \$800,000+ today. The major issues are the costs to renovate and the difficulty to rent the barn, including the proximity of the archery range.

ED Haberthur stated that the District has removed and saved many barns. He referenced the All Grass Farms operation. The District invested in replacing the roof and in return gains a percentage of revenue from the current operation. Another example was the Schweitzer Barn; the District worked with Dundee Open Space to restore it and it is currently being utilized. The Aurora West barn was also restored by a partnership with the Fox Valley Park District and they currently use it. All of these have a purpose and partnership.

ED Haberthur stated that the District has not occupied the red barn at LeRoy Oakes. This barn is part of the Durant house property and is not programmed into our capital projects; however, it is more restorable than the current barn in question. Haberthur opened the floor for discussion.

DISCUSSION: *President Kious asked for the list of issues of the Millcreek barn, as it exists. ED Haberthur responded that barn is in need of a new roof, he noted that the barn in Brundige was \$250,000 at the time; the Millcreek barn would cost more as it has a larger square footage. Another main problem is the walls, in 2016, Williams Architect evaluated the barn for potential use as the Natural Resource Management building, however it was not habitable at the time, as it needed new floors in addition to the walls and roof repairs to make it stable and safe. Another issue was the height of the ceiling in the downstairs area; it was not high enough to get the equipment inside.*

Commissioner Bates asked about the location of the barn and proximity to the Millcreek subdivision. ED Haberthur responded that it was to north. Bates asked if the neighborhood would consider restoring the barn. She felt that someone should do something to save the barn. She suggested the historical society or grants. Comm. Bates requested to reverse the consensus to remove the barn.

Commissioner Tepe asked if it would cost \$.5M to save the Millcreek barn. ED Haberthur responded that it would cost a minimum of \$800,000 to stabilize the structure. Comm. Tepe felt that the monies would be better spent elsewhere.

Commissioner Kenyon asked if the District had a timeline for the decision of the barn. ED Haberthur responded that yes, the hope is to open the archery range by early fall, late summer of 2024. Some funding from the construction of the OSLAD grant could be allocated to stabilize the area if the removal of the barn were the decision. The bid would need to go out late spring; the timeframe for having a partner would need to be early spring contracted or agreement signed. ED Haberthur indicated that the barn is currently stabilized for anti-vandalism;

however, the main concern is safety and the ground that surrounds the barn. It is currently very dangerous with broken glass and broken concrete.

Commissioner Strathmann discussed the walk through. She stated that she understood wanting to save the barn, however she stated that the barn is in very poor condition. She noted that the photos provided did not show how destroyed the barn really is. She felt that it would be a large expense just to make it safe and stable.

ED Haberthur commented that the LeRoy Oakes barn is in need of renovation and this barn could be used as a venue to generate funds. Commissioner Kenyon stated that the key to renovate something is the use. He noted that the barn could be saved, although would remain empty. Various Commissioners recommended Commissioner Bates to see the Millcreek barn in person. Commissioner Roth noted that renovations should have been made many years ago. President Kiouss stated that renovations were not financially feasible at that time, same as now.

Commissioner Bates asked if the District could find someone to take over the barn and the land for farming, such as the All Grass Farms operation. ED Haberthur stated that the area available to farm was very small, with only 16 acres available to use and it would be difficult to earn enough revenue to cover the cost of restoration.

President Kiouss asked if the District has a hard deadline for the barn if the plan would be to demolish. ED Haberthur responded that the District would need a deadline by late spring in order to bid the construction for the archery range to have this included for land restoration.

President Kiouss asked for consensus to move forward with the plan to demolish the barn with a stipulation that if funds were brought forth from an outside party to restore the barn, then it would be kept. There was discussion to separate the barn into a resolution and another resolution to include all the residence structures. There was consensus to move forward.

Commissioner Tepe asked about the resident houses and the issue of the sizes. ED Haberthur explained the smaller homes versus the newly purchased residence. He noted that the housing policy is under review, there are some items that will need to be discussed including the taxability, rent and fringe benefit. The approval from this presentation is to determine which homes to keep and renovate. The next steps would be to update the housing policy.

Commissioner Tepe noted that rental properties are not typically well cared for; he recommended including tenant responsibility for maintenance. ED Haberthur responded that the District has revamped the facilities coordinator position to address the issue of regular maintenance and upkeep. He added that the housing policy has been a sensitive issue, considering some employees currently live in housing and he wanted to be sure that employees would have the adequate time to review the policy changes and expectations.

Commissioner Bates asked if the employees are night watchmen. ED Haberthur explained that in the past rangers would open and close gates, and would be available if someone would need assistance prior to cell phones being popular. At this time, the staff would be considered residents and not care takers of the grounds.

Roll Call vote was taken to separate the houses and barn into two resolutions for full commission and to add the stipulation of a potential third party funding source to restore the barn by spring.

RESULT: **MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE**
TO: Forest Preserve District Commission
MOVER: Michael Kenyon

SECONDER: Cheryl Strathmann
AYE: Myrna Molina, Dale Berman, Mavis Bates, Michael Kenyon, Anita Lewis, Cheryl Strathmann, Vern Tepe, and Jarett Sanchez

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

None.

IX. Communications

ED Haberthur provided a brief update regarding the Great Orb Hunt event, noting it has been a big success. He promoted the Harvest of the Acorn Moon annual event and various events found on the website calendar. Commissioner Bates noted the oaks in Geneva were being cut down.

X. President's Comments

ED Haberthur reported an update on the Muirhead Springs Wetland Mitigation Bank. He noted that 26 bird species have been seen.

XI. Financial Reports

Reports A-C were moved together

- A. Bond Investment Analysis Report through August 2023
- B. Cash & Investment Report through August 2023
- C. Income Statement through August 2023

RESULT: **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT**
MOVER: Vern Tepe
AYE: Myrna Molina, Dale Berman, Mavis Bates, Michael Kenyon, Anita Lewis, Cheryl Strathmann, Vern Tepe, and Jarett Sanchez

XII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 AM.

RESULT: **APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE**
MOVER: Michael Kenyon
SECONDER: Cheryl Strathmann
AYE: Myrna Molina, Dale Berman, Mavis Bates, Michael Kenyon, Anita Lewis, Cheryl Strathmann, Vern Tepe, and Jarett Sanchez

Chris Kious, Chairman
Forest Preserve District Executive Committee
Forest Preserve District of Kane County

Respectfully Submitted,

Gabriella Figliozzi

Gabriella Figliozzi
Recording Secretary