



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, April 4, 2024

8:30 AM

3rd Floor Board Room

I. Call to Order

The Forest Preserve District Executive Committee meeting was held Thursday, March 7, 2024. 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
Commissioner Dale Berman
Commissioner Anita Lewis
Commissioner Mavis Bates
Commissioner Michael Kenyon
Commissioner Vern Tepe
Commissioner Cherryl Strathmann (Remote)
Commissioner Jarett Sanchez (Remote)

Also Present: Commissioners Allan (Remote), Juby (Remote), Roth; Exec. Dir. Haberthur; Chief of Planning & Land Mgmt. Rooks-Lopez; CFO Petschke & staff Carrano, Marano; Dir. of Comm. Affairs Metanchuk; HR staff Misner; Chief of Police & Dir. of Public Safety Burger; Exec. Assist. Figliozzi & staff Rafferty and Attorney Hodge.

II. Approval of Minutes from March 7, 2024

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

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

None.

IV. Presentation and Approval of Bills and Commissioners' Per Diem from March 2024

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

V. Finance and Administration

TMP-24-2084 Resolution Authorizing a Professional Auditing Services Contract with Lauterbach & Amen, LLP

Finance Manager Carrano presented the renewal contract with Lauterbach & Amen. The 2023 fiscal year was the last contract year with the District's current auditors, Lauterbach & Amen, LLP. In January 2020, the District issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for auditing services. The proposed term was for four (4) years with the option for three (3) additional one-year extensions, if approved by the Commission and mutually agreeable by the Audit Firm. Due to concerns of inflated audit service costs caused by the pandemic, staff reached out to Lauterbach & Amen to request an extension of all three (3) option years. The auditors acknowledged an overall increase for audit services, but agreed to executing all three (3) option years at the pricing included in the 2020 RFP submittal, and they also provided three (3) additional mutually agreeable option years as well.

DISCUSSION: *None.*

RESULT: **MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE**

TO: Forest Preserve District Commission

MOVER: Dale Berman

SECONDER: Mavis Bates

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

TMP-24-1871 Resolution Approving the District Owned Housing Policy

HR Dir. Clough presented a policy for the District owned housing program. The District has had residential properties nearly since its inception. Truly vacant land is rarely available for sale. Land is more typically sold with associated residences. Currently the District owns twelve (12) residential properties which it lets, or has the capacity to let, to employees, and one (1) property that is being leased to a non-District person. Currently, six (6) of the available properties have an active lease agreement. The remaining vacant homes are undergoing improvements prior to re-leasing or becoming available to rent following the full commission's review of this policy document. The following Forest Preserve properties have residential homes onsite:

- Binnie Forest Preserve – staff rental
- Bliss Woods Forest Preserve – staff rental
- Buffalo Park Forest Preserve – vacant/needs repairs
- Burnidge Forest Preserve – non-District rental
- Paul Wolff Forest Preserve – staff rental
- Dick Young Forest Preserve - vacant/needs repairs
- Fabyan Forest Preserve - staff rental
- Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve - vacant/needs repairs
- Jon J. Duerr Forest Preserve – staff rental
- Oakhurst Forest Preserve - vacant
- Stoney Creek Forest Preserve - vacant/use under review
- Tyler Creek Forest Preserve – staff rental
- Tekkawitha Forest Preserve - vacant

DISCUSSION: *HR Dir. Clough noted that the policy implementation process has been transparent with the employees that reside currently in the residences. The policy presented addressed the equitability and expectations that relate to inspections and maintenance. Commissioner Bates asked about the recommendation being presented. HR Dir. Clough explained that the District contracted a licensed real estate agent who provided a 5-year fair market value average of each home. The monthly rent shall be collected based off of 25% of a home's residence's fair market value plus fringe benefit tax withholdings. President Kious felt*

it was a conservative estimate. Exec. Dir. Haberthur explained that the main issue was that the tenants haven't been taxed as a fringe benefit before. The monthly rent plus the taxable value would be a significant increase. The total amount per month would be effective July 1, 2024. Commissioner Kenyon stated that staff did an excellent job as an educated approach to implement this policy. He felt it has always been a positive benefit to have staff living on preserves as a safety addition, also as a benefit to staff. Commissioner Tepe voiced he had a few reservations. He felt that the benefit should simply be not having to pay real estate taxes. He felt that was an advantage already. Commissioner Tepe noted that the housing policy only affects six people. He felt that the District is not covering the total cost of maintenance and that the residents need to be held accountable. Commissioner Tepe was not in favor of the rental rate within the policy. He felt that the maintenance far exceeds the rate being charged.

HR Dir. Clough explained that the lease agreement is a standard rental agreement. It addresses all aspects of maintenance including pets with a deposit required. Exec. Dir. Haberthur indicated, since auditing the program, it was brought to senior staff's attention that regular maintenance has been an issue, part of the reason why the policy is being written and will be enforced. Commissioner Lewis stated that the District has taken a positive first step, the goal is not to force people out and as a starting point, this is a fair policy. In one year, the policy can be reviewed again and residents would be prepared at that point for any potential changes.

President Kiouss commented that the recommendation brought forth from the Finance and Administration Committee was to review the policy in one year, more data would be collected and any changes could be discussed then. He felt that that this was a reasonable request to implement a new policy.

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

VI. Planning & Utilization

TMP-24-2117 Resolution Approving the Establishment of the Agricultural Land Use Policy

NRM Dir. Chess presented the establishment of the Agricultural Land Use Policy. Dir. Chess provided a brief background regarding District land use, land acquisitions, conservation and restorations. He briefly noted restrictions of various pesticides, herbicides and tillage to stop soil erosion. He also discussed the term and rental rates. The District currently owns 23,404 acres of land in Kane County and approximately 5,978 acres of farmland is under annual Farm License Agreements for the production of row crops and grass hay. About 36 local farmers have annual license agreements with the District. The interim land use of farming row crops and hay provides for the suppression of undesirable vegetation on the landscape which would otherwise be problematic for future restoration and development. Sustains the continued farming agricultural nature of Kane County and provides an important revenue source for the District. The District has the responsibility of implementing best management practices and sound stewardship on all its holdings, including farmland. Many public land managers have adopted conservation farming strategies to protect the current and long-term ecological health of their land and have enlisted a dedicated team member to implement these strategies. With the addition of a dedicated Agricultural Coordinator on staff at the District, efforts have been made to revise the current Farm License Agreement with contemporary agricultural practices

and refreshed license language. This includes pesticide restrictions and implementing no-till and conservation tillage conditions to the Farm License Agreement.

The Policy that is being recommended shall govern the stewardship and licensing of agricultural lands, reflect a commitment to agricultural practices based on regenerative agriculture goals, soil health principals and conservation farming concepts. The District will be a leading example and strong partner to other conservation organizations moving forward.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Bates asked about regenerative farming practices. Dir. Chess briefly discussed All Grass Farms, he noted that this particular farmer does regenerative farming, different practices to enrich the soil and bring it back to natural state. Commissioner Bates asked about solar farming. Exec. Dir. Haberthur responded that solar farming has not been discussed in this program, solar is mostly a land use option, not necessarily related to farming. He noted that the goal of the District is to restore the land and the biodiversity within the land. Exec. Dir. Haberthur discussed rental rate incentives for farmers who have interest in regenerative farming, he noted that staff has been in collaboration with Kane County land protection program. This offers different options to reduce rent and aid farmers. Commissioner Roth asked about the soil testing. Exec. Dir. Haberthur responded that the soil testing includes testing the biodiversity of the soil. This data will aid in the restoration process. Commissioner Kenyon felt it was important to know that farming incurs income and they are taking care of the land and weeds until the land can be restored.*

President Kious expressed the importance of having an Agricultural Coordinator for the proper enforcement of agricultural practices.

RESULT: MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE

TO: Forest Preserve District Commission

MOVER: Michael Kenyon

SECONDER: Anita Lewis

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

VII. New or Unfinished Business

None.

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

None.

IX. Communications

Comm. Affairs Dir. Metanchuk provided an update on the online campground reservations. She noted that since the launch on April 1, 2024, the District brought in an estimated \$30,000 of revenue. Dir. Metanchuk provided pictures of the first public burn demo hosted by the Natural Resource Management Department held at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Earth Day Tree Planting event will be held on Saturday April 20, 2024 and the Native Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, April 27, 2024.

Commissioner Tepe asked if the Orb Hunt event will be happening again this year. Dir. Metanchuk responded that yes, staff is working with Fine Line Creative Arts Center to collaborate another Orb Hunt in the summer.

Commissioner Kenyon promoted a Golf Outing at Hughes Creek Golf Course that will be hosted by the District's Foundation, more information will be provided. The Conservation Foundation (TCF) will host their Annual Earth Day Benefit Dinner on April 25, 2024.

X. President's Comments

None.

XI. Financial Reports

Reports A-C were moved together

- A. Bond Investment Analysis Report through February 2024
- B. Cash & Investment Report through February 2024
- C. Income Statement through February 2024

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

XII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:29AM.

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

Christopher Kious, President
Forest Preserve District Executive Committee
Forest Preserve District of Kane County

Respectfully Submitted,

Gabriella Figliozzi

Gabriella Figliozzi
Recording Secretary