



Government Center
719 S. Batavia Ave., Bldg. A
Geneva, IL 60134

Forest Preserve District Commission Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

8:30 AM

County Board Room

I. Call to Order

The Forest Preserve District Full Commission meeting was held Tuesday, December 10, 2024 at the Kane County Government Center located at 719 S. Batavia Ave., Geneva, IL 60134. President Kious called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

Approval of Remote Attendance

Commissioners Daugherty, Gumz, Molina, Sanchez, Strathmann

II. Pledge of Allegiance

President Kious asked Chief Burger to lead the pledge.

III. Roll Call PRESENT

President Forest Preserve District Chris Kious
Secretary Forest Preserve District Myrna Molina
Commissioner Deborah Allan
Commissioner Mavis Bates
Commissioner Dale Berman
Commissioner Mo Iqbal
Commissioner Leslie Juby
Commissioner Bill Lenert
Commissioner Anita Lewis
Commissioner Michael Linder
Commissioner Bill Roth
Commissioner Jarett Sanchez (Remote, in person at 9:16AM)
Commissioner Clifford Surges
Commissioner Bill Tarver
Commissioner Vern Tepe
Commissioner Rick Williams
Commissioner David Young
Commissioner Jon Gripe
Commissioner Sonia Garcia (In person at 9:01AM)
Commissioner Ted Penesis
REMOTE
Commissioner Gary Daugherty
Commissioner Michelle Gumz (departed at 9:15AM)
Commissioner Cheryl Strathmann

Others Present: Exec. Dir. Haberthur, Dir. of Finance Petschke; Dir. of Planning and Land Protection Rooks-Lopez; HR Dir. Clough; NRM Dir. Chess; Ops. Dir. Jensen; Dir. of Comm. Engagement Metanchuk & staff Kovach; Chief of Police Burger; Attorney Hodge; Exec. Assist. Figliozzi, KCIT staff and members of the public.

IV. Public Comment (Each Speaker is limited to 3 minutes)

Kim Haag, long time volunteer and steward of the District spoke in favor of electing Chris Kious as President. She thanked various staff members and gave a special shout out to NRM Manager Jason Johnson, who is very supportive of all the volunteers.

Sandy Kaczmariski, longtime resident of Kane County spoke in favor of the electing Chris Kious as President. She noted that she has worked closely with the President of the DuPage County Forest Preserve and statewide conservation agencies. She is a supporter of the Kane County Forest Preserve District.

Jeff Hedrich, longtime volunteer and steward of Lake Run Forest Preserve, spoke about the success of the referendum passing. He noted that financial support is essential for the volunteers and looked forward to be able to continue the efforts among the volunteers and staff.

Sue Sanders, resident of Kane County, thanked the Board for their efforts and success of passing the Referendum. She noted the essential value of open spaces in Kane County, specifically keeping the Forest Preserves open during the pandemic, which gave the residents a much-needed mental health outlet in the most challenging times. She spoke about the remodeling of the golf courses and the return of buffalo to Kane County. She stated that the District demonstrates a forward approach to conservation and does so with fiscal responsibility. She stated her support to elect Chris Kious for President.

Gary Swick, longtime Kane County resident and partner of Friends of the Fox River spoke about the major accomplishments he has seen throughout the years at the District. He stated that he has been working with the District since Jack Cook and Jon Duerr. He stated that the District has come a long way. Additionally, he stated that he has developed a relationship with Chris Kious and that he sees him everywhere, noting this is an important factor. He spoke in favor of Chris Kious for the President.

Steve Bruesewitz, a St. Charles resident and Forest Preserve user spoke in favor of the District, noting that the Forest Preserve in his opinion was the best run Board in county government. He spoke in favor of electing Chris Kious for President.

Luanne Lewandowski, resident of Kane County read a letter written by June Keibler, who was unable to attend due to illness. June is a longtime volunteer and supporter of the District; she enthusiastically spoke in favor of electing Chris Kious for President.

**V. Presentation and Approval of the Minutes from November 12, 2024
Full Commission and Truth in Taxation Hearing, November 12, 2024**

RESULT: APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

MOVER: Bill Roth

AYE: Deborah Allan, Mavis Bates, Dale Berman, Mo Iqbal, Leslie Juby, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Bill Roth, Jarett Sanchez, Clifford Surges, Bill Tarver, Vern Tepe, Rick Williams, David Young, Jon Gripe, Ted Penesis, Gary Daugherty, Michelle Gumz, Cheryl Strathmann

ABSENT: Sonia Garcia

VI. Presentation and Approval of the Bills and Commissioners' Per Diem from November 2024

RESULT: ADOPTED BY ROLL CALL VOTE
MOVER: Michael Linder
SECONDER: Mavis Bates
AYE: Deborah Allan, Mavis Bates, Dale Berman, Mo Iqbal, Leslie Juby, Chris Kiou, Bill Lenert, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Bill Roth, Jarett Sanchez, Clifford Surges, Bill Tarver, Vern Tepe, Rick Williams, David Young, Jon Gripe, Ted Penesis, Gary Daugherty, Michelle Gumz, Cherryl Strathmann
ABSENT: Sonia Garcia

VII. Presentations

A. Cougars - 2024 Season Championship

Exec. Dir. Haberthur introduced Dr. Bob Froehlich, owner of the Cougars Baseball Team. Dr. Froehlich presented the 10th championship of this franchise. He provided background information of the franchise noting it began in 1888 in Decatur Illinois. In 1991 this league relocated to Kane County as the Kane County Cougars. This is the third championship for the team having previously won in 2001, 2014. He noted that the Forest Preserve in Kane County is the only Forest Preserve in the United States to own a baseball stadium. He thanked the Board for all their support over the years.

B. Presentation and Approval of the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)

Commissioner Garcia arrived in person at 9:01AM) Jamie Wilkey of Lauterbach and Amen presented an overview of the audit as conducted for fiscal year 2023-2024. Wilkey thanked the finance department for all of their hard work. She noted that the District presents the cleanest audit year after year. The District was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for last year's ACFR given by GFOA. This is the highest level of achievement for financial reporting for local government. Wilkey discussed the independent auditors report, or auditor's opinion. The unmodified, or clean opinion, is the highest level of opinion that an auditor can issue. The Management's Discussion and Analysis or (MD&A), included high-level financial results. There was an overall increase in equity or value of the District of 3.5% during the fiscal year. This was a result of continued capital asset investments and a long-term debt payment of \$13M. Wilkey discussed the detail analysis of the District's pension obligation. The most recent IMRF results for the year jumped from 84% to 94.7%. State statute requires 90% funding by 2040, this creates a strong standing for the District. Wilkey touched on the Government Accountability and Standards Board (GASB) and all the new standards and implementations over the last couple years.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Gripe asked about the possibility of meeting 100% funding. Wilkey clarified that state statute requirement is 90% funding by 2040, noting that this number would always fluctuate, however the District is in a strong position which reduces the liability that would need to be reported on the books each year.*

RESULT: ADOPTED BY VOICE VOTE
MOVER: Bill Roth
SECONDER: Michael Linder
AYE: Deborah Allan, Mavis Bates, Dale Berman, Gary Daugherty, Sonia Garcia, Jon Gripe, Michelle Gumz, Mo Iqbal, Leslie Juby, Chris Kiou, Bill Lenert, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Ted Penesis, Bill Roth, Jarett

Sanchez, Clifford Surges, Bill Tarver, Vern Tepe, Rick Williams, David Young, Cheryl Strathmann

VIII. Executive

FP-R-24-12-3130 Resolution Authorizing an Intergovernmental Agreement Between the County of Kane and the Forest Preserve District of Kane County for the Conveyance of Stearns Road Greenway Parcels

Dir. of Planning and Land Protection Rooks-Lopez presented the agreement with Kane County. In 2000, the District and the County entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement for the realignment of Stearns Road, Dunham Road and Illinois State 25. This agreement and the following amendments created greenway parcels and pedestrian connectivity over the Fox River and along Stearns Road that would eventually be conveyed to the Forest Preserve District. Prior to conveyance the County was required to make improvements to the parcels including pedestrian trails, parking, gates, benches and general restoration. The County has completed the improvements and desires to convey the parcels to the District. Due to the age of the improvements, the County has set up an allowance of up to \$572,275 for any necessary future enhancements of the Greenway Parcels, upon receipt of invoice from the District. In addition to routine maintenance associated with District standards, other potential financial impacts include a 50/50 cost share between the County and District for major structural repairs to the Stearns Road Pedestrian bridge and the Brewster Creek Stream Embankment Restoration.

DISCUSSION: *None. (Commissioner Sanchez arrived in person at 9:16AM)*

RESULT: ADOPTED BY ROLL CALL VOTE

MOVER: Dale Berman

SECONDER: Bill Roth

AYE: Deborah Allan, Mavis Bates, Dale Berman, Gary Daugherty, Sonia Garcia, Jon Gripe, Mo Iqbal, Leslie Juby, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Ted Penesis, Bill Roth, Jarett Sanchez, Clifford Surges, Bill Tarver, Vern Tepe, Rick Williams, David Young, Cheryl Strathmann

ABSENT: Michelle Gumz

IX. New Business

None.

X. Election of the President

A. Nomination of Temporary Chair

Exec. Dir. Haberthur was nominated as the Temporary Chair. Exec. Dir. Haberthur explained the process of nominations for the new Commissioners and covered the standard protocol.

RESULT: ADOPTED BY ROLL CALL VOTE

MOVER: Dale Berman

SECONDER: Bill Roth

AYE: Deborah Allan, Mavis Bates, Dale Berman, Gary Daugherty, Sonia Garcia, Jon Gripe, Mo Iqbal, Leslie Juby, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Ted Penesis, Bill Roth, Jarett Sanchez, Clifford Surges, Bill Tarver, Vern Tepe, Rick Williams, David Young,

Cherryl Strathmann

ABSENT: Michelle Gumz

B. Nominations for Forest Preserve District President

1. Nomination for Chris Kious for President

Commissioner Bates nominated Chris Kious for President, second by Berman.

2. Nomination for Bill Lenert for President

Commissioner Iqbal nominated Bill Lenert for President, second by Williams.

C. Close Nominations for Forest Preserve District President

The floor was closed with two nominations, each nominee provided a statement.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Kious provided a statement. He discussed the various projects that have moved forward and major accomplishments during his Presidency. Kious discussed the Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) that was passed and created four new staff positions. He spoke about COVID, noting the preserves were maintained open for all those who needed sanctuary during those years. Kious spoke about the successful referendum and the upcoming centennial celebration and read the District's mission statement. He quoted Peter Murphy, President and CEO of Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), noting the job of the President is to get the consensus of the Board and provide that for the Executive Director of the District. Lastly, he stated that he has visited all of the Preserves in the County and has attended numerous events held by the District. He talked about the various entities and community development that he has attended to and become a part of.*

Commissioner Lenert provided a statement. He discussed his fiscal responsibility to the District as a board member. He stated that he has more time and availability to offer the District this term. He stated that the transition from former Executive Director Monica Meyers to Ben Haberthur has been seamless, commending staff for all of their hard work during the changeover, additionally the accomplishments of major projects. Lenert spoke about the referendum and praised staff, volunteers and The Conservation Foundation (TCF) for all of their efforts and tremendous work to get the referendum passed. Lenert stated that as President, he will ensure staff is paid fairly, he noted that the District found that most paygrades were below average. From a business standpoint, lowering the turnover rate is essential as it can be very expensive. He voiced his concern regarding the Settler's Hill Golf Course. He noted that the new management firm is showing promise to focus on one of the District's assets. The third item mentioned was the support for the Cougars baseball team. He noted that since 2014 the rental payments have been reduced from \$1M to \$500,000. Each year bonds are being paid at \$610,000, therefore the District is losing money. These bonds will be paid in full in the next few years, these monies can become a fulfillment to pay employees, purchase equipment needed, etc. He stated that there would be no reduction in rental payments going forward. He stated that this past season the Cougars had a record-breaking attendance, so revenues have been increasing with the addition of the special events. He thanked the board for the consideration.

Commissioner Surges made a statement prior to taking the vote. He talked about how the presidential vote among the board members and peers can be the most uncomfortable, however it is a positive issue to have although a difficult situation. He stated that the District staff have continued to progress and grow and is confident they will continue with whoever is elected president.

RESULT: PRESIDENT BILL LENERT APPROVED BY ROLL CALL VOTE [11-10]

KIOUS: Deborah Allan, Mavis Bates, Dale Berman, Sonia Garcia, Chris Kious, Myrna

Molina, Ted Penesis, Jarett Sanchez, Cheryl Strathmann, Vern Tepe

LENERT: Gary Daugherty, Jonathan Gripe, Mo Iqbal, Leslie Juby, Bill Lenert, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Bill Roth, Cliff Surges, Rick Williams, David Young

ABSENT: Michelle Gumz

PRESENT: Bill Tarver

President Bill Lenert assumes as chair for the remainder of the meeting.

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

None.

XII. Communications

Comm. Engagement Dir. Metanchuk presented a brief update of upcoming events. Polar Palooza will be held Saturday January 18, 2025 at Creek Bend Nature Center. A new Commissioner Orientation will be held January 17, 2025, more information will be provided.

XIII. President's Comments

None.

XIV. Department Reports

The Department reports were placed on file

RESULT: APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

MOVER: Bill Roth

AYE: Deborah Allan, Mavis Bates, Dale Berman, Gary Daugherty, Sonia Garcia, Jon Gripe, Mo Iqbal, Leslie Juby, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Ted Penesis, Bill Roth, Jarett Sanchez, Clifford Surges, Bill Tarver, Vern Tepe, Rick Williams, David Young, Cheryl Strathmann

ABSENT: Michelle Gumz

XV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:43AM

RESULT: APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE

MOVER: Mike Linder

SECONDER: Bill Roth

AYE: Deborah Allan, Mavis Bates, Dale Berman, Gary Daugherty, Sonia Garcia, Jon Gripe, Mo Iqbal, Leslie Juby, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Anita Lewis, Michael Linder, Ted Penesis, Bill Roth, Jarett Sanchez, Clifford Surges, Bill Tarver, Vern Tepe, Rick Williams, David Young, Cheryl Strathmann

ABSENT: Michelle Gumz

Bill Lenert, Chairman
Forest Preserve District Commission
Forest Preserve District of Kane County

Respectfully Submitted,

Gabriella Figliozzi