

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County  
**BOARD MEETING**  
Preserves Headquarters  
October 20, 2021

**PRESENT**

Judy Barnard  
Mike Eickman  
Audrey Johnson  
Cheryl Maggio  
Jerry Paulson  
Jeff Tilly

**STAFF**

Mike Holan, Executive Director  
Steve Chapman, Finance  
Vaughn Stamm, Preserve Operations  
Ann Wasser, Education  
Samantha Crooks, Communication

**ABSENT**

Gloria Lind

**GUESTS**

Alex Mills – Klehm Arboretum

**ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM, by President Tilly. Recording secretary Kristy Knapp called the roll.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Jerry Paulson led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA and MINUTES** Minutes for September 15 were approved. No changes or additions were made to the agenda.

**PRESENTATIONS and PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

New Severson Dells Nature Center – Ann Wasser addressed the Board of Commissioners regarding the possibility of a new nature center at Severson Dells Forest Preserve. Ann passed out renderings of the new building along with a projected cost. Severson Dells has just started a feasibility study to see if this is something the community is interested in supporting. The drawings include an aerial view of the building, a map of the new location with the entrance off old Weldon Road, the site plan, a view of the entry way, interpretive space, multipurpose room, floor plan, building sections and what a living building challenge includes. The building and surrounding area would include a constructed wetland, car charging stations, bus parking and drop off area, pollinator and edible native gardens, living roof, solar panels, water cistern, two entrances, lobby area and gift shop, storage rooms, bathrooms, garage space, screened in porch with a double-sided fireplace, catering kitchen, conference room, classrooms, multipurpose room with a large row of windows, and a potential amphitheater. This building would be the first building to be a living building challenge certified in Illinois. To be certified you have to track the performance of the building for one year to prove the building operates within the sustainability guidelines of the certification. Visitors would also have the opportunity to see a real time display of how the building is performing. Hanneberry Eddy Architects is the architectural company that is working on the project. This company was chosen because they specialize in living building challenge certification and have a lot of experience in these types of buildings. They're based out of Portland and manage projects nationwide. Ann stated she thinks this would be a good opportunity to get on the map for sustainability. The proposed mechanics of the building would be solar, geothermal for heating and cooling, and a well for water with possible composting toilets or possibly a need to expand the wetland area. Audrey Johnson asked Ann what will happen to the current nature center and Ann stated that the Forest Preserve Board would ultimately be in charge of what happens to the old building but she has a lot of creative ideas, which Judy asked for a list. Some possible ideas are a nature preschool and an artisan residents' program. President Tilly asked Ann if she knows what the life span of the building's infrastructure is and Ann was not sure at this time. Mike Holan addressed the question and stated that the infrastructure of a geothermal system does not last as long as a typical HVAC system.

Ann stated they are not at that level of detail yet and at this time it's more about getting some potential plans and a cost estimate. The cost estimate is based on what current costs are with cost increases by quarter. Jerry Paulson asked Ann if they have initiated the fundraiser feasibilities and Ann stated they just started some of the interviews this week. Ann mentioned if any of the Board members would like to speak with the consultant, they will be doing interviews from now until November 10<sup>th</sup> at Severson Dells or by Zoom or phone. Ann can set up a date and time that works for the Board members that are interested. Jerry Paulson asked Ann if they are planning to do this all through private donations or will they be asking the District to apply for a state grant and Ann responded that there will be a combination of funding. Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation is aware of the interest Severson Dells has in pursuing this project which aligns with their green building's program. This program covers 80% of the cost of upgrades to meet living building challenge certification. Ann also heard from a representative of Maurice West's office regarding the Illinois Department of Economics Opportunity that has a tourism and attractions grant for up to \$1 million dollars. Illinois Department of Natural Resources have three different grant programs that this project would also qualify for. There have also been a few family foundations that have expressed interest. Ann is open to all opportunities. There will be a maintenance endowment included in the cost of the overall project so the Forest Preserve is not liable for the maintenance. Cheryl Maggio asked what the timeline is for the feasibility study and Ann stated they should have the result by December. At that time, the Severson Dells' Board will decide if they can raise the funds based on the feasibility study. Judy Barnard recommended talking to local legislators to see if there is additional money available. President Tilly asked if there is funding for the current nature center and Ann stated there is no funding included in the project for the current building. Cheryl Maggio asked if the County has to make a decision on Weldon Road and Mike Holan responded that the Township wants to abandon the road, remove it from their jurisdiction and turn it over the Forest Preserve. Mike talked to the township supervisor who had the road surveyed and told him he does not want to take over the road as it is. The road surface would need to be taken out completely before it would be turned over to the Forest Preserve due to the damaged asphalt. Mike's concern is this may affect the ingress/egress on the road. There may be a possibility that the County may also require turn lanes, greater asphalt thickness and other improvements. Ann reviewed what a living building challenge requires, which includes keeping native flora and fauna, managed water and energy usage, health and happiness, a red list of materials that cannot be used, ADA accessibility, which Severson Dells is working with R.A.M.P., biophilia and education. Ann stated the feasibility study will cost around \$25,000 and the projected cost of the project is \$11.2 million. President Tilly questioned if the maintenance will be different for this type of building and would someone need to be certified to work on the facility. Mike Holan commented on the question and also mentioned a list of concerns. Mike's concerns include making sure we can find someone who is specialized and understands the maintenance of the facility, which may include added cost. Ann stated as they progress with the project, they will look into who will be able to maintain the building. The first step will be to find out if they can afford the project before they plan to look into anything else. Mike Holan mentioned he asked Ann to bring this project forward to the Board, so the Board is aware of what was going on with the potential building and for a better understanding. Mike continued mentioning the remainder of his concerns which include, the roadway, what is the ask of the Forest Preserve, what's going to happen to the current nature center and if we decide to keep it what are we going to do with it and what is the purpose and maintenance plan of the building, if we don't keep it who will cover the cost of demolition and will the family or public protest the demolition, what happens to The Grove and the maintenance of The Grove, and there will be a loss of cropland revenue. Cheryl Maggio asked if the Severson Dells' Board is onboard and if the family has been approached. Ann stated the Severson Dells' Board is onboard with the project and the Severson family has been notified. Jerry Paulson wanted to know if there are any restrictions on the deed for the removal of the current building and Mike Holan stated he did not see anything on the deed but would confirm with an attorney. With the old building having many issues, Ann is excited to have a possibility of a new building that shows what's possible in sustainability and that may put the Forest Preserve and Severson Dells on the map. President Tilly thanked Ann for the information.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Judy Barnard passed out information to the Board about the GreenTown Conference on November 12<sup>th</sup>. This is an in person or zoom conference that addresses climate solutions and a sustainability plan for this region. This is the first step in what a sustainability plan would look like for the area. Judy mentioned the Forest Preserve has been asked to be a sponsor, which would cost either \$500 or \$1,500. Judy is recommending being a \$500 sponsor. Mike Holan mentioned there would need to be a consensus from the Board since this would be taken from the Board budget; the Board's consensus is to be a \$500 sponsor. If Board Members would like to attend, they will need to pay the \$35 for the registration fee and be reimbursed by the Forest Preserve.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

Bills for September – Jerry Paulson made a motion, Mike Eickman seconded to authorize the payment of the bills for September in the amount of \$826,599.22. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Budget and Appropriations Ordinance – The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County's Fiscal Year budget operates from November 1 through October 31. The Board of Commissioners has been presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Annual Budget and Appropriation for review and adoption. The budget has been laid over for 30 days for public review and comment. Judy Barnard made a motion and Audrey Johnson seconded that the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Annual Budget and Appropriations be adopted. Roll call vote taken. **Budget & Appropriations ordinance passes 6-0.**

Levy Ordinance – The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County's Fiscal Year budget operates from November 1 through October 31. The Board of Commissioners have been presented a proposed tax levy that must be approved to finance the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Annual Budget and Appropriations Ordinance that has been presented to the Board. The tax levy has been laid over for 30 days for public review and comment. Mike Eickman made a motion and Audrey Johnson seconded that the tax levy be adopted. Roll call vote taken. **Levy ordinance passes 6-0.**

2022 Fee Schedule – Preserves staff is proposing the following changes for the 2022 Golf Fees and Charges and the 2022 Preserve Fees and Charges and will be reflected on the fee schedules. Mike Holan spoke on the changes to the preserve fees and charges and the golf fees and charges. The last time fees were raised was in 2013. After reviewing fee charges at other agencies, staff feels it's time to bring our fees up to par with other agencies. The changes are as follows: Shelter reservation fees will increase by \$25 and a little more for large shelters, large shelters for over 300 people was raised \$100, under ground use, a construction permit was added for \$100 and up, bridle tags pricing was raised, the Roland Olson arena pricing was removed, metal detecting and geocaching prices are being raised, the golf fees that staff is asking to be approved are the maximum rate that can be charged for that season, the outing and playdays fees are being raised, the inside storage private cart fee is being removed since no one is using the inside storage any longer, golf cart fees are also being raised. Mike Eickman made a motion Jerry Paulson seconded to approve a resolution to revise the 2022 Golf Fees and Charges and the 2022 Preserve Fees and Charges Schedule. **Motion passed unanimously.**

2022 Holiday Schedule – Certain days of the calendar year are designated as scheduled holidays. The Preserves has designated the holidays that will be observed. Judy Barnard made a motion and Jerry Paulson seconded, to amend the Holiday Schedule from October 10<sup>th</sup>, Columbus Day to October 10<sup>th</sup>, Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples' Day. Judy Barnard made a motion and Audrey Johnson seconded, to approve the amended 2022 Holiday schedule to be observed by the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County employees for the year 2022. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Auditing Services – Steve Chapman spoke on the resolution and recommends the approval of the firm, Baker Tilly to perform the Forest Preserves 2021 fiscal year audit for \$16,000. Cheryl Maggio made a motion Mike Eickman seconded to approve a resolution to approve Baker Tilly as the Forest Preserve

auditing services. **Motion passed unanimously.** Jerry Paulson requested the 2019 and 2020 audits be sent to him.

Delegate to IAPD Annual Business Meeting – The Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) requires each member agency to select delegates to their Annual Business Meeting which will be held on January 29, 2022. The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County is an IAPD member and therefore must assign delegates to represent the Preserves. The Preserves typically assigns the Executive Director as the delegate and up to three other individuals as alternate delegates, comprised of staff and/or Board members. Mike Holan asked the Board to let him know before next month's board meeting if they are interested in going. Jerry Paulson made a motion and Mike Eickman seconded to appoint Mike Holan as the delegate and Vaughn Stamm as the alternate to represent the Preserves for the Illinois Association of Park Districts. **Motion passed unanimously.**

## **STAFF REPORTS**

Preserve Operations - Vaughn Stamm, Scott Stewart, Scott Wallace & Bryan Helmold submitted a written report.

Land and Development – Natural Resource Staff submitted a written report.

Golf Operations – Vaughn Stamm, Rich Rosenstiel, Tyler Knapp & Mark Freiman submitted a written report.

Marketing – Samantha Crooks submitted a written report.

Environmental Education – Ann Wasser submitted a written report. Ann announced the end of year community science celebration will be held mid-November at Headquarters. This will be a chance for the Board members to meet the some of the volunteers. Ann will send the details of the celebration to Mike Holan so he can send it to the Board members.

Law Enforcement – Sheriff's Department submitted a written report.

Alex Mills announced Klehm Arboretum received a grant from Thermo Fischer Scientific for \$6,600. The grant will be used to pay Fehr Gram to do the engineering to design an infiltration trench for the parking lot.

Mike Holan announced Daniel Rohrer the Human Resources Manager is no longer with the Forest Preserve. An offer was made to Donna Bileto and she will start November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Judy Barnard questioned the damaged bridge at McKiski and wondered if we needed to replace it. Vaughn Stamm stated the bridge did not need to be replaced due to less water flow and a rock base that was installed. The rock base seems to be working for staff and preserve users.

Judy Barnard asked what the mowed set-a-side areas are at Seward Bluffs and Vaughn Stamm stated they are mowed once a year to keep unwanted vegetation from taking over these areas.

Audrey Johnson asked about the bridge at Klehm and Vaughn stated a tree came down and damaged the bridge. They are hoping to rebuild the bridge in the future, possibly with a grant.

Judy Barnard wanted to compliment staff for the stepping stones at Funderburg.

President Tilly asked Samantha if she had an update on the centennial celebration. Samantha stated she created a new logo and asked if anyone has names of food trucks in the area. Judy Barnard will send her information on local food trucks.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 7:09 PM.

Next board meeting 5:30 PM, Wednesday, November 17, Preserve Headquarters

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kristy Knapp  
Recording Secretary