

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County
BOARD MEETING
Forest Preserve Headquarters
August 19, 2026

PRESENT

Judy Barnard
Mike Eickman
Gloria Lind - Absent
Cheryl Maggio
Jerry Paulson
Emily Porter
Jeff Tilly

STAFF

Daniel Olson, Executive Director
Steve Chapman, Director of Finance
Kristy Knapp, Administrative Services Manager
Mike Brien, Director of Natural Resources
Jody Kennay, Human Resources Manager
Sarah Lorenz, Communications Coordinator
Emily Wendlandt, Board Recording Secretary
Taylor Joray, Wildlife Biologist

GUESTS

Alex Mills Ann Wasser

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 PM, by President Jeff Tilly.

ROLL CALL Recording secretary Emily Wendlandt called the roll.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Judy Barnard made a motion to approve of the meeting minutes from July 15th, seconded by Mike Eickman.
Motion passed unanimously.

INTRODUCTION

The new Wildlife Biologist, Taylor Joray, introduced himself to the Board. The Board welcomed Taylor.

PRESENTATION

Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget Presentation – Steve Chapman presented to the Board the draft budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Jeff Tilly proposed that an additional \$64,000 be added to the environmental education fund.

NEW BUSINESS

Jerry Paulson announced that Sustain Rockford is having a conference on November 6th and requested he attend as a commissioner to represent the Forest Preserves.

ACTION ITEMS

Bills for July- Steve Chapman presented to the Board the bills for July. Mike Eickman made a motion to authorize the payment of the bills for June in the amount of \$939,545.72 seconded by Jerry Paulson. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Acceptance of Land Adjacent to Kilbuck Bluffs from Natural Land Institute – Daniel Olson presented to the Board the ordinance to accept land adjacent to Kilbuck Bluffs from the Natural Land Institute. Mike Eickman made a motion to approve the ordinance, seconded by Emily Porter. **A roll call vote was taken. Jerry Paulson and Judy Barnard abstained. Motion passed.**

Authorizing the Purchase of Land Adjacent to Ferguson Forest Preserve – Daniel Olson presented to the Board the ordinance to purchase land adjacent to Ferguson Forest Preserve. Judy Barnard made a motion to move the ordinance to after closed session, seconded by Cheryl Maggio. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of Change Orders for Natural Resource Building - Daniel Olson presented to the Board the resolution to approve change orders for the Natural Resource building. Mike Eickman made a motion to approve of the resolution, seconded by Judy Barnard. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of Addition to Board Annual Calendar – Daniel Olson presented to the Board the resolution to approve the addition to the annual Board calendar. Emily Porter made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Jerry Paulson. **Motion passed unanimously.**

DISCUSSION

Abatement of Bond Levy – Steve Chapman spoke to the Board regarding the abatement to the bond levy and asked that the Board verbally consent before bringing it to the them as an action item. The Board verbally consented to the abatement.

Budgeting for Sponsorships – Daniel Olson spoke to the Board regarding budgeting for sponsorships and asked the Board whether or not they would want to create a policy and budget for sponsorships in the future. Jerry Paulson suggested that staff retrieve the Rockford Park District's sponsorship policy. Emily Porter requested that Dan put together examples of policies from different organizations with their projected budgeted amounts. Dan agreed to put together policies from different organizations including the Rockford Park District. The Board discussed how much money should be budgeted for sponsorships in the next fiscal budget year.

Community Foundation Agreements – Dan briefed the Board on the community foundation agreements. The Board agreed to absolve the endowment.

Local Election Candidate Endorsements – President Jeff Tilly asked the Board whether or not they would be interested in endorsing local election candidates who align with the values of the Forest Preserves. The Board agreed that the organization should not get involved in endorsements.

STAFF REPORTS

Preserve Operations - Vaughn Stamm, Matt Weik, Scott Wallace, and Bryan Helmold submitted a written report.

Natural Resource Management – Mike Brien, Mike Groves, Keith Krey and Taylor Joray submitted a written report.

Golf Operations – Vaughn Stamm, Bobby VanSistine, Tyler Knapp, and Mark Freiman submitted a written report.

Communications Coordinator – Sarah Lorenz submitted a written report.

Human Resources – Jody Kennay submitted a written report.

Partner Groups – Alex Mills, the Executive Director of Klehm, announced to the Board the completion of critter creek. Ann Wasser, the Executive Director of Wild Roots, let the Board know that renovations at the Grove are continuing.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:19 PM Mike Eickman made a motion to go into closed session to discuss land acquisition and the review of closed minutes, Emily Porter. At 7:55 PM the meeting returned to open session. No action was taken while in closed session.

ACTION ITEMS CONTINUED

Authorizing the Purchase of Land Adjacent to Ferguson Forest Preserve – Jerry Paulson made a motion to approve of the ordinance, seconded by Mike Eickman. **A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.**

Judy Barnard made a motion to approve the following closed session minutes, seconded by Mike Eickman: Jan. 21, 2015, Feb. 18, 2015 – Land Acquisition, Feb. 18, 2015 – Personnel, Mar. 18, 2015, Apr. 15, 2015 – Land Acquisition, Apr. 15, 2015 – Personnel Labor Negotiations, May 20, 2015 – Land Acquisition, May 20, 2015 – Personnel Labor Negotiations, June 19, 2015 – Personnel Labor Negotiations, Aug. 12, 2015, Oct. 21, 2015, Nov. 18, 2015 – Land Acquisition, and Nov. 18, 2015 – Personnel, Dec. 16, 2015.

Motion passed. Jerry Paulson abstained.

Approval of resolution to release closed session minutes and destroy verbatim recordings – Emily Porter made a motion to approve of the resolution, seconded by Mike Eickman. **Motion passed unanimously.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS and COMMUNICATIONS

1. August 21 – Steward Volunteer Day – Moth Sheeting at Deer Run Forest Preserve starting at 8:30pm.
2. August 29 – Guided Hike with NLI at Kishwaukee Gorge North Forest Preserve started at 10:00am.
3. September 12 – Steward Volunteer Day – Invasives Removal at Kilbuck Bluffs starting at 9:00am.

Judy Barnard requested that the golf reports include a column for the budgeted amount.

ADJOURNMENT

Emily Porter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m. Cheryl Maggio seconded; **motion passed unanimously.**

Next regular Board Meeting– 5:30 PM Wednesday, September 16th, Forest Preserve Headquarters

Respectfully Submitted,
Emily Wendlandt
Recording Secretary