

**Forest Preserves of Winnebago County  
BOARD MEETING**

Wednesday, March 18, 2026 – 5:30 PM  
Forest Preserve Headquarters



**AGENDA**

- A. ROLL CALL**
- B. PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE**
- C. APPROVAL of MINUTES**
  - 1. February 18, 2026 Regular Board Meeting
  - 2. March 2, 2026 Special Call Meeting
- D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, AWARDS, and PRESENTATIONS**
  - 1. Natural Resources Dept. Annual Update
- E. OLD BUSINESS**
- F. NEW BUSINESS**
- G. ACTION ITEMS**
  - 1. Bills for February
  - 3. MOU AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteers
  - 7. Budget Amendment Resolution IMRF Accelerated Payment
  - 9. Safety Personal Protection Equipment Reimbursement Policy
  - 12. Holt House/Severson Barn Nomination on National Register of Historic Places
- H. DISCUSSION**
  - 14. 1. Employee Handbook Updates Approval
  - 16. 2. Strategic Plan
    - i. RFP Scope of Work
    - ii. Review of Timeline
    - iii. Develop Stakeholder, Partner, Vendor Contact List
- I. UPDATES and REPORTS**
  - 18. 1. Preserve Operations
  - 21. 2. Natural Resource Management
  - 23. 3. Golf
  - 26. 4. Marketing
  - 27. 5. Human Resources
  - 6. Partner Group Updates
- J. CLOSED SESSION**
  - Land Acquisition
  - Lease Agreement
  - Review of Closed Session Minutes
  - Personnel
- K. REGULAR SESSION CONTINUED**
- L. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  - Approval of Closed Session Minutes from February 20, 2019.
  - Approval of Closed Session Minutes from April 17, 2019.
  - Approval of Closed Session Minutes from August 20, 2019.
  - Approval of Closed Session Minutes from January 15, 2020.

Page

Approval of Closed Session Minutes from February 19, 2020.  
Approval of Closed Session Minutes from June 17, 2020.  
Approval of Closed Session Minutes from September 16, 2020.

**M. ACTION ITEMS CONTINUED**

28. 6. Approval of Resolution to Release Closed Session Minutes and Destroy Verbatim Recordings

**N. ANNOUNCEMENTS and COMMUNICATIONS**

1. March 26 - Fabulous Frogs Program at Headquarters Forest Preserve starting at 6:00pm.
2. April 9 – Nature Nook Spring Cleanup at the Burpee Museum of Natural History starting at 9:00am.
3. April 9 – Bumblebee Monitor Training via Zoom starting at 5:00pm.
4. April 22 – Bat Monitor Training via Zoom starting at 6:00pm.

**O. ADJOURNMENT**

Next regular Board Meeting– 5:30 PM Wednesday, April 15, Forest Preserve Headquarters

If you require assistance while attending our meetings, please call 815-877-6100 or email [ewendlandt@winnebagoforest.org](mailto:ewendlandt@winnebagoforest.org) no less than 48 hours prior to the Board meeting.

Anyone wishing to address the Board must call 815-877-6100 or email [ewendlandt@winnebagoforest.org](mailto:ewendlandt@winnebagoforest.org) in advance of the meeting.

**Forest Preserves of Winnebago County**  
**Authorization to Process Payment of Bills**



March 18, 2026

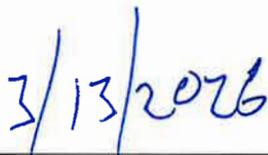
**TO: THE AUDITOR AND TREASURER OF THE  
FOREST PRESERVES OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY.**

Your Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners, to whom were referred the following bills in the amount of **\$ 462,045.32** against the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, have reviewed and approved and therefore respectfully request that orders be drawn on the account of the Forest Preserve District for their payment:

CORPORATE FUND	3001	203,737.12
HEALTH BENEFITS FUND	3185	41,463.27
SOCIAL SECURITY FUND	3192	14,423.12
RETIREMENT FUND	3193	19,034.91
LIABILITY RESERVE FUND	3194	3,535.00
IMPROVEMENT & DEV. FUND	3302	85,294.94
CORPORATE FUND	3402	<u>94,566.96</u>
		<b>\$462,045.32</b>

Respectfully submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Chapman, Finance Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**RESOLUTION**

**No. 26-0305**

**PAYMENT OF BILLS FOR FEBRUARY**

WHEREAS, the Forest Preserve incurs annual and monthly operating and capital expenditures during its budget cycle; and

WHEREAS, the Winnebago County Finance Department compiled the attached invoices relating to Forest Preserve expenditures to be paid for the month of February; and

WHEREAS, our Finance Director, Steve Chapman, has reviewed the invoices and avows them to be accurate and appropriate for payment; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board authorizes the payment of the attached compilation of bills totaling \$462,045.32 to be paid by the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County for the month of February 2026.

Voting YES \_\_\_\_\_ Voting NO \_\_\_\_\_ Voting ABSTAINED \_\_\_\_\_

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 18th day of March, 2026.

That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon its adoption.

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Jeff Tilly, President  
Board of Commissioners

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Gloria Lind, Secretary  
Board of Commissioners

**R E S O L U T I O N**  
**No. 26-0306**

**Memorandum of Understanding for the  
AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Volunteer Program**

**WHEREAS**, the Retired and Senior Volunteer (RSVP) program is one of the largest volunteer networks in the nation for individuals aged 55 and older, and;

**WHEREAS**, the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP (AmeriCorps) program reviews an individual’s skills and connects senior volunteers with appropriate volunteer opportunities in our community, and;

**WHEREAS**, the local AmeriCorps program has three focus areas including disaster services, environmental stewardship, and healthy futures, and;

**WHEREAS**, AmeriCorps has provided a suitable Memorandum of Understanding with an effective date of April 1, 2026 through March 31, 2029 that aligns with the Forest Preserve’s volunteer program.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County approves the attached Memorandum of Understanding with AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP, sponsored by Lifescape Community Services, Inc.

**Voting YES** \_\_\_\_\_                      **Voting NO** \_\_\_\_\_                      **ABSTAINED** \_\_\_\_\_

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 18h day of March, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Tilly, President  
Winnebago County Forest Preserve District

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gloria Lind, Secretary  
Winnebago County Forest Preserve District



**Memorandum of Understanding**

This Memorandum of Understanding (this “MOU”) contains basic provisions, which will guide the working relationship between both parties. It is entered into by and between AmeriCorps Seniors **RSVP of Boone, DeKalb, Lee, Whiteside, and Winnebago County**, sponsored by **Lifescape Community Services, Inc.** and the following agency and/or entity (the “Station”):

**Station Name:** Forest Preserves of Winnebago County **EIN:** 36-6006676

**Station Site Address:** 5500 Northrock Dr

**City:** Rockford **State:** Illinois **Zip:** 61103

Volunteer Station Primary Type:

- Public Non-Profit
- Private Non-Profit
- Proprietary Health Care Agency
- Governmental Agency

**Station Contact Information:**

Name: Keith Krey Phone Number: (815) 516-2655

Email: kkrey@winnebagoforest.org

The AmeriCorps Seniors **RSVP of Boone, DeKalb, Lee, Whiteside, and Winnebago County**, sponsored by **Lifescape Community Services, Inc.** and the *Station* may be referred to herein as the “Parties.”

This MOU is effective 4/1/2026 through 3/31/2029. This MOU may be amended in writing at any time with concurrence of both parties and must be renegotiated at least every three (3) years.

**AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP of Boone, DeKalb, Lee, Whiteside, and Winnebago County Responsibilities:**

1. Recruit, enroll, and interview AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers into RSVP.
2. Refer AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in RSVP to the Station.
3. Review acceptability of volunteer assignments.
4. Instruct AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in RSVP in proper use of volunteer timesheets, reimbursement guidance, and the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP procedures.
5. Provide the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP orientation to the Station staff prior to placement of volunteers and at other times as needed.
6. Initiate publicity regarding AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP.
7. Furnish accident, personal liability, and excess automobile insurance coverage for enrolled volunteers required by the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP policies. The insurance provided by the sponsor is secondary coverage and is not primary insurance.
8. Periodically monitor volunteer activities at the Station to assess and/or discuss needs of volunteers and the Station.

9. Staff an Advisory Council to AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP. Along with the advisory council, arrange for appeals procedure to address problems arising between the volunteer, the Station and/or AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP.
10. Arrange for appropriate AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP recognition.
11. Coordinate with other volunteer and aging programs in the area to foster effective communication and avoid duplication.
12. Reimburse AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in RSVP for transportation costs between their home and volunteer station in accordance with AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP policies and availability of funds (if applicable).
13. AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP will run criminal background checks on any volunteer wanting to be placed, before officially placed.

### **The Station's Responsibilities**

1. Interview and make final decisions on assignments of AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in RSVP.
2. Perform, if required for a particular assignment, background, or other screenings.
3. Implement orientation, in-service instruction, and/or special training of volunteers.
4. Furnish volunteers with materials required for assignment. These materials may include station uniform and photo I.D.
5. Provide supervision of volunteers on assignments.
6. Provide volunteer assignment descriptions for each volunteer opportunity at the Station.
7. Provide for adequate safety of volunteers and submit an annual assurance upon request to AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP of Boone, DeKalb, Lee, Whiteside, and Winnebago County.
8. Investigate and report any accidents and injuries involving AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers immediately to AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP of Boone, DeKalb, Lee, Whiteside, and Winnebago County. All reports shall be submitted in writing.
9. Specify, either by written information or verbally, that AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers are participants in the Station's programming in publicity featuring such volunteers. Display an AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP placard where it may be viewed by the public.
10. **Reports:** The Station Representative shall:
  - **Timesheets:** Report volunteer hours monthly on or before 10th of the following month (Insurance coverage is only effective with verified records of hours served.) OR allow our volunteer coordinator to collect approved monthly timesheets from the volunteer themselves.
  - **Progress Reports:** upon request from the Director, stations may be asked to complete a short bi-annual survey provided by AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Director documenting the impacts of services provided by volunteers.

### **Other Provisions**

1. **Separation from Volunteer Service:** The Station may request the removal of an AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteer at any time. An AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteer may withdraw from service at the Station or from the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP at any time. The AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP staff, the Station staff, and volunteers are encouraged to communicate to resolve concerns or conflicts, or take remedial action, including, but not limited to, placement with another station.
2. **Letters of Agreement:** For in-home assignments, the Volunteer Station will obtain a Letter of Agreement signed by the person or persons legally responsible for the child served, the Volunteer Station liaison, and the

RSVP liaison authorizing the assignment of an AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteer in the child’s home, defining the volunteer’s activities, and specifying supervisory arrangements.

**3. Religious/Political Activities:** The Station will not request or assign AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers to conduct or engage in religious, sectarian, or political activities, but volunteers are to know they may be exposed but not required to participate.

**4. Displacement of Employees:** The Station will not assign AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers to any assignment which would displace employed workers or impair existing contracts for services.

**5. Compensation:** Neither the station nor AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP will request or receive compensation from the beneficiaries of AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers. AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers will not receive a fee for service from beneficiaries.

**6. Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation:** The Station will maintain the programs and activities to which RSVP volunteers are assigned accessible to persons with disabilities (including mobility, hearing, vision, mental, and cognitive impairments or addictions and diseases) and/or limited English language proficiency and provide reasonable accommodation to allow persons with disabilities to participate in programs and activities.

**7. Prohibition of Discrimination:** The Station will not discriminate against AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteers.

**8. Termination of MOU:** This MOU may be terminated at any time by either party by sending written notice of termination of the MOU to the other party. This MOU shall be reviewed at least every three (3) years by the Parties.

**9. Signatures:** By signing this MOU, the Station, through its authorized representative, self-certifies that it meets the requirements necessary to become a AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Station.

**Confidentiality**

1. Sponsor and station agree to establish appropriate safeguards to protect the confidentiality of the data and to prevent unauthorized use or access to it.
2. Specifically, Sponsor will: Not share data outside of the organization volunteer tracking system, or RSVP secure network folder, and grant holder required software.
3. Station and Sponsor will maintain data collected in a safe and secure manner.

**Authorized Signatures**

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<b>Authorized Station Representative</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>RSVP Project Director [or other sponsor designated representative]</b>	<b>Date</b>

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**Forest Preserves of Winnebago County**

**ORDINANCE**

**No. 26-0307**

**Amending the Annual Budget and Appropriations Ordinance  
for the period from November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2026**

**WHEREAS**, Chapter 70, paragraph 805/13,4 Illinois Compiled Statutes – 1992 states “After the adoption of the Annual Appropriations Ordinance, no further appropriations may be made at any other time during that fiscal year except as provided in this Act, provided that the Board of each district may amend such appropriation ordinance from time to time by the same procedure required by this Act for the original adoption of the appropriation ordinance in order to meet an immediate emergency,”; and

**WHEREAS**, the former Executive Director for the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County retired as of June 20, 2025 and applied for his IMRF pension; and

**WHEREAS**, the District was notified by IMRF that based on IMRF’s calculation an accelerated payment amount of \$83,724.86 is owed for that individual; and

**WHEREAS**, the District is required to make such payment within 90 days to avoid accruing interest; and

**WHEREAS**, it is necessary to amend the IMRF 2025-2026 expenditure budget by increasing account No. 412.31 IMRF Employer Contribution by \$83,725 to be funded by the IMRF Fund Balance; and

**WHEREAS**, the IMRF Fund Balance as of October 31, 2025 was \$419,646.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED** as follows:

Section 1. That \$83,725 in budgeted appropriations shall be added to the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Forest Preserve IMRF Fund under expenses in Personnel and funded from the IMRF Fund Balance IMRF Fund 3193 Personnel – IMRF Employer Contribution - 935 412.31 - \$83,725.

Section 2. That this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect immediately upon this adoption

Section 3. That the Secretary of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County is hereby authorized and directed to send two certified copies of this Ordinance to the District Executive Director and one to the Director of Finance.

**Forest Preserves of Winnebago County**

**ORDINANCE**

**No. 26-0307**

**Amending the Annual Budget and Appropriations Ordinance  
for the period from November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2026**

**Voting Yes**

**Voting No**

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Judith Barnard

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Judith Barnard

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Mike Eickman

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Mike Eickman

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Gloria Lind

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Gloria Lind

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Cheryl Maggio

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Cheryl Maggio

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Jerry Paulson

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Jerry Paulson

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Emily Porter

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Emily Porter

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Jeff Tilly

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Jeff Tilly

The above and foregoing Ordinance was adopted this 18th day of March, 2026.

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Jeff Tilly, President  
Board of Commissioners

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Gloria Lind, Secretary  
Board of Commissioners

**RESOLUTION**  
**No. 26-0308**

**Safety Footwear and Safety Eyewear Reimbursement Program**

**WHEREAS**, the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County wishes to recognize the importance of providing employees a hazard-free work environment, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County has a current Safety Footwear policy in place and is currently working to update the Employee Handbook to reflect new safety footwear standards, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County has current standards for providing over-the-lens safety eyewear in the workplace at no cost to the employee, and is currently working to update the Employee Handbook to reflect new standards, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) establishes and defines the lawfully required mandates for safety wear and personal protection in the workplace, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County can assist employees in obtaining personal protection equipment by establishing a reimbursement policy for safety footwear and safety eyewear.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County agree to approve and adopt the following Safety Footwear and Safety Eyewear Reimbursement Policy, and:

**Voting YES** \_\_\_\_\_                      **Voting NO** \_\_\_\_\_                      **ABSTAINED** \_\_\_\_\_

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 18th day of March, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Tilly, President  
Winnebago County Forest Preserve District

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gloria Lind, Secretary  
Winnebago County Forest Preserve District

## **Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Safety Footwear and Safety Eyewear Reimbursement Policy**

### **Purpose**

The Winnebago County Forest Preserve District recognizes the importance of and has an obligation to provide employees a hazard free work environment. This written policy documents the requirements safety wear must meet in order for employees to be reimbursed. The requirements are based on current standards from Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).

### **Policy Statement**

At no time may an employee sign a waiver to excluding the use of personal protective equipment.

#### **Footwear:**

When safety shoes are a requirement of the position, WCFPD will provide a reimbursement to apply toward their purchase. Footwear must meet OSHA requirements and ASTM standards. Standard footwear will not be reimbursed under this policy.

The employee and their supervisor will determine if safety footwear is necessary to the position. If needed, the employee shall complete and submit the reimbursement form and receipt within two weeks after purchase. Original receipt(s) must accompany the District's reimbursement form.

No more than one (1) pair of footwear will be reimbursed in a twenty-four (24) month period at the rate of \$200 per pair for full-time and \$100 for part time and seasonal employees. New employees and seasonal employees will be reimbursed after their ninety (90) day probationary period. The employee will be solely responsible for any additional expense associated with the purchase, including sales tax. Safety shoes that are lost, stolen or damaged, unrelated to the employee's position, will be replaced at the employee's expense.

Employees working in designated positions must wear protective footwear that meets or exceeds the following standards:

ASTM F2413-18 (or most current standard)

Footwear must include one or more of the following protections, as determined by job duty:

- Impact Resistance (I)
- Compression Resistance (C)
- Electric Hazard Protection (EH) or Static Dissipative (SD), where applicable
- Puncture Resistance (PR)
- Metatarsal Protection (Mt) when required by specific tasks

OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.136(a)

#### **Eyewear:**

Employees who require vision correction and are assigned to tasks requiring eye protection must wear **approved protective eyewear that accommodates prescription lenses** or wear protective eyewear designed to fit over prescription glasses.

The employee and their supervisor will determine if safety eyewear is necessary to the position. If needed, and the employee chooses to purchase prescription safety glasses, the employee shall complete and submit the reimbursement form and receipt within two weeks after purchase. Original receipt(s) must accompany the District's reimbursement form.

No more than one (1) pair of safety prescription eyewear will be reimbursed in a twenty-four (24) month period at the rate of \$200 per pair for full-time and \$100 for part time employees. Seasonal employees are not eligible for reimbursement, but will be assigned over-the-lens safety eyewear. New employees will be reimbursed after a successful ninety (90) day probationary period. The employee will be solely responsible for any additional expense associated with the purchase, including sales tax. Safety eyewear that is lost, stolen or damaged, unrelated to the employee's position, will be replaced at the employee's expense.

In order to be reimbursed for prescription safety eyewear, the eyewear must meet or exceed the following standards.

- Prescription lenses permanently mounted into ANSI Z87.1-rated safety frames
- Must meet or exceed ANSI Z87.1 standards
- Designed specifically for occupational safety use (not standard street eyewear)

**R E S O L U T I O N**  
**No. 26-0309**

**Support for the Nomination of the Holt House and Severson Barn to the National Register of Historic Places**

**WHEREAS**, the National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation’s historic sites that are considered to be worthy of preservation, and;

**WHEREAS**, listing buildings on the National Register may enhance its value, raise community awareness and meet requirements for funding restoration opportunities, and:

**WHEREAS**, Elijah Holt, an early settler to Winnebago County, built the Holt House between 1840 and 1843 from limestone collected locally, and is one of the first limestone buildings to be built in Winnebago County, and:

**WHEREAS**, the Severson Dairy Barn is of unique architectural and cultural significance, remains in good condition, and may be included in the historic designation along with the house, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Save the Holt House (STHH) community group was formed, independently of the Board of Commissioners, to explore the feasibility of restoring and finding suitable occupation or re-use of the Holt House.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County agree as follows:

Section 1. – Supports the nomination of the Holt House and Severson Barn to the National Register of Historic Places, and:

Section 2. – Will lead, and provide limited funding for, development and distribution of a request for proposals (RFP) to find a vendor to write the nomination for the National Register, with the understanding that the STHH group will also provide funding for the nomination, and:

Section 3. – Will formally appoint a Board committee (two Board members) to work with District staff and the STHH group, on various tasks related to the nomination process, including but not limited to, awarding the Request for Proposals for writing the nomination, and;

Section 4. - That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon its adoption by the Board of Commissioners, and:

Section 5. - That the Secretary of the Forest Preserve District is hereby authorized and directed to deliver copies of this Resolution to each member of the Board of Commissioners, to the Executive Director and to the Feasibility Committee.

**Voting YES** \_\_\_\_\_

**Voting NO** \_\_\_\_\_

**ABSTAINED** \_\_\_\_\_

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 18th day of March, 2026.

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Jeff Tilly, President  
Winnebago County Forest Preserve District

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Gloria Lind, Secretary  
Winnebago County Forest Preserve District



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners  
**FROM:** Daniel J. Olson, Executive Director  
**DATE:** March 18, 2026  
**RE:** Discussion of Employee Handbook Content Revisions

### REQUEST

Staff is presenting a draft of the Employee Handbook and summary of changes for Board discussion. At this time, we are asking Board members to review the content of the Employee Handbook and send questions to me. We recognize that grammatical corrections such as numbering, headers, etc. will be worked on after all content has been discussed and comments received.

### BACKGROUND

The current Employee Handbook, was last revised in 2023. Best practice for our industry suggests that a review and revision of the Handbook should be completed on a two-year rotation to keep up with new legislation.

To complete the latest revision, a committee of six staff members worked several months to complete a draft suitable for legal counsel review. The draft as well as key staff questions were reviewed by legal counsel. The draft presented here has had a full internal review.

### CHANGES AND UPDATES

The Employee Handbook draft presented with this memo shows strikeouts of areas that were re-written elsewhere or no longer needed. Bold areas are new to the document. Areas of standard text were kept from the last revision.

Also included with this memo is a document titled "Employee Handbook Staff Review Changes and Legal Review Changes". This is a summary of some of the larger conversations between staff and legal counsel if you would like to see details about the changes.

The majority of the updates to the Handbook were changes in federal or state law. Discussion of these items should be minimal.

Additionally, we streamlined some internal processes that included chain-of-command scenarios. Some of these changes were related to disciplinary actions (currently sections 4 and 5).

Of the changes to the Handbook, the following need to be highlighted for the Board.

1. The Safety Wear Reimbursement Policy would be new for the District, but has been an industry standard for a couple of decades. I am presenting it as a separate action during this Board meeting (currently section 5.5).
2. Upon final approval of the Employee Handbook, we are requesting that the Board of Commissioners give authority to the Executive Director to approve and enter into contracts that are one year or less and within the Executive Director spending authority, without getting Board approval. Anything over that amount of time or money would need to be approved by the

Board (currently section 4.5). This will also need to be reflected in the next revision of the District's purchasing Policy.

3. Upon final approval of the Employee Handbook, we are requesting that the Board of Commissioners allow a prorated employee payback of tuition reimbursement if the employee leaves the district within a certain timeline after receiving the reimbursement.
4. Upon final approval of the Employee Handbook, we are requesting that the Board of Commissioners allow the Executive Director to have discretion with layoffs, demotions, and reassignment of positions (currently sections 3.35 and 3.36).
5. There are two areas that still need finalization by staff before Board approval. Both are reliant on technologies for the District. They include the new timekeeping system (currently in its testing phase) and holiday accrual and use (reliant on the County's system). We hope to have both finalized in the coming weeks.

#### **FUTURE ACTIONS**

Staff will be requesting Board approval of the Employee Handbook at the next Board meeting. Any questions or potential revisions can be sent to Dan or Jody.



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners  
**FROM:** Daniel J. Olson, Executive Director  
**DATE:** March 18, 2026  
**RE:** Discussion of Strategic Plan

### REQUEST

The Executive Director requests the Board of Commissioners discuss the needs for the upcoming Strategic Planning RFP to determine the scope of work.

### BACKGROUND

The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County (FPWC) wishes to develop a new strategic plan (SP). The previous plan, developed in 2020 was generally based on an earlier plan.

A tentative timeline for the new plan was shared with the Board near the end of 2025. An updated version of the timeline is attached. The process is underway with a Community Survey designed to receive information relevant to the strategic planning process.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) for a facilitator needs to be developed. Staff is requesting the Board of Commissioners discuss and reach consensus on the following items in order to develop a scope of work.

1. Determine the effective length of Strategic Plan. Three to five years is standard.
2. For the facilitator selection process, determine if the board desires to A.) Have District staff interview respondents and choose the top candidate, or B.) Have the Board of Directors interview respondents and choose the top candidate, or C.) A combination of staff and Commissioners.
3. Determine if the Board desires to appoint a Board member to the Internal Steering Committee to work with committee staff members to finalize the RFP, organize interviews, set up meetings for the facilitator and other administrative duties before and after SP writing.
4. Develop list of eight (8) to ten (10) key stakeholders to attend a visioning session.

### BUDGET IMPACT

A total of \$30,000 was budgeted for Strategic Planning in FY2025-26. Of that total, \$5,000 was reserved for the Community Survey.

# Tentative Timeline

## Strategic Planning Process FPWC

Updated March 2, 2026 by DJO  
Green Highlight Designates Completion

Milestone	Target Date
Recruitment of Survey Developers/Team	December 1, 2025
Development of Community Survey In-house	December 2025 (Early)
Community Survey Materials Finalized	January 31, 2026
Community Survey Released to Public	February 1, 2026
Community Survey Closes	April 30, 2026
Community Survey Data Compiled	May 30, 2026
Board Meeting Discussion on Plan Parameters/Needs	March 2026
Board Meeting Discussion on Plan Parameters/Needs	April 2026
Formation of Internal Steering Committee	April 2026
Notification to partners, stakeholders, vendors, etc.	April 2026
RFP Released	April 2026
RFP Proposals Due	May 2026
Consultant Selection	June 2026
Project Kickoff	July 2026
Phase 1: Preparation and Discovery	July – October 2026
Phase 2: Facilitation and Engagement	November 2026 – February 2027
Phase 3: Plan Development and Finalization	February – June 2027
Draft Plan Presentation to Steering Committee	July 2027
Staff Review of Draft Plan	July 2027
Final Plan Presented to Steering Committee	August 2027
Final Plan Approval by Board of Commissioners	October 2027
Public Launch of Plan	October 2027

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

Schedule will cross over two budget years.  
Community Survey will be done in-house by staff.  
Timeline aligns with start of FY27-28 Budget Year

# Preserve Operations

Vaughn Stamm, Director of Operations  
Matt Weik & Scott Wallace, Preserve Managers  
Bryan Helmold, Facility & Equipment Manager  
February 2026 Activities Report

- Removed large dead tree from back picnic area at Hononegah and along roadway at Sugar River.
- Assisted golf operations with removal of dead trees at Atwood, Macktown and Ledges Golf Courses.
- Cleaned up turf damage in preserves that get plowed.
- Continued replacing boards on picnic tables, dispersed newly rebuilt tables to shelters.
- Conducted building inspections at Sugar River, Macktown, Hononegah and Colored Sands Bird Banding Station.
- Started cleaning up preserves of limbs and sticks, blew roadways as needed.
- Completed 5-year equipment replacement plan for North and South Area Preserve Maintenance Departments.
- Del Johnson and Kayla Lindquist attended IACD Conference.
- Put re-finished hand rails back in wooden outhouses in preserves.
- Performed preventative maintenance and cleaning on chainsaws after heavy use.
- Swept and pressure washed shop floor.
- Received and stored cleaning/janitorial supplies for upcoming season.
- Replaced outdated trail marker plaques at Sugar River and Sugar River Alder.
- Met with Jeff Prentice from Norwest about 2027 asphalt projects.
- Removed hazardous Locust tree at Headquarters.
- Hung “Now Hiring Seasonal Employees” banners at Hononegah and Headquarters.
- Put out “Now Hiring” yard signs at Hononegah, Headquarters, Kieselburg, Roland Olson and Macktown.
- Del Johnson assisted south area with removal of dead ash tree at Blackhawk Springs playground.
- Matt W met with Dan Olson and Vaughn Stamm regarding Stevens Building at Macktown Historic District.
- Preserve Maintenance staff participated in the deer management program.
- Bucked and split firewood for the campgrounds.
- Burned brush piles at Blackhawk Springs and Kishwaukee River picnic area.
- Installed survey signs in Kiosk.

# Preserve Operations

## February 2026 Activities Report Continued

- Cleared trees off fence line at Hinchliff.
- Repaired Weldon Rd gate at Funderburg.
- Replaced AED pads at Severson Dells.
- Removed ash trees at Blackhawk Springs and Kishwaukee River Preserves.
- Staff completed AOD (time-keeping) training.
- Repaired storm gutter at Funderburg farm building.
- Ground tree stumps throughout preserves.
- Cleared honeysuckle from along the trail leading to the Dells at Severson.
- Removed three dead trees near the Grove play area.
- Removed two hazardous trees near the kiosk at Kilbuck Bluffs.
- Completed monthly safety inspections.
- Removed honeysuckle from along bridge at Blackhawk Springs.
- Ongoing trail clearing and maintenance.

## FOREST PRESERVES OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY

### November - February

	<u>2024-2025</u>		<u>2025-2026</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Total</u>
Small Shelter Res.	4	\$340	9	\$765
Small Shelter N/Res.	0	\$0	0	\$0
Large Shelter Res.	18	\$1,980	31	\$3,410
Large Shelter N/Res.	0	\$0	10	\$1,350
Electric Res.	43	\$5,375	43	\$5,375
Electric N/Res.	9	\$1,395	4	\$620
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>\$9,090</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>\$11,520</b>
<b>ONLINE</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43%</b>
Over 300 Res.	0	\$0	0	\$0
Over 300 N/Res.	0	\$0	0	\$0
Ground Use/Tent Res	2	\$60	3	\$90
Ground Use/Tent N/Res.	1	\$45	1	\$45
Building Use Permits	0	\$0	0	\$0
Commercial Photography Permit	0	\$0	0	\$0
Special Use Permits	7	\$2,360	8	\$850
Rides	6	\$240	0	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>\$2,705</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>\$985</b>
<b>ONLINE</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Equestrian Passes</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yearly Tag Res.	13	\$650	19	\$950
Yearly Tag N/Res.	1	\$70	6	\$420
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>\$720</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>\$1,370</b>
<b>ONLINE</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Fly Field Passes</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yearly Pass Res.	10	\$350	12	\$420
Yearly Pass N/Res.	3	\$135	3	\$135
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>\$485</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>\$555</b>
<b>ONLINE</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Metal Detecting Passes</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yearly Pass Res.	13	\$325	17	\$425
Yearly Pass N/Res.	4	\$140	2	\$70
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>\$465</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>\$495</b>
<b>ONLINE</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>\$13,465</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>\$14,925</b>
<b>ONLINE</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>38%</b>

# Natural Resource Management

Mike Brien, Director of Natural Resources

Mike Groves, Natural Resource Manager

Keith Krey, Stewardship Coordinator

Liz Hucker, Wildlife Biologist

February 2026 Activities Report

## Natural Resource Staff

The District wrapped up the 2026 deer management program in early February, removing 75 deer from the Kishwaukee River corridor, 20 deer from Funderburg Forest Preserve, and 6 deer from Klehm arboretum. Nine deer from the Kishwaukee River Corridor (12%) and two deer from Funderburg Forest Preserve (10%) tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Meat from the CWD free deer, totaling 3,811 pounds, was donated to the Rock River Valley Pantry.

- Prepared equipment for upcoming burn season.
- Chemically treated invasive species throughout Hartley Memorial and Laona Heights Nature Preserves.
- Removed deer stands from preserves.
- Burned brush piles at Kishwaukee Gorge, Sugar River Alder, and Funderburg Forest Preserves.
- Forestry mowed invasive brush at Roland Olson, Kishwaukee Gorge, Kieselburg, Sugar River Alder, and Paula Swanson Forest Preserves.
- Hand cut trees and brush at Kishwaukee Gorge, Blackhawk Springs, Paula Swanson, and Sugar River Alder Forest Preserves.
- Staff attended the annual Illinois Association of Conservation Districts conference at Starved Rock Lodge.
- Monitored wood duck houses in preserves throughout the county.
- Distributed annual farm lease questionnaires and agreements.
- Completed Wetland Reserve Program easement monitoring at Cal and Sophia Ferguson Forest Preserve with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Completed training on new attendance software.
- Worked with Hey and Associates to develop proposal for hydrologic restoration project at Sugar River Alder Nature Preserve.
- Monitored ongoing forestry contract work at Funderburg Forest Preserve.
- Continued project coordination for the construction of the new natural resource facility.

## Wildlife

Wildlife biologist Elizabeth Hucker will be leaving the District on March 19th to begin a position with Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Since starting with FPWC in June of 2024, Liz has worked enthusiastically to document rare and sensitive species throughout the preserve system. She was instrumental in expanding our Blanding's turtle monitoring program,

# Natural Resource Management

## February 2026 Activities Report Continued

conducting surveillance for a variety of wildlife pathogens, and developing protocols for documenting many other taxa, including snakes, bats, badgers, American kestrels, and more. We thank Liz for her contribution to the District and wish her luck in her new position!

- Baited piles and assisted with sharpshooting program.
- Scouted locations for spring salamander monitoring.
- Completed radio telemetry of tagged turtles.
- Ordered and assembled equipment for AHDrift project.
- Developed protocol and ordered equipment for water quality assessment project.
- Presented to the Rockford Garden Club regarding wildlife programming. Members of the club graciously donated money to help purchase radio transmitters for turtles.
- Developed protocol for detecting and managing smooth green snakes.
- Completed an inventory of wildlife department equipment.
- Coordinated transfer of permits with permitting authorities.

### Stewardship Coordinator

- Worked with an Eagle Scout candidate to complete a conservation project at Keiselburg Forest Preserve.
- Hosted five volunteer workdays at Blackhawk Springs, Pecatonica River, Kishwaukee Gorge, and Roland Olson Forest Preserves.
- Co-hosted Calling Frog citizen science program with Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.
- Presented at the Morton Arboretum's "Stumped about Arbor Day" Zoom meeting.
- Attended webinars on volunteer management and engagement.
- Attended the Illinois Association of Conservation District's annual conference.
- Flush cut stumps in the volunteer restoration area at Roland Olson Forest Preserve.
- Met with University of Illinois's Winnebago County extension office to discuss partnerships and volunteerism.

### *2026 Statistics*

A total of 34 volunteers earned 294.50 service hours through the month of February.

The monetary value of these service hours equals **\$10,298.66**. As of April 2025, the estimated national value of each volunteer hour is currently \$34.79 (based on the Independent Sector).

# Golf Operations

Vaughn Stamm, Director of Operations  
Bobby VanSistine, Clubhouse Manager  
Rose Mathews, Golf Food & Beverage Manager  
Tyler Knapp & Mark Freiman, Golf Course Superintendents  
February 2026 Activities Report

## Clubhouse Operations:

- New Hire Orientation completed.
- Reviewed and sent out rehire information to last year's staff.
- Met with all golf shop vendors.
- Reviewed previously placed orders.
  - Made reductions to Srixon order.
  - Inventoried orders already received.
  - Added three new vendors.
- Met with Forest Preserve staff:
  - Director of Operations:
    - Reviewed outstanding invoices
    - Discussed priorities to get up and running efficiently
  - Administrative Services Manager:
    - Vendor set up and billing
    - Point of Sale information
    - General information provided to assist day to day operation
  - Communications Coordinator:
    - Brainstormed new ways to promote courses.
    - Received logos for merchandises.
  - Food and Beverage Manager:
    - Reviewed staffing.
    - Reviewed product selection and pricing.
- Began cleaning out golf shops and reconfiguring design layout.
- Oversaw carpet installation at Atwood.

## Golf Maintenance:

### Ledges

- Updated expense report for the 2026 season to ensure accurate, up to date tracking of all expenses.
- Removal, cleanup and flush cutting of stumps for all dead trees located throughout the property.

# Golf Operations

## February 2026 Activities Report Continued

- Developed a five-year equipment replacement program with current market pricing and submitted to Director of Operations.
- Installed display case in the clubhouse for the Food and Beverage Manager.
- Reviewed and selected all items included in the fertilizer and pesticide bid.
- Continued interviewing seasonal applicants for the upcoming season.
- Began spring cleanup throughout the golf course.
- Obtained three quotes for beverage carts and submitted to the Director of Operations.
- Participated in virtual training on the AOD timekeeping system.
- Replaced and tested diaphragm kit on the pesticide sprayer to ensure proper operation.
- Burned brush pile.
- Removal, cleanup and flush cutting of numerous dead trees at Atwood.
- Removed all items from the Pro Shop and Clubhouse at Atwood to prepare for new carpet installation.
- Installed a new light fixture in the Food and Beverage storage closet at Atwood.
- Mechanic performed repairs and maintenance on equipment.

### Macktown

- Updated expense report for the 2026 season to ensure accurate, up to date tracking of all expenses.
- Removal, cleanup and flush cutting of numerous dead trees.
- Developed a five-year equipment replacement program with current market pricing and submitted to Director of Operations.
- Reviewed and selected all items included in the fertilizer and pesticide bid.
- Installed display case in the clubhouse for the Food and Beverage Manager.
- Began spring cleanup throughout the golf course.
- Replaced all burned out or non-functioning light bulbs in clubhouse.
- Continued interviewing candidates for seasonal positions.
- Repaired and calibrated numerous irrigation timing mechanisms.
- Burned brush pile.
- Supervisory participated in virtual training on the AOD timekeeping system.
- Replaced and tested diaphragm kit on pesticide sprayer to ensure proper operation.
- Met with Area Mechanical and obtained quotes before proceeding with furnace repairs in the maintenance shop and clubhouse.

# **Golf Operations**

## **February 2026 Activities Report Continued**

- Mechanic performed repairs and maintenance on equipment.
- Completed fertilizer and pesticide bid selection for upcoming season.
- Delivered golf course accessories to all golf locations.

### **Atwood**

- Completed fertilizer and pesticide bid selection for upcoming season.
- Submitted five-year equipment replacement plan to Director of Operations for review.
- Moved furniture and golf shop merchandise to prepare for clubhouse carpet installation.
- Removed multiple dead and hazardous trees on golf course and haul to burn pile.
- Completed installation of new rear axle bearings and seals on John Deere 5065 tractor.
- Burned brush piles.
- Replaced the stained and damaged ceiling tiles in Atwood clubhouse.
- Cut tree stumps to prepare for grinding.

# **Marketing & Communication Relations**

Sarah Lorenz, Communications Coordinator  
February 2026 Activities Report

## **Programming & Events:**

- Past: Career Fair 3/5, Bluebird Monitor Training 3/12, Budburst Monitor Training 3/18.
- Upcoming: Fabulous Frogs with Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Connie McIntosh 3/26, Backpacking With Burpee: Basics of Birding 4/4, Nature Nook Spring Clean Up with Burpee Museum of Natural History, Bumblebee Monitor Training 4/9, Backpacking With Burpee: Celebrate Earth Day 4/18, Bat Monitor Training 4/22.

## **Professional Development**

- Attended IACD conference 2/19-2/20.
- Attended web compliance webinar 3/12.

## **Advertising:**

- ½ page ad in Natural Land Institute's Annual Dinner program.
- General and targeted golf (Mid-West Family targeted display ads running seasonally).
- GoRockford advertising (Outdoor Activities, Family Fun).
- Meta ad (survey).

## **Engagement:**

- Announcement of Paula Swanson Forest Preserve acquisition picked up by 8 local news agencies.
- Collaborated on reel with Rock River Valley Pantry (venison donation).
- March digital newsletter to be sent to subscribers on 3/19.
  - April digital newsletter scheduled for 4/23.

## **Print & Signage:**

- Permanent PSA signage (dog safety) completed.
- Yard sign campaign (dog safety) in final phases of development.
- Spring Nature's Notebook at the printer.

## **Social Media(February 6 – March 9, 2026)**

- FPWC Facebook: 6,119 followers (+135)
  - Reach: 52,797 (+280.2%)
  - Engagement: 2,523 (+68.4%)
  - Views: 217,365 (+185.3%)
- FPWC Instagram: 2,067 followers (+22)
  - Reach: 1,787 (+64.5%)
  - Engagement: 608 (-10.9%)
  - Views: 12,097(-2.5%)

## Human Resources

Jody Kennay, Human Resources Manager  
February 2026 Activities Report

Full-Time New Hires	2 (Mechanic II and Laborer)
Full-Time Open Requisitions	2 (Technician and Carpenter)
Seasonal Hires	82 Returning 10 new 13 Open
Resignations	1 (Wildlife Biologist)
Orientations	3 Orientations (40 seasonal employees)

### Projects and Progress:

**Job Fair - March 5 Received 7 applications** (Mechanic, Laborer, Outside Attendants, Preserve Maintenance)

**Search for Wildlife Biologist** - in progress. Planning for interviews the weeks of March 30 and April 6.

**Returning Seasonal Employees** - Orientations begin the week of March 9. Sending link to Illinois Harassment training March 13. 82 returning seasonal employees with 13 positions still open. Open seasonal positions posted on website.

**Revising Employee Handbook** (updated with new employment laws, rewrote sections as needed, added addendums) Staff/ED review complete; Legal review complete; Asking for Board approval at March Meeting.

**Compensation Study** (current state, pain points, research, other updated Preserve information, compensation analysis, etc.). Due date to ED is March 31.

**Insurance Open Enrollment Preparation** (anticipated costs, new program offerings, process improvements and communication plan)

## **RESOLUTION**

### **No. 26-0310**

#### **REVIEW, RELEASE OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES AND DESTRUCTION OF VERBATIM RECORDINGS**

WHEREAS, pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2.06(d), the Forest Preserve District of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners (the “Board”) has met and reviewed the minutes of all meetings of the Board dated below that are presently closed to the public; and

WHEREAS, the Board hereby finds and declares that the minutes for closed sessions held on certain dates no longer require confidential treatment; and

WHEREAS, section 2.06(c) of the Open Meetings Act allows for destruction of closed session verbatim recordings more than eighteen (18) months old; and

WHEREAS, District staff and legal counsel have reviewed and made recommendations to the Board about the minutes of all meetings dated below.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE WINNEBAGO COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT IN ILLINOIS, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION ONE: The recitals set forth herein above shall be and they are hereby incorporated as if said recitals were fully set forth within this Section One.

SECTION TWO: The Board finds and hereby declares that closed session minutes or parts thereof of the following dates no longer require confidential treatment and can be released at this time:

- February 20, 2019 – Entire set of minutes.
- April 17, 2019 – Entire set of minutes.
- August 20, 2019 – Entire set of minutes.
- January 15, 2020 – Entire set of minutes.
- February 19, 2020 – Entire set of minutes.
- June 17, 2020 – Partial release of minutes. Land Acquisition portion only.
- September 16, 2020 – Entire set of minutes.

SECTION THREE: The Board finds and hereby declares that the closed session minutes or parts thereof for the following dates cannot be released at this time because it remains necessary to protect the public interest or the privacy of an individual to keep said minutes confidential:

- June 17, 2020 – Personnel portion to remain closed and confidential.

SECTION FOUR: The Board finds and hereby declares that the verbatim recordings of closed session minutes for the following dates may be destroyed by the recording secretary, as approved written minutes exist for those sessions.

February 20, 2019.  
April 17, 2019.  
August 20, 2019.  
January 15, 2020.  
February 19, 2020.  
September 16, 2020.

SECTION FIVE: Any and all motions, policies or resolutions of the Forest Preserve District of Winnebago County in conflict with the provisions of this resolution shall be and are hereby repealed.

SECTION SIX: This resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval in the manner provided by law.

PASSED THIS 18th day of March, 2026.

Voting YES \_\_\_\_\_ Voting NO \_\_\_\_\_ ABSTAINING \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Tilly, President  
Board of Commissioners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gloria Lind, Secretary  
Board of Commissioners