

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County
BOARD MEETING
Preserves Headquarters
January 18, 2023

PRESENT

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

STAFF

Mike Holan, Executive Director
Steve Chapman, Director of Finance
Vaughn Stamm, Director of Operations
Ann Wasser, Director of Nature Education
Sherry Winebaugh, Human Resources Manager
Renee Henert, Communications Coordinator

GUESTS

Roxanne Sosnowski
Alex Mills
Brendan Noble
Liz Wiener
Andrea Wallace Noble
Jarrod Hennis
Chris Samuelson
Aubrie Sabin
Roger Reithmeier
Josh Sag
Phil & Connie McIntosh
Don & Sue Miller
Harin Patel
Tom & Teresa Tomblinson
Patty Oliveri

Laura Sjoquist
Mary Kaull
Jim Roberts
Jim Larson
Kurtis Longenecker
Emily Porter
Eliott Porter
Jillian Neece
Ginnie Watson
Erin O’Gorman
Andrea Pedersen
Connie Kuntz
Jocelyn Kuntz
Sam Kuntz

Fern Kuntz
Angelo Kuntz
Alex Marshall
Chris Potter
Emily K.
Kevin Kaltewbach
Julie Uram
Richard Toppe
Alexis Simmons
Lynell Cannell
Katie Kerr
James Marshall
Zachary Dal Pra
Jack Armstrong

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 December 14, 2022 were approved. No changes or additions were made to the agenda.

PRESENTATIONS and PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Brendan Noble – 3909 March Ave., Brendan addressed the Board regarding the responsibilities of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County and how the Board has failed to uphold them. After giving multiple examples, he asked the Board to be a good partner and act in good faith.

Jim Larson – 10245 Tybow Trail, Roscoe. Jim thanked the maintenance staff for repairing the damaged outhouse at Roland Olson. He also was thankful for the calendar which helped identify a fungus at Roland Olson. He would still like to hear back regarding painting the outhouses.

Harin Patel – 916 Cerasus Drive. Harin addressed the Board to discuss Severson Dells. Harin mentioned multiple organizations that Severson Dells partners with to educate the public. He asked the Board why they have been slow to respond to the public, why it took over a year to meet with Severson regarding the

agreement, and why does the Board seem so negative and combative when it comes to its approach to Severson Dells. Harin asked for the Board to start acting in good faith.

Alex Marshall – 11912 Deacon Dr.- Alex spoke on his experience at Severson Dells through summer camps and mentioned how it deeply impacted his life and linked him to nature. He asks that the Board take their next steps regarding this essential organization with the utmost care, so it can provide the same opportunity for future generations.

Chris Samuelson - 13550 Cricket Close, Roscoe. Chris addressed the Board regarding the decision to eliminate staff and how poorly the process to was executed.

Jeff Tilly thanked everyone for their time and input.

Jerry Paulson asked for a microphone and speaker system. Mike Holan and Jeff Tilly said we will look into it.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS / DISCUSSION

Committee Report and Update – Cheryl Maggio updated the Board regarding the meeting on December 20th. She said they went over the agreement with the participants and had good back and forth comments. The Severson participants are going to take a look at the agreement and see if they have any questions or any additional changes. They plan to meet again on January 30th at 4:00pm. If the Board members have any questions or comments they would like to ask, they should submit them by email to Jeff Tilly within the next 48 hours and he will get the questions or comments to Cheryl Maggio and Judy Barnard to discuss at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Accel Entertainment Gaming Agreement – Mike Holan apprised the Board of a new law that has gone into place with regards to gaming. This law allows Accel Entertainment Gaming to do an eight-year agreement instead of a five-year agreement. Mike Holan is asking to renew the agreement for eight-years since Accel is the only company that is willing to work with us because of our part-time status. The new law requires the gaming machines to be removed after the season and put back in when the season begins. Mike Holan also mentioned that there's no monetary cost to the Forest Preserves and if at any point we decide we don't want gaming or we're forced to close a golf course, there's no contractual stipulation and therefore the contract ends with that golf course. Jeff Tilly has the contacts and will sign them.

ACTION ITEMS

Bills for December – Gloria Lind made a motion, Mike Eickman seconded to authorize the payment of the bills for December in the amount of \$574,787.00. **Motion passed unanimously.**

CRP Contract – Mike Holan Addressed the Board regarding the CRP Contract. The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County (FPWC) purchased the Mitchell Farm in Shirland, IL. as an addition to Ferguson Forest Preserve (Seaton Addition) in October 2021. 6.87 acres of the Mitchell Farm is under a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract with the former owners, the Seatons, for 10 years with the contract period of 06/01/2017 – 09/30/2027. FPWC, as the new owners, can choose to take over the remaining years of the CRP contract, without payment since FPWC is a government agency or reject the contract whereby the Seatons would be required to return all previous payments. FPWC will enhance the CRP area with prairie plantings, therefore continue to be compliant with the regulations set in the CRP contract but may remove up to two (2) acres of the CRP acres to construct a small parking area for additional parking for Ferguson Forest Preserve. Because the parking lot construction is not compliant with the CRP contract, the contract holder will be required to reimburse the Stephenson County Farm Service Agency (FSA) for those acres in the amount of \$3,000.00 and if FPWC takes over the contract,

this would be charged to FPWC. FPWC negotiated with the Seatons to take over the contract with the understanding that the Seatons would pay FPWC the \$3,000.00 for the reduced acreage as well as an additional \$1,200.00 to maintain the CRP acres per the contract by mowing and burning those acres. Judy Barnard made a motion and Jerry Paulson seconded to accept the CRP contract with the Stephenson County FSA with the understanding that the Seatons will make payment of \$4,200.00 for managing the CRP acres and repayment for the two (2) acres being taken out of CRP by FPWC for a parking area.

Motion passed unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

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

Land and Development – Mike Brien and Mike Groves submitted a written report.

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

Marketing – Renee Henert submitted a written report.

Environmental Education – Ann Wasser submitted a written report. Ann addressed the Board of Commissioners regarding the issues with transparency, communication, billing and she asks the Board to think about what type of agency they want to be for this community in the future.

Human Resources/Volunteer Program Report – Sherry Winebaugh submitted a written report. Stewardship position has been filled.

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

CLOSED SESSION

Audrey Johnson made a motion to go into closed session at 6:06 pm. At 7:00 pm, the meeting returned to open session. No action was taken while in closed session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and COMMUNICATIONS

Cheryl Maggio asked for a public statement to be released to indicate how the Board and Forest Preserve are moving forward and our intent to support Severson Dells. There was much discussion between the Board members and Mike Holan regarding the billing for Severson, the misinformation to the public, using the public statement in response to emails and questions, and the educational policy resolution from 1977 and having legal counsel look at how to interpret the wording.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Next board meeting 5:30 PM, Wednesday, February 15, 2023, Preserve Headquarters

Respectfully Submitted,
Kristy Knapp
Recording Secretary