

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County
SPECIAL CALL BOARD MEETING
Forest Preserve Headquarters
September 6, 2023

PRESENT

Judy Barnard-via phone
Mike Eickman
Audrey Johnson
Gloria Lind-arrived 5:34pm
Cheryl Maggio
Jerry Paulson
Jeff Tilly

STAFF

Mike Holan, Executive Director
Steve Chapman, Director of Finance
Emily Wendlandt, Administrative Assistant

GUESTS

Alex Mills
Sue Grans
Tera Wenner

ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM, by President Jeff Tilly. Recording secretary Kristy Knapp called the roll.

PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE Cheryl Maggio led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENTATIONS and PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Presentation on proposed natural playground at Klehm Arboretum and Botanical Gardens-Alex Mills – Alex Mills addressed the Board of Commissioners regarding the proposed natural playground at Klehm Arboretum and Botanical Garden. Alex presented a video, aerial overview of the Nancy Olson Children’s Garden and renderings of the project. Alex also read a summary of the project which stated Winnebago County Forest Preserve District qualifies as a distressed community in the IDNR Open Space Land Acquisition and Development grant program and that the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District is seeking 100% funding for a new natural playground feature to be constructed at Klehm Arboretum and Botanical Gardens. The feature will be adjacent to the kid’s creek water feature and splash pad in the Nancy Olson Children’s Garden. It will give the children a range of activities between the two areas and accessible all year round. The total project budget and grant request is approximately \$392,000 and is due on September 15th. This project would be the first natural playground located within the City of Rockford and has several elements that are ADA accessible. Day-to-day maintenance for the natural playground would be Klehm’s responsibility through an agreed upon maintenance plan but the natural playground would be a Forest Preserve asset. Alex reviewed many ways they promote the use of the facilities, which includes social media, promoting memberships or entry fees, participating in the Museums for All program, school field trips, boys and girls club visits among other things. Awards of the grant would most likely be the first half of 2024, with the projected start date of July 1, 2024 and finish date of December 31, 2025.

Public comment and feedback on proposed natural playground at Klehm Arboretum and Botanical Gardens – Sue Grans – Sue stated she is a volunteer and tour guide for Klehm Arboretum. Over the summer she was able to have her relatives, aging from 18 months to 9 years old, play on the splash pad. The one thing she hears the most is how much everyone loves the Nancy Olson Children’s Garden but wish they could use the area in the spring and fall. She would much rather have kids at Klehm Arboretum looking at flowers, walking over the bridge at the koi pond and touching the trees instead of screentime. Sue has seen a lot of kids out there that are disabled or not moving well and she said there are a lot of features those kids can

enjoy too. Sue stated it would be appropriate to have a three-season effort at the Nancy Olson Children's Garden. The Board thanked Sue for speaking.

Tera Wenner – Tera stated she found out about this meeting because of social media. Tera has lived in this community for a very long time and has had the benefit of using the Forest Preserve resources. Tera mentioned she has friends that have been able to go to Klehm because of the Access for All program. She is proud that we offer this program in the community. Sue has recently become a member of Klehm and mentioned how much her grandchildren love the water feature. She also would like to see more resources accessible than just in the summertime for the children. She appreciated the accessibility issue being identified because she works with children with disabilities and thinks it great to have places that kids can participate and learn just like their peers. Tera supports everything shared in the presentation and it sounds like this is an opportunity to add value to our Forest Preserve system. The board thanked Tera for speaking.

NEW BUSINESS

Ledges Pool – Mike Holan updated the Board of Commissioners regarding the Ledges Pool. Mike mentioned the Ledges pool never opened this season due to lack of funds. Mike spoke with the president of Ledges Pool Association along with another board member regarding the 2-million-dollar liability insurance policy they are responsible to have per the agreement. After stating they would provide us the policy, Mike has still not seen anything at this time. Since they have not provided the insurance policy, the Forest Preserve's attorneys state they are in breach of the agreement. This would put the liability of the pool back on the Forest Preserve. Mike recommends if they come back next year and want to open the pool, that the Board may want to start a new agreement. The locks have been changed on all the building at this time. Notice was sent of the breached agreement to the Ledges Pool Association and if nothing is sent, Mike will contact our attorney and have them send notice of the termination of the lease.

ACTION ITEMS

Resolution authorizing OSLAD Grant Application for Natural Playground at Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden – The Winnebago County Forest Preserve District staff is pursuing a \$400,000 State of Illinois/Illinois Department of Natural Resources Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant as a funding mechanism for the further development of Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden. Winnebago County Forest Preserve District is identified as an Economically Distressed Forest Preserve District for the purposes of grant match, and as such, proposed improvements could be funded up to 100% by the grant. A condition for applying for the grant is the passage of "DOC-3 Resolution of Authorization" by the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District. The Winnebago County Forest Preserve District certifies and acknowledges that it has up to 100% of matching funds necessary to complete the pending OSLAD project within the timeframes identified in the application. The Winnebago County Forest Preserve District agrees to comply with all terms, conditions and regulations of the OSLAD program. Mike Eickman made a motion, Gloria Lind seconded to authorize an OSLAD Grant Application for natural playground at Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden. Roll Call vote taken. **Motion passed 6-0. (Judy Barnard was not present for roll call).**

ADJOURNMENT

Gloria Lind made a motion, Audrey Johnson second to adjourn the meeting at 6:06 PM. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Next board meeting 5:30 PM, Wednesday, September 20, 2023, Forest Preserve Headquarters

Respectfully Submitted,
Kristy Knapp
Recording Secretary