

**KENDALL COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

AUGUST 2, 2017

I. Call to Order

Committee Chairman Flowers called the Operations Committee meeting to order at 6:00 pm in the Kendall County Board Room.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Flowers, Hendrix, and Prochaska all were present.

III. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Hendrix. All, aye. Opposed, none.

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to establish a fixed end time for the meeting of 7:00 pm. Seconded by Commissioner Hendrix. All, aye. Opposed, none.

IV. Citizens to be Heard

No public comments were offered by those in attendance.

V. Review of Financial Statements through July 31, 2017

Director Guritz presented an overview of financial statements and programs through July 31, 2017.

Director Guritz reported that overall the District appears ahead of the prior fiscal year.

Director Guritz expressed concerns over the number of weddings contracted for Ellis House in 2018, stating that this will be carefully monitored going into the FY 17-18 budget development process in order to make adjustments to the program budget.

Commissioner Purcell entered the meeting at 6:05 pm.

Director Guritz reported that the Natural Beginnings Early Education Program registrations are below budget projections for full enrollment for the upcoming year. The FY 17-18 budget will be adjusted accordingly based on actual enrollments.

The Operations Committee reviewed program performances, citing concerns regarding salary expense versus revenue generation for Ellis Equestrian Center program services. The

Operations Committee also discussed concerns related to the number of scheduled wedding events at the Ellis House for 2018.

Chairman Flowers suggested target marketing for non-traditional audiences including corporate meetings and retreats. Director Guritz stated that this does need to be explored.

Director Guritz stated that the Equestrian Center's budget is not performing to expectations. For this reason, the second Equestrian Program Coordinator position will not be filled. Additional part-time Horsemanship Instructors will be hired in order to properly staff the public program and horse care schedules, with efforts focused on continued marketing to increase program participation going into fall and the upcoming fiscal year.

Commissioner Purcell stated that the program revenues for the equestrian center are not performing to expectations. Director Guritz acknowledged the program revenue shortfalls, and that staff salary costs that are out-of-line with program performance. Within the current year, the types of services have been diversified, which should lead to increased reservations for the upcoming year so long as marketing efforts are continued, and equestrian center staff are helping to enhance target marketing efforts which fell short within the current year. This is the recipe that has generated increased enrollments within environmental education program services. Director Guritz stated that the goal for all programs is to meet all program direct costs.

Commissioner Hendrix suggested that the District put forward a marketing effort to incentivize bookings in the current year for 2018 events. Director Guritz stated that the District will be marketing the new program offer for a second rental event with a 50% discount for contracted wedding events at both Ellis House and Meadowhawk Lodge.

Director Guritz highlighted recent program successes, including a \$900 field trip and tour extended to the Polish National Alliance summer camp children.

Commissioner Purcell stated that for lessons, the District has only achieved 43% of target revenues, while at the same time incurring costs at 106% of budget. Director Guritz stated that the lessons program cost center has been charged a disproportional amount of the horse care expenses, which will be reviewed, but acknowledged that the part time salary charges are out of line with program performance, which is why the second Equestrian Program Coordinator position will not be filled. Equestrian Center Coordinator Norton has been apprised of the situation, and is working well with District administrative staff to address this situation. Director Guritz validated Commissioner Purcell's interpretation of program performance.

Commissioner Flowers suggested that staff turnover may be impacting participation, noting that client relationships with instructors may be a cause for reduced lesson package services.

Commissioner Purcell requested forecasted salary expenses for the remainder of the year. Director Guritz stated that this report will take some time to prepare, but can be presented at the September Operations Committee meeting. Commissioner Purcell requested an expedited report for end-of-year projections. Director Guritz stated that he would work to pull an informational report that will be distributed prior to the next meeting. The Operations Committee discussed the timing for development of the end-of-year projections report.

Commissioner Hendrix noted that by not rehiring the second coordinator position should reduce staff salary costs to address budget performance, with additional instructors hired to support program reservations whose salaries will vary based on program volumes.

Commissioner Hendrix asked whether the District has tracked trends in ridership. Director Guritz stated that all of the program revenue participation and payment data is available within RecPro. This will provide an indication of when clients are purchasing services, but not necessarily when the prepaid lesson packages have been fulfilled. This is addressed from here on out with the Board's approval of the lesson program's session scheduling.

The Operations Committee discussed the status of 2018 wedding bookings, suggesting completion of an updated comparison of local venues, fees and charges.

VI. Review of Public Program Fees and Charges

Environmental Education Coordinator Emily Dombrowski presented a report on the proposed fall public program fees and charges.

The Operations Committee discussed the upcoming Creatures of the Night program, expressing optimism that this will be a popular offering.

The Operations Committee noted staff efforts to extend pilot adult program opportunities. Director Guritz stated that the Forest Foundation also has expressed interests in adult education programming as part of its community outreach efforts.

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to forward the fees and charges to Commission for approval. Seconded by Commissioner Hendrix. Aye, all. Opposed, none.

VII. Fall 2017 Sunrise Center North-Ellis House and Equestrian Center "Hoofin' It" 5K Run/Walk and Kids 1-Mile Run Fees and Charges

Director Guritz presented sponsorship and registration materials, including proposed fees and charges, developed by Sunrise Center North for a proposed 5K Run/Walk and Kids 1-Mile Run.

The Operations Committee discussed the history of 5K events at Ellis.

Commissioner Hendrix made a motion to forward the proposed fees and charges as presented to Commission for approval. Seconded by Commissioner Prochaska. Aye, all. Opposed, none.

VIII. Proposed Grant from The Conservation Foundation - Ellis House and Equestrian Center Pond Habitat Restoration Project

Director Guritz presented information on a proposed habitat restoration project for Baker Woods Forest Preserve. The project will involve re-grading and establishment of native vegetation around the shoreline of the farm pond at Ellis funded by a \$3,000 to \$4,000 grant from The Conservation Foundation received for Aux Sable Creek conservation efforts from LyondellBassell. An additional employee matching grant totaling \$400 has been received by the Forest Foundation that could also support this project.

Director Guritz stated that completion of the project by a contractor may be cost prohibitive, but there are sufficient funds to complete the project in-house.

Commissioner Hendrix inquired into the approach to protect aquatic life. Director Guritz stated that AquaNeat would be used for the shoreline application which will limit non-target impacts.

Commissioner Purcell stated that staff time commitments and priorities will need to be examined.

Director Guritz stated that the goal is to complete the project with the funds available, and can be extended into next year if need be. Director Guritz stated that he would present a project budget for consideration.

The Operations Committee requested a presentation of the project overview and budget at the September Committee of the Whole meeting.

Commissioner Purcell made a motion to forward the Ellis Pond restoration project budget to the Committee of the Whole for consideration. Seconded by Commissioner Prochaska. All, aye. Opposed, none.

IX. Eldamain Road – Rob Roy Creek Mitigation Funding and Subat Fen Restoration Project

Director Guritz reported on notification received from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources regarding a proposed restoration project at Subat Forest Preserve that would be funded by the Kendall County Highway Department's incidental take permit fee. As part of the Eldamain Road widening project, state listed mussels were relocated to the Schaeffer-

Eldamain Road fen in Subat Forest Preserve, an area studied by the Conservation Research Institute in 1999. \$4,000 - \$6,000 will be received directly from the Kendall County Highway department that will be applied to support restoration project activities within the fen area.

X. Grant Application Updates (RTP, LWCF, ComEd Green Region, TMA-USFS Urban Trees Grant)

Director Guritz reported that the District's application for RTP funding to complete trail improvements at Millbrook South was not awarded funding, citing the need to complete a Phase II archaeological survey.

Director Guritz reported that a waiver of retroactivity has been submitted for approval to the US Department of Interior for the District's Land and Water Conservation Fund grant.

Director Guritz reported that the \$10,000 ComEd Green Region grant has been received and deposited into the capital fund for support of the Henneberry Forest Preserve restoration project.

The District is waiting to hear on the status of award for the USFS Urban Trees grant from The Morton Arboretum, which, if received, will be applied to the Henneberry Forest Preserve restoration project initiative.

XI. Plants of Concern Project Overview

Director Guritz reported on a volunteer-intern project effort to develop a master database of all plant communities studied over the past three decades in order to identify possible locations of rare, threatened or endangered plant species known to occur within preserve areas from past studies. A project overview will be presented in September with support from Natalie Nowak who volunteered time over the summer to compile the baseline report that will be integrated into a GIS plant community database layer for all preserves. This effort will be tied into a Plants of Concern workshop in late-winter 2018 to recruit volunteers to support efforts to help identify and conserve rare plant species populations in Kendall County.

XII. Sponsorship Program Updates – Calendar of Events and Forest Preserve Location and Amenities Map

The Operations Committee reviewed concept designs for the proposed Calendar of Events and Forest Preserve Location and Amenities Map as part of the approved 2018 Sponsorship Program. Director Guritz reported that the goal is to begin recruitment of 2018 sponsors beginning in September of this year.

XIII. Henneberry Forest Preserve Restoration Project Updates

Director Guritz reported that the Whitetail Ridge Homeowner's Association Board will meet later in the week to vote on whether or not to grant access to the restoration area using the open space parcel adjacent to the restoration site.

Separately, President Gilmour and Director Guritz will be meeting with an adjacent property owner to discuss possible acquisition of property to establish an access corridor for long-term maintenance of the natural and restored areas at Henneberry Forest Preserve. A meeting is scheduled with the Kendall County Planning, Building and Zoning Department to review the status of platted parcels for the Henneberry Woods subdivision development in order to assess long-range plans for preserve access, and to examine the status of contracts for completion of development projects currently in place with Kendall County and the Oswegoland Park District.

XIV. Hoover Bunkhouse Alarm Line Repair – Proposed Donation from T&T Technologies

Director Guritz reported on the possible donation of horizontal boring services from TT Technologies to replace the damaged cable to restore the alarm monitoring connection to the Blazing Star Bunkhouse.

XV. Executive Session

None.

XVI. Other Items of Business

None.

XVII. Citizens to be Heard

No public comments were offered by those in attendance.

XVIII. Adjournment

Meeting summarily adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David Guritz
Executive Director, Kendall County Forest Preserve District