

**KENDALL COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 1, 2017**

I. Call to Order

Chairman Flowers called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm in the Kendall County Board Room.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Hendrix, Prochaska, and Flowers all were present. District staff members Marty Vick, Amy Martin, Nicole Norton, Emily Dombrowski, and April Morris also were present.

III. Approval of Agenda

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

IV. Citizens to be Heard

No public comments were offered by those in attendance.

V. Yorkville Athletic Association, NFP – License Agreement and Proposal for Ballfield Improvements at Hoover Forest Preserve

Director Guritz presented the most current draft of the Yorkville Athletic Association license agreement. Director Guritz stated that the agreement is now under review by the Association.

The proposed license agreement cost is \$2,000.00, with the security deposit for trash removal included as discussed at previous Programming and Events Committee meetings.

Director Guritz stated that Yorkville Fury representatives plan to present at the upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting, and may include a request for a reduced license agreement fee to offset a portion of the costs for their proposed improvements.

VI. Galena Road and Route 47 Rest Stop Closure Discussion

Director Guritz presented a request to close off the Galena and Route 47 rest stop. The District has received ongoing reports of commercial use (truck trailers), and other reports from the Kendall County Sherriff's Office on other prohibited activities taking place.

Beyond unauthorized uses, the close proximity of the driveway to the Galena-47 intersection presents additional traffic safety concerns.

If permission is extended, District staff will work with the Kendall County Highway Department to effect the closure, which will include pavement renewal and turf restoration.

Commissioner Prochaska inquired into whether the District could sell the 4.88 acre parcel over time under the Downstate Forest Preserve District Act. Director Guritz stated that he would need to check with the State's Attorney's Office to see if this selling off 1-acre tracts over time to the adjacent farmer would be allowable, and suggested that road widening efforts will likely need a portion of the north side of the parcel to complete.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to move forward with the closure in 2017 following notification of the Board of Commissioners, provided there are no objections received.

VII. Ellis Equestrian Center Program Performance and Budget Objectives Report and Discussion

Director Guritz presented a report detailing FY 15-16 budget performance and FY 16-17 budget projections for Equestrian Center operations.

Ellis Equestrian Center operations posted an overall surplus of \$1,789.00 for the year.

In 2016, Camps, Lessons, and Birthday Party programs all underperformed in terms of revenue projections. Lessons and Camps also underperformed in terms of projected net gain, but Birthday Parties posted a surplus of just over \$2,000.00 for the year. The success of last year's surplus budget is attributed largely to the additional revenues generated through the Sunrise Center North license agreement.

Nicole Norton stated that it should be observed that little was done in the area of marketing Ellis Equestrian Center programs last year. Equestrian Center staff are working to better promote services, starting with a presence at the Minooka Family Fest on February 11.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed promotional giveaways for the event, including selection of a lesson, camp, or birthday party program for the raffle, and \$5 off coupon to event ticket holders to boost presence and awareness of services at the event.

Commissioner Hendrix stated that expanding marketing efforts should result in increased demand for the programs.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed Equestrian Center staffing in the upcoming spring. Amy Martin is returning to school part time, and Nicole Norton will be taking a 2-3 month leave of absence. Farm Manager Vick reported that applications have been received from qualified candidates that will help sustain operations and customer service, including a student from Black Hawk College.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed the distribution of vet and farrier cost coding in the equestrian center cost centers.

Amy Martin reported that a portion of the District's stored surplus hay has been delivered and loaded into the Ellis storage barn and main barn.

Nicole Norton reported that the equestrian center has received strong positive feedback from parents and participants in the new Pony Club program. A letter or email will be sent out to all current lesson students to promote the program.

Nicole Norton and Amy Martin also plan to implement volunteer work days on program days for extra assistance with program support and horse care activities on a more regular schedule during times that volunteers are most likely able to contribute time.

VIII. Discussion of Possible Use of the Ellis House Apartment for Housing Student Horsemanship Instructors

Director Guritz presented a request to develop a lease agreement for use the Ellis upstairs apartment area as for housing of student Horsemanship Instructor employees.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to move forward with the development of the lease agreement template to house a single student employed by the District as a Horsemanship Instructor, limiting the space occupied to one bedroom area and the adjoining full bathroom.

Director Guritz reported that the structure for employment with a lease agreement is under development based on guidance received from the State's Attorney's Office. Under SAO guidelines, interns must be supervised at all times, and cannot perform the same duties as employees, limiting their use and utility within support of programs and operations. The approach that will be taken is to hire qualified students as Horsemanship Instructors on a semester, or seasonal basis, where the student is also able to receive course credit as part of their employment.

Director Guritz stated that the extension of a housing benefit does not impact taxable wages, but the value of the weekly benefit can be counted towards salary so long as employee time is tracked, and employees are paid for the difference in hourly salary earned over the amount of the weekly benefit.

Director Guritz stated that the Horsemanship Instructor positions are scheduled to receive a starting salary of \$8.50 to \$9.50 per hour, and the value of the housing benefit would not be counted against their weekly earnings.

Commissioner Hendrix stated that she is comfortable with the arrangement so long as District liability is covered, and a security deposit is paid for any damages to leased property.

The Programming and Events Committee suggested contacting Aurora University that also offers a minor in Equestrian Studies.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to bring the draft lease agreement to the February Committee of the Whole for review.

IX. Conversion of the Ellis Caretaker Volunteer Position to a Part Time Employee

The Programming and Events Committee discussed transitioning the Ellis Caretaker volunteer position to a part time position. Director Guritz stated that the budget impact should be minimal. The position will work a regular schedule, with the value of the housing benefit counted against the weekly earnings for this position.

Chairman Flowers stated that in the past, concerns had been expressed over unauthorized individuals invited to assist with animal care responsibilities when the Ellis Caretaker is out of town. Director Guritz stated that this was the case in the past, with coverage now handled by District staff.

The individual serving in the role of Ellis Caretaker is Shannon Prette. Shannon supports programs, events, and animal care.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to develop the Ellis Caretaker position description, and draft of the lease agreement for Committee review.

X. Lesson Horse Updates and Needs

Amy Martin reported on medical treatment of Candyman. Candyman will receive three joint injections for arthritis in the upcoming year, and has been a very strong addition to the program.

Nicole Norton that the Ellis equestrian program requires an additional lesson horse. The District currently owns three horses, and a fourth is needed in place by the beginning of April in order to transition the new horse into programming before the start of summer.

Equestrian Center staff are exploring the possibility of receiving a donation of a new lesson horse. Sunrise Center North is helping to identify possible candidates. Alternatively, Amy Martin and Nicole Norton requested \$1,500.00 for purchase of a new lesson horse.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to begin efforts to secure a new lesson horse.

XI. Natural Beginnings Late Payment Policy Change Recommendations for 2017-2018

Director Guritz presented a draft of the proposed late payment policy for Natural Beginnings for the 2017-2018 program year.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to forward the proposed policy change as presented to Commission for approval.

XII. Natural Beginnings Scholarship Program Guidelines

The Programming and Events Committee reviewed the Natural Beginnings Scholarship Program Guidelines and Application.

Director Guritz reported that the Forest Foundation's restricted fund has a current balance of \$2,400.00, which will be scheduled to extend scholarships over the next three year period.

Commissioner Hendrix stated that it is not unusual for low-income households to fall below requirements to file federal taxes.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to include the Federal Financial Aid household income thresholds in the application, and to restate that income verification can include Federal Student Award letter as alternative documentation of financial need.

XIII. Special Use Permit – 5K Run at Ellis House and Equestrian Center

Director Guritz presented a special use permit application received from Rheta Murdaugh for use of Baker Woods Forest Preserve – Ellis House and Equestrian Center to host a 5K benefit run on August 13, 2017 to support the American Heart Association. Registration will be handled by the Channahon-Minooka Running Club, and the required insurance has been extended.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to staff to approve the special use permit.

XIV. Bunkhouse and Lodge Rental – Reservation and Payment Policies Review and Recommendations

Director Guritz presented a draft of revised reservation and payment policies for use of the District's bunkhouses and Meadowhawk Lodge at Hoover Forest Preserve.

The report presented highlighted current and proposed policies. Director Guritz stated that the intention of the policy revision is to protect the District from the financial impact from cancellations, and at the same time, not make the policies so stringent or punitive that it deters individuals from making reservations.

Currently, full refunds are extended to individuals cancelling with at least 72-hour notice prior to the scheduled event. The revised policy for use of Meadowhawk Lodge calls for a paid security deposit (50% of the rental total) at the time of reservation, with full payment of the rental fees processed no less than 60 days prior to the event.

Under the revised policy, 50% of the security deposit is forfeit in the event the rental is cancelled with at least 60-days advanced notice, with 100% of the security deposit forfeit in the event the rental is cancelled with less than 60-days advanced notice.

For use of the bunkhouses, a \$100 security deposit is required at the time of reservation, with 100% refund extended on all cancellations made with at least 72-hours prior notification.

Under the revised policy, full payment for the reservation is required 60 calendar days prior to the event, with the District retaining the security deposit for cancellations with at least 60-days advance notice, and the District retaining the rental fees for cancellations with less than 60-days advanced notification.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to amend the revised policy to allow clients one opportunity to reapply their security deposit and/or rental payments towards another scheduled date, retaining the full rental payment towards the rescheduled event, with return of the security deposit following the rental or second subsequent cancellation.

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to forward the revised Hoover Forest Preserve bunkhouse and Meadowhawk Lodge reservation and payment policies, as amended, for Commission approval. Seconded by Commissioner Hendrix. Aye, all. Opposed, none.

XV. Environmental Education Program and Bunkhouse Bundle – Fees and Charges

Emily Dombrowski and April Morris presented a proposed program and bunkhouse use rate of \$20 per student for weekday use (Tuesdays and Wednesdays only) for consideration. This fee would include unsupervised use of the bunkhouses, where parents and/or teachers would act as student chaperones for overnight stays.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to present the proposed Program and Bunkhouse Bundle Fee to Commission for approval.

XVI. Spring Public Program Offerings – Fees and Charges

Emily Dombrowski and April Morris presented the proposed spring 2017 program fees and charges for review.

Emily Dombrowski reported that the Forest Foundation will be assisting with the delivery of the 2017 Maple Syrup program event.

Emily Dombrowski reported that 2017 summer camp registration has opened, with two camps already achieving minimum enrollments for participation.

The Programming and Events Committee reviewed the programs, and provided direction to present the fees and charges for Commission approval.

XVII. ComEd Green Region 2017 Grant Application Resolution

Director Guritz reported that under the new ComEd Green Region program guidelines, the District is eligible to apply. The 2017 Green Region program focus is the establishment of pollinator habitat within the ComEd service region. Director Guritz presented a draft resolution for review authorizing the District to apply for a \$10,000 Green Region program grant to support the restoration of pollinator habitat at Henneberry Forest Preserve.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed approaches for preserve access.

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to forward the ComEd Green Region 2017 Grant Application resolution to Commission for approval. Seconded by Commissioner Hendrix. All, aye. Opposed, none.

XVIII. Citizens to be Heard

No public comments were offered by those in attendance.

XIX. General Discussions and Updates

Director Guritz reported that the Hoover Forest Preserve groundwater well pump and water distribution system may require repairs. An investigation of the issue is underway.

XX. Executive Session

None.

XXI. Adjournment

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Hendrix. Aye, all. Meeting adjourned at 8:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David Guritz
Director, Kendall County Forest Preserve District