

**KENDALL COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 1, 2016**

I. Call to Order

Chairman Flowers called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm in the Kendall County Board Room.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Prochaska, Gilmour, and Flowers all were present.

III. Approval of Agenda

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

IV. Citizens to be Heard

No public comments were offered by those in attendance.

V. General Discussions and Updates

Director Guritz requested discussion of the status of summer camp enrollments, reporting that enrollment is down considerably from projections over last year. Director Guritz reported that he has been working with Environmental Education Coordinator Emily Dombrowski, and Equestrian Program Coordinator, Amy Martin, to promote summer program opportunities, but going into the summer season, the District is down \$20,000 in gross revenues for participation in environmental education camps, and down \$13,000 in gross revenues for participation in Ellis equestrian center camps.

Director Guritz recommended moving forward with placement of a Facebook summer camp ad in order to promote awareness of the District's summer camp offerings, and getting this underway immediately to boost enrollments, along with other zero-cost strategies to market the camps.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed the shortfall of enrollments and proposed Facebook marketing strategy.

For Environmental Education camps, lower enrollment is contributed to increased fees for offerings, although the District has not received complaints for the increased rates from parents, but this may be effecting sibling and multiple camp enrollments from individual families.

For Ellis camps, Family Fun Nights likely served to recruit families to participate in lessons, birthday parties and camps, although lessons and birthday parties are on better tracks for the year.

The District plans to send another direct mail to past program participants, contact The Conservation Foundation to request promotion of camp opportunities to local members, and continue to feature camps in the Constant Contact newsletter.

For the Facebook ad, an example was provided where the District would reach between 2,500 and 6,000 residents within 10-miles of Yorkville and Minooka for \$100 for a three day ad.

Commissioner Purcell entered the meeting at 6:12 pm.

Director Guritz stated that the campaign would likely raise awareness and potential sales of other District services based on the draw of residents to the District's website and social media pages.

Emily Dombrowski reported that targeted social media strategies has boosted enrollment recently in other public program services.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed Family Fun Nights at Ellis, and whether these should be offered in 2016.

Commissioner Gilmour observed that the fees are not out of line for similar camp services in the area.

Commissioner Purcell inquired into whether there were funds in the budget for the ad. Director Guritz stated that the District is already slightly over budget, and this would put us over for each additional dollar expended.

Commissioner Purcell expressed concerns over chasing this issue with additional expenditures, further stating that if this doesn't work to boost enrollments, whether additional expenditures will be requested for other strategies.

Director Guritz stated that at this point, we are at a critical juncture with camps starting in just two weeks' time. Promotional efforts and expenditures after the start of the summer camp season would likely fall short of boosting enrollments in this summer's camp sessions.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed competition from other summer activities.

Staff recommended expending \$500 towards a Facebook ad campaign over the next two weeks to boost enrollments by reaching approximately 24,000 residents within a 10-mile radius of Yorkville and Minooka.

Commissioner Purcell inquired into where the cost would be coded. Director Guritz stated that the issue isn't whether the costs could be coded to environmental education or Ellis equestrian center budgets, but rather whether additional expenditures will be incurred with the overall promotional budget for the year projected to exceed appropriations.

Commissioner Prochaska stated that he was very concerned about the status of enrollment. While the District should be concerned about not over expending, giving this new promotional approach by trying it for a week should be taken on if it has a chance of generating enrollments.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed whether or not to offer a promotional discount on camp tuition, determining that a discount would not be promoted as part of the ad campaign. As part of the discussion, concern was expressed over dissatisfaction of current parents that have enrolled their children if a discount is offered, further stating that typically, an early registration discount is typically offered as an incentive.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed the Facebook ad by reviewing the ad production online interface, reaching consensus to run a 7-day ad for \$100, targeting ages 18 to 65+ within a 10-mile radius of Yorkville and Minooka, with discussion of further investment posted to the Commission meeting for consideration with discussions informed by the initial results of the first week of the campaign.

VI. SKY 5K Run Event Evaluation

Director Guritz presented an evaluation report on the recent SKY 5K run event sponsored by the Juvenile Justice Council.

District staff will be discussing the need for race finish line management at the Hoover main road crossing, and need for parking volunteers for next year's event with the planning committee in order to insure smooth traffic flow and safety for preserve visitors.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed the weather impacts to registration.

Commission Gilmour reported that Superintendent Kim Olson did a great job assisting with the event.

Director Guritz reported that typically, Jay Tecknenbrock or other Hoover support staff would normally assist. Due to staff shortages, both he and Kim Olson are working to fill important service gaps to make sure District programs and permits are running smoothly.

VII. Natural Resources Tours Reimbursement and Forest Foundation Grant

Director Guritz presented a report received from Jenny Wold from Kendall County Soil & Water Conservation District requesting reimbursement of \$444.50 for purchases towards the recent Natural Resources Tours. The Forest Foundation will be reimbursing the District for the costs as part of an approved grant. 475 students participated from 3 school districts, with multiple agencies sending presenters to support instruction.

VIII. Storefront Website and “The Knot” Storefront Website Updates

Director Guritz reported that the District’s new storefront website, <http://kendallforest.com> is now live, with some additional work requested for site improvements requested. Final changes should be completed over the next two weeks. Commission will be invited to offer suggestions for improvements after the final changes are in place.

Director Guritz reported that as part of the new website, the Forest Foundation PayPal account is posted to accept credit card donations.

“The Knot” storefront website has been completed, and the District is working to update the site with improved venue photos.

IX. KCFPD FY 16-17 Fees and Charges Discussion and Recommendations

Director Guritz presented a draft of proposed fees and charges for all District program services and facilities for Programming and Events Committee review and discussion.

Proposed increases presented included a \$100 per event increase for tent and house rental events at Ellis, a \$5 per hour increase for Ellis House rentals, a \$2.00 optional per participant upcharge for the Ellis Birthday Party horseshoe craft option, Environmental Education school program fee increases to \$7 per student for Native American, Bug Fest, and the new Maple Syrup programs, and \$6 per student for the new Weather program. For school programming, this would take effect for the upcoming school year. School groups are continuing to schedule programs over the summer months.

The spreadsheet included proposed fee increases also included a \$5 increase for firewood bundles as well.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed the discount offered for Friday and Sunday events at Ellis. Commissioner Purcell asked Tina Villarreal, Events Coordinator whether the discount actually provides incentive for wedding bookings. Tina Villarreal responded that Saturday is the most popular day, so the discount is offered on the off days.

Commissioner Purcell suggested that the Friday and Sunday rates be increased by \$100 as well, suggesting that the discount is not what drives participation on these days, but rather lack of availability of Saturdays at the time of booking.

Tina Villarreal stated that other venues typically extend discounts on these days, so part of this recognizes that the discount is customary practice.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed the proposed linen use fee of \$10 per linen. Tina Villarreal stated that the Ellis House linens are not in good shape, and would just

prefer discontinuing the practice of allowing renters to use these. Consensus was reached to eliminate use of linens in Ellis House events.

Commissioner Purcell inquired into the Natural Beginnings second sibling discount. Director Guritz stated that the discount is promoted in the Natural Beginnings handbook, and was therefore added to the spreadsheet so the discount could be discussed. Commissioner Purcell stated that the discount was not approved, and therefore should not be included in the handbook, and that staff does not have the authority to offer discounts on programs without approval from the Board. Director Guritz stated that the second sibling discount was in place when he started with the District, presumed it had been discussed and approved by the Board at some point, but was also not certain about whether this had been presented which is why it is now included on the spreadsheet.

Commissioner Purcell stated that program fees and charges for Natural Beginnings had been discussed several times in the past year, and at no point was a discount discussed or approved. As such, Commissioner Purcell stated that staff should receive disciplinary action for including the discount in the current handbook. Director Guritz stated that the presumption is that this had been reviewed and approved in the past, and acknowledged his oversight for not including the discount in previous discussions setting the registration and tuition charges for Natural Beginnings.

Commissioner Purcell stated that it is wrong that staff included and promoted the discount in the handbook for the upcoming year without being included and discussed by the board as part of the fees and charges discussion for the program.

Director Guritz agreed that this should not be the practice, apologized for the oversight, but presumed that this had been discussed and approved by the Board at some point prior to his starting with the District. Director Guritz stated he would be following up with Megan Gessler, Natural Beginnings Coordinator, to determine the level of participation within the second sibling discount, and would forward this information to the Committee once received.

Commissioner Purcell stated that is has been made and should be crystal clear that all rates are to be approved by the Board, and that any discounts offered without board oversight is wrong.

Director Guritz inquired into the history of the program. Commissioner Gilmour stated that the program has been in place for approximately 5 years, and was initiated by Jessica Pierson. Director Guritz stated that at some point in the program's history, the second sibling discount would have required approval to put the discount into practice, and that this has been promoted in each year's handbook for some time since then. Whether or not Commission reviewed and approved the discount historically would require additional research.

Direction received from the Committee was to move forward with the presentation of the fees and charges to the Committee of the Whole per discussions.

X. Draft Bill of Sale for Ellis Horses and Equipment

Director Guritz presented a draft bill of sale for the transfer of ownership of the Ellis miniature horse “Polly,” including miniature horse driving equipment, and the Ellis lesson horse, “Madrid,” to Lisa Hoekstra of Yorkville for a total purchase price of \$500.00.

Amy Martin is looking for a replacement horse needed to support lessons, and is looking into potential candidate horse from Homer Glen, Illinois for a potential purchase price of \$1,200 that may be brought before the board for consideration if it proves to be a good candidate for lessons.

Commissioner Purcell made a motion to forward the draft bill of sale to Commission for approval. Seconded by Commissioner Prochaska. Aye, all. Opposed, none.

Amy Martin presented horse health updates. Shadow is doing well integrating into programs, and Missy has recovered from a hoof abscess.

XI. Grass and Alfalfa Hay Sales

Director Guritz reported that the first hay cutting at Baker Woods Forest Preserve will be completed within the next two weeks, likely resulting in a grass hay and alfalfa-mixed hay surplus of over 400 small bales after topping up District storage and inventory in the main barn and storage barn.

The surplus can be stored on the ground floor of the storage barn, and offered for public sale. Kyle Connell has informed the District that he is not interested in purchasing back surplus bales from the District’s share at \$4.50 per small bale, but would consider purchasing surplus hay if the buy-back price was lowered by amending the contract. Kyle Connell also has offered to store surplus hay until needed in the winter months for a small storage and delivery fee that can be considered later in the season.

District staff is recommending offering the surplus bales generated for public sale at a cost of \$4.50 for pickup and payment by appointment only. This could generate an additional \$1,800 in revenue from the first cutting, with additional surplus hay harvested over the course of the summer.

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to forward approval of the public hay sale to Commission for approval. Seconded by Commissioner Gilmour. Aye, all. Opposed, none.

XII. General Use Ordinance Discussions

The Programming and Events Committee reached consensus to postpone General Use Ordinance discussions to the July meeting.

XIII. Executive Session

Commissioner Purcell made a motion to enter into Executive Session under 2(c)1 of the Open Meetings Act to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity. Seconded by Commissioner Flowers.

Roll call: Commissioners Purcell, Prochaska, Gilmour and Flowers, aye. Opposed, none. Executive session called to order at 7:55 pm.

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to adjourn from executive session. Seconded by Commissioner Gilmour. Regular meeting reconvened at 8:22 pm.

XIV. Facility Rental Policies Discussion (Meadowhawk, Ellis, Harris Shelters)

Director Guritz reported that a scheduled wedding event at Ellis recently cancelled with less than two weeks' notice. Current policy dictates that only the \$1,000 event security deposit is forfeit when an event cancels within the immediate six months prior to the event. This will impact the District's budget with a loss of revenue of approximately \$3,600, with the security deposit paid and accounted for in the previous fiscal year.

Director Guritz presented a revised policy and contract requiring payment of 50% of the rental amount, non-refundable in the event of a cancellation, with payment required six months prior to the scheduled date of the event. The change will allow the District to retain half of the event rental proceeds in the event of a cancellation. This will provide some measure of protection from budget impacts, as the likelihood of renting the venue is considerably reduced within the six months timeframe leading up to an event date.

Commissioner Prochaska asked whether this would apply in case of a closure of the venue due to flooding or other issue. Director Guritz stated that this would be examined on a case-by-case basis and presented to the Programming and Events Committee for consideration. Additional changes include updating the contract to include provisions for additional charges for District staff setup and cleanup of wedding events previously approved by the Board.

General Discussion and Updates - Continued

Commissioner Gilmour inquired into process for hiring and firing of District staff.

Commissioner Gilmour asked for how Commission is informed of current staffing and staff changes.

Director Guritz stated that he works to keep the Board informed in the monthly Director's Report. The District's Organizational Chart is also in need of update and approval, and will be presented at an upcoming meeting.

Briefings on staffing issues have been historically reported during executive sessions.

XV. Adjournment

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Gilmour. Aye, all. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David Guritz
Director, Kendall County Forest Preserve District