

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION

MAY 16, 2017 – 5:47 PM

PRESIDENT KAI SWANSON PRESIDING

1. Karen Kinney, County Clerk, called the roll: (Record)

R. Brunk, L. Burns, K. Callaway-Thompson, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, V. Shelton, R. Simmer, M. Steffen, S. Terry, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl, K. Swanson,

TOTAL PRESENT 24

TOTAL ABSENT 0

2. President Swanson read a news release from the Government Finance Officer's Association of the United States and Canada who awarded April Palmer, Rock Island County Auditor, an 'Excellence in Financial Reporting' certificate for the Forest Preserve District:

President Swanson stated, "The certificate for the Achievement of Excellence in Financial Reporting has been awarded to the Rock Island County Forest Preserve District by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The certificate of achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management." Mr. Swanson presented Ms. Palmer with her certificate.

(Applause)

Ms. Palmer stated, "As always I thank you all. If it were not with your support, I would not be able to produce an Audit timely and efficiently and in the manner that the government deems appropriate to receive this award. So, thank you very much. I also would like to extend a thank you to the Forest Preserve District Management, more specifically Jeff Craver and his staff and all of the Park Directors as well as my own staff. I can't do it alone...so, thank you very much."

(Applause)

3. President Swanson introduced Jay Verstraete, Superintendent of the Golf Course at Indian Bluff Forest Preserve, who spoke to the Commission about what goes on at the Golf Course and what new things are to come.

Mr. Verstraete stated, "Thank you, President Swanson. My name is Jay Verstraete. I have been with the Rock Island County Forest Preserve 14 years now and the last 3 of which I have been the Superintendent of the Indian Bluff

Golf Course. I started working at the Golf Course a little bit after my 16th birthday and in a very short amount of time I realized it was really something I really wanted to do for a living. I got a degree in temperate grass management from Pennsylvania State University in 2000. I spent 10 years at Short Hills Country Club before coming out to Indian Bluff in 2003. We made a lot of changes to the facility in the last few years. I tried to implement a little different game plan than the typical golf course approach. With my background being in the country club world, that is how my staff and I approach our daily tasks and things for new golfers. We have a beautiful clubhouse that we just built 8 years ago now. It has nice amenities for the customers out there. There is 30 to 40 acres of timber and park that are somewhat utilized. There is a pavilion that is rented with 250 or so weddings and birthday parties. Unfortunately, it is a little underutilized and we are trying to get people back out there. We have identified several ways of promoting events from small to big golf outings and better concessions...better amenities all around the facility. We did a bunker renovation in the last 3 years and we just finished the last one today and that's been received very well by the customers. Your average and above average golfers look for some of the finer details in a course that really sets it off from the golf course down the street. We like to think that we are definitely taking the right steps to see to it that the customers see what they want to continue to come back to the facility. Quite frankly, there aren't a lot of options in the golf course world anymore. Unfortunately, 10 to 12 years ago, the game of golf got hit with a one-two punch, the decline of Tiger Woods and the economy turned downwards a little bit and things like disc golf, hand-held games and mobile devices came on the scene that the youth of America kind of grabbed on to instead of golf. Fortunately, the USGA and the PGA tour are working with the First Tee Program, which actively goes after the youth of America to kind of get them into the game again. They did experience quite a downturn in the game across the nation. Fortunately, being in the business the last 25 years, I have seen the highs and the lows. I do think we are in an upswing right now in the game of golf. So, I do think there is going to be a bigger boom in the years to come. There are several talented young golfers both in the PGA and the LPGA tours. They have attracted a lot of young golfers again. So, I definitely think it's going to improve as time goes on and I think that Indian Bluff is making the right steps to see that happen. We do have some things in the works...because we have several acres of unused timber and hard land out there; we have identified some of that area that would be ideal for a disc golf course. While it isn't very common to be played at facilities, there are pay-to-play facilities out there for disc golf if there is properly maintained. If there is concessions on site, if there are restrooms. The carts are available for rental. It is starting to happen more and more. We have the land to do that, so we have talked to various people about doing that. I think that just continuing doing what we are doing...we have a great staff out there. Everybody is very dedicated to doing what they do. We are on the right track and I couldn't be happier doing what I

am doing and I am very pleased to be here and thank you for your time. If anybody has any questions, I would be happy to take and answer them."

Commissioner L. Moreno stated, "Can you tell us the story about the Trail?"

Mr. Verstraete answered, "Yes. Fortunately the property has a little bit of historical significance to it. We have about 1,000 yards of property out there that are the last remaining section of the Blackhawk Trail that was used by the Sauk Fox Indians for hundreds of years. Fortunately, it is still there. Being a park style golf course, it means we were just cut into Mother Nature and very little shaping was done on the facility. That is still out there. I think the Forest Preserve acquired the property in the early 1940's. Before that, it was Blackhawk Hills Country Club. So, there was actually a three or four story hotel that sat right on the top of the hill as you come into the property. It is no longer there, but there are some stones there...and there is some rubble is there. It goes back a long way and has been there for nearly a hundred years. It's a very descent piece of property. Occasionally, over the years, digging up irrigation leaks and stuff like that. We've turned up an occasional arrowhead and things like that. It's a great piece of property. I encourage all of you to come out anytime you can, whether it is just for a walk, just to come see the place or to tee it up and hit a few golf balls."

Commissioner Steffen asked, "Tell me what I can tell constituents who complains about the condition of the asphalt golf cart track, whether it is sink holes or pot holes?"

Mr. Verstraete answered, "Ya know what...yes, yes there is. We have addressed some of the worst ones with cold patching. The nature of the beast in this part of the Midwest is we get a lot of frost heave every year. Asphalt is what it is...it's inexpensive and is relatively easy to put out as well as overlay. You get your money's worth out of cement overtime and such things. I think that the asphalt has been in place now for several decades. There are some places that are worse than others. That being said, I have been on worse places at different golf courses. It is definitely on our list to amend. We have something in the works to tie in the most critical holes that...when we do have to close due to wet conditions, it is just a couple of the holes that do it. We are looking to tie into all of the cart paths in those areas. That will increase revenue due to lack of closure. It's in the works and we have addressed some of the ones that people have been complaining about the most. That being said, they are not perfect."

Commissioner Steffen stated, "Thank you."

Mr. Verstraete answered, "You're welcome."

Commissioner Deppe asked, "I don't know if you do or don't do this, but I know that bowling has reached out to all of the high schools and the junior highs. Do you try to go to the high schools?"

Mr. Verstraete asked, "In regards to playing out there...or employment? Oh, yeah...absolutely. We are the host for Alleman's play for their school. But through the course of the season, our practice is to get Moline out there and UT out there and occasionally, Galesburg comes up. We offer youth passes and we've also looked at expanding some of the details of what we can and can't offer like youth golf. They are the future of the game. If we don't start getting kids involved and even earlier, going back to what I mentioned about the USGA and the PGA, working with the first Tee Program. They are even trying to incorporate a form of golf in elementary and grade school age kids where they use big clubs and a mat...but what it does is it gets them swinging a club and gets them interested way earlier than high school. In the coming years, we hope to see an increase in younger people coming out to play. Because if they don't, the game of golf might not be around in another 100 years because so many of us are getting older and I see less and less familiar faces every year. Fortunately, I am starting to see some younger people coming to play golf and that's a good thing."

Commissioner Callaway-Thompson asked, "Two questions. I didn't hear you mention Rock Island. Do they not have a golf program? ...or are you aware?"

Mr. Verstraete answered, "Yeah, they do. I think their home course is Highland Springs...I believe, yeah. They would play out there as well. The teams that don't consider us their home course, they play their practice rounds at the other facilities than on their home course. They would come out and play their practice rounds at our facility leading up to whatever events we might hold. So, I think pretty much every high school both on the Illinois and Iowa sides have a golf team as far as I know."

Ms. Callaway-Thompson asked, "Are their lessons offered?"

Mr. Verstraete answered, "Unfortunately, we don't have a very expansive practice facility right now. We have a putting green. We are a little land-locked with timber, a neighborhood and....unfortunately, a really big farm field that isn't for sale at this point in time. But once it is, we could have an awesome driving range and a practice facility but that's something that myself and Mr. Craver will need to spend some time on how we can manipulate what land we do have to work with because an expansion of our practice facility would allow us to work from our end of it hand in hand with the First Tee Program because that's one of their requirements is a full-scale practice facility. They want staff on site that is capable of teaching the game as well as a driving range, putting greens and chipping greens. They have a lot of criteria before they'll start

kicking in on their end of things. Right now, Glynn's Creek Golf Course over at Scott County Park...they have a very active First Tee Program because of the size and scope of their practice facility. So that is something that we are kind of trying to see what we can change over time to make happen because like I said, it's very important to get youth back into the game. It is the future of it."

President Swanson asked, "Are there any other questions? I would like to thank you, Mr. Verstraete, and your team for making all the good work that you do."

Mr. Verstraete stated, "Thank you very much, I appreciate it."

President Swanson replied, "Thank you."

(Applause)

4. Commissioner L. Moreno moved to approve the April 21st minutes, as presented. Commissioner O'Brien seconded.

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENTS: (None)**

6. Commissioner Brunk moved to approve the Forest Preserve General Fund Claims at \$127,298.46, and the Niabi Zoo Fund Claims at \$237,655.19. Commissioner Shelton seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

R. Brunk, L. Burns, K. Callaway-Thompson, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, V. Shelton, R. Simmer, M. Steffen, S. Terry, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 23

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

7. Commissioner Burns moved to approve the Treasurer's Disbursements at \$1,030.72. Commissioner Steffen seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

R. Brunk, L. Burns, K. Callaway-Thompson, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston,
E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, P. Moreno,
R. Morthland, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, V. Shelton, R. Simmer,
M. Steffen, S. Terry, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 23

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

8. Commissioner O'Brien moved to approve Resolution regarding the Risk Management Program, as presented. Commissioner Callaway-Thompson seconded.

Note ** (The Resolution is in .pdf format and begins on the next page.)

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
RESOLUTION

RE: RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission recognizes its role of stewardship over the assets of the District, both human and financial, and


WHEREAS, the Commission acknowledges its responsibility and requiring the highest possible concern for the safety of its employees and the public it serves, and

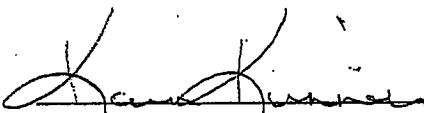
WHEREAS, in accordance with The Illinois Local Government and Governmental Employees Tort Immunity Act (745 ILCS 10/9 - 101 et. seq.) which provides for a governmental body to levy a tax which when collected will pay the cost of risk management (Section 9-107), and

WHEREAS, the District wishes to acknowledge the Illinois Parks Association Risk Services (IPARKS), and express appreciation for the assistance provided by their program in the development of Risk Management Program for the Rock Island County Forest Preserve District.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, by the Forest Preserve Commission of Rock Island County, Illinois in open meeting this 16th day of May, as follows:

- The District shall have in operation a Risk Management Program designed to limit and prevent against liability or loss which may be imposed upon the District or its employees. The Risk Management Program will identify and analyze loss exposures, select techniques for treating loss exposures, implementing selected techniques and monitoring and modifying such techniques as necessary through a Risk Management Committee.


Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission


Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

A roll call vote was taken.

R. Brunk, L. Burns, K. Callaway-Thompson, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, V. Shelton, R. Simmer, M. Steffen, S. Terry, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 23

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

9. Commissioner Maranda moved to waive the reading and approve the Transfers of Appropriation in the Forest Preserve General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund. Commissioner Vyncke seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

R. Brunk, L. Burns, K. Callaway-Thompson, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, V. Shelton, R. Simmer, M. Steffen, S. Terry, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 23

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

10. Commissioner O'Brien moved to approve the Bi-State Agreement for the scope of work for the District Plan update, as presented. Commissioners Noyd and Shelton seconded.

Commissioner Mayberry was recognized.

Ms. Mayberry asked, "Is this just to enter into something to get the update or are there specifics on the plan already?"

Mr. Craver stated, "This is just to take the existing plan and update it. We did the plan in 2008 and we did a plan in 2013. So, the agreement states that in the beginning of August we will begin the work, which is the next work for MindFire for me to do a needs assessment survey. We will take a look at the needs assessment survey and the materials that are brought in there, the current levels of service and other bench-marking figures and basically update the plan with some of the things that we have accomplished. There might be a couple of new strategies or avenues that we will take a look like Jay had mentioned at and the golf course. We are trying real hard to improve the conservation of that

area and the 4.5 acres of wildlife habitat, the First Tee Program. Mr. Mills was here last week looking at expansion of the campground and made some progress with our boat house and trails. This is just our typical 5 year cycle to say what is the community's needs and wants and how are we going to best service those."

A roll call vote was taken.

R. Brunk, L. Burns, K. Callaway-Thompson, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, V. Shelton, R. Simmer, M. Steffen, S. Terry, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 23

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

11. Commissioner O'Brien moved to approve the MindFire agreement for data collection for District Plan update. Commissioner Cremeens seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

R. Brunk, L. Burns, K. Callaway-Thompson, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, V. Shelton, R. Simmer, M. Steffen, S. Terry, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 22

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

12. Commissioner Terry moved to approve all the Routine Reports from the Director and Department Heads of the Forest Preserve Commission. Commissioner Mayberry seconded. (Record)

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

President Swanson stated, "One final note... I just want to thank all of the staff having a committee out at Indian Bluff. Jay gave us a great tour of the grounds there and the plans for some prairie restoration there and the pollinators there. Friends, if you are looking for a place to hold a party for about 200 of your

closest friends, you are not going to find a better deal than that shelter that he has got at Indian Bluff. Thanks for all of your time. You invested a lot of your time and I appreciate that very much.

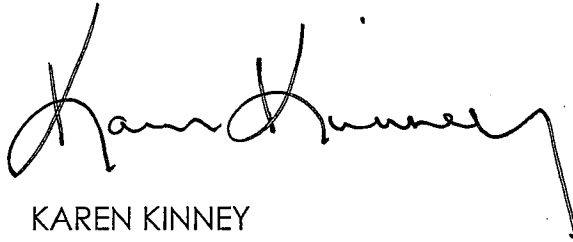
The next meeting of the Forest Preserve Commission is June 20, 2017, immediately following the meeting of the Rock Island County Board.

Commissioner Maranda stated, "I just wanted to say the Forest Preserve is on the front page of the paper. That was Dennis and he has done a fabulous job. So, thank you."

(Applause)

President Swanson declared the Forest Preserve Meeting adjourned.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Kinney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the right.

KAREN KINNEY
COUNTY CLERK AND SECRETARY
OF THE FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION

KK: rw