

FOREST PRESERVE BUDGET COMMITTEE MINUTES
AUGUST 10, 2021

PRESENT: Committee members - K. Swanson, L. Moreno, E. Sowards, R. Simmer, J. Woods, A. Normoyle.

ABSENT: D. Cremeens.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Craver, District Director; Jay Verstraete, Golf Course Superintendent; Todd Collins, Club House Manager; Mike Petersen, Illiniwek Ranger; April Palmer, Auditor.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Budget Committee to order at 3:06 PM on Tuesday, August 10, 2021, in the Club House at Indian Bluff Golf Course in Milan, Illinois.

L. Moreno, E. Sowards, R. Simmer, J. Woods, A. Normoyle, K. Swanson.

TOTAL YES 6

D. Cremeens.

TOTAL ABSENT 7

President Swanson called on Mr. Craver to go through the proposed budget.

Mr. Craver stated that the original Schedule A that was emailed to the Commissioners held numbers as of July 31st. The current Schedule A that is in the packet has included the tax distribution that is back dated to the previous fiscal year. This should give an idea of how the fiscal year is going to go. Looking at the fund balances there, all the funds are doing well with the exception of the zoo. The zoo did incur a small deficit over the past fiscal year due to the restrictions that were put in place during the height of the pandemic. Management staff did what they could and made sacrifices in salary to mitigate the financial damage during that time, among numerous other things including loans from other funds. The payoff of those endeavors shows in how small the deficit is. Hoping to focus on rebuilding the fund balance this fiscal year. There will be a general emphasis on keeping taxes down and partnering with organizations in the area while also continuing to offer the services at the level they have been offered in the past. It will take a couple years to build the fund balances back up. Staff will be, as always, looking for grants to pad revenues for projects on the preserves. Of note in the proposed budget is a deficit budgeted in the FISSA Fund. There is an almost 90% surplus in that fund balance, and there is no reason to have quite that much of a fund balance in that fund. Also, keep in mind that with the union contract negotiations coming up in the fall, there may need to be some small adjustments made to these numbers.

President Swanson asked about Mr. Craver's note on a lack of a deferred capital replacement line item in the budget. Perhaps as a goal over the next year, Mr. Craver could put together a capital replacement calendar. Vehicles have always been looked

after and anticipated very well, but would like to see that for all capital replacement. That way it's easier to see where the budget needs to go in years to come.

Mr. Craver stated that one was created a few years ago, but could likely stand to be updated.

President Swanson asked how involved Mr. Craver normally gets with the contract negotiations. What's been seen in the past couple of years is that extremely unpredictable events can come in like a wrecking ball. Is there any chance at talking about the automatic step increases in return for consideration above COLA on the annual increases?

Mr. Craver stated that the last contract was handled a little bit differently than in previous negotiations.

Ms. Palmer stated that as far as step increase negotiation in past negotiations, there hasn't been any success in changing those other than increasing them.

Dr. Simmer stated that perhaps it's time to look at bringing in a professional negotiator for these contracts to help guide and lead the proceedings.

Ms. Palmer stated that it's a good idea, however, that is probably better discussed at a County meeting. The District is wrapped up into the County's contract. There are a couple sections that are specific to the District's union employees, but it is predominantly a County contract.

Mr. Craver stated that typically the Civil Division of the State's Attorney's Office will take the lead in negotiations. Elected Officials and department heads bring lists to them, and someone from the Civil Division takes the lead. Occasionally, I have attended and occasionally the Forest Preserve President has attended meetings.

President Swanson asked if there were any other questions on the budget.

Mr. Craver went briefly through how grant money the District was waiting for would affect the fund balances. There remains some of the bond money that was ear marked for the cabins at Loud Thunder. Construction costs have significantly increased in the past year, so that's something to keep in mind for future projects as well. The tax estimate is also in the packet. The EAV historically increases around one percent each year. A best guess is made looking at the information from the Assessor's Office and economic data of the area.

Ms. Palmer stated that she had recently seen the preliminary estimates from the Assessor's Office, and it was close to one percent.

President Swanson asked if there were any other questions regarding the budget presentation.

There were no other questions regarding the budget presentation.

Adjourned the meeting at 3:31 PM.

Submitted by:
Cassie Sullivan
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant