

**ROCK ISLAND COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION  
JUNE 21, 2022 – 6:28 PM  
PRESIDENT KAI SWANSON PRESIDING**

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

D. Beck, K. Bogdonas, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, M. Burns, D. Cremeens, C. Enburg, E. Langdon, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, L. Thompson, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

**TOTAL PRESENT 22**

D. Adams, D. Clevenger, J. Deppe

**TOTAL ABSENT 3**

2. President Swanson stated, "Thank you very much. At this time, it is my great pleasure to introduce to you Mr. Paul Fessler, Program Manager for the Blackhawk College Highway, Construction and Transportation program; which has been a wonderful partner to the Forest Preserve District. And, I am going to turn things over to you, Mr. Fessler."

Mr. Fessler stated, "Okay. Well, it's a pleasure to come here and tell you a little bit about what we do. A nice piece of that is what we do with the Forest Preserve District and that's working at Loud Thunder, Illiniwek and a couple of other places that we have been at over the past few years. We are a construction training program. We are pretty single minded about trying to get people ready to become an apprentice in the building trades. So, you come into our program and you are there for three months. It's full time, we treat it like a job. You got to work hard. Half of it is classroom and half of it is hands-on construction training. So, over 50% of our graduates are now going to be entering class 19...two of these classes a year. Over 50% of them become apprentices in the building trades. Recent classes, you know, as we've been going longer and longer...we have been having a much better success rate. So, I think it's...out of the last 16 graduates, 13 have gone straight into an apprenticeship. So, we are trying to fill the ranks that desperately need people actually and it's a tremendous opportunity for any young person. You are not just doing hard physical labor. Construction is about a lot of different things. We have Highway in the title and I try to say this, but we are trying to open the door to any of the building trades. So, we do have people who become plumbers, electricians, street & metal workers... a whole variety of trades. We do have people who do get out there...excuse me (cleared throat)...and get on highway projects. So, we've had I think, at least 15 of our graduates that worked on the I74 bridge. They are out there on the I280 bridge and on roads all around Rock Island and of course the whole Quad City area. So, about half of the time our students are out there doing hands-on construction projects and a big chunk of those have taken place within the Forest Preserves. So, we have put in

accessible restrooms and an accessible dock area at Loud Thunder. So, you could go right on up to the dock and you can go fishing, get on a boat or what have you. They are very accessible. So, the restroom up on top of the hill above Lake George, up until a few years ago, you now have parking and a sidewalk that goes straight into the restroom...and we redid those restrooms. But, we will do all kinds of different projects. We have put in concrete pads for dumpsters at Illiniwek. We have put in most recently, a bunch of benches...very nice benches at Loud Thunder. We have worked on the ball diamonds over and out by Port Byron."

President Swanson stated, "Dorrance."

Mr. Fessler continued, "Dorrance Park. So, we've done a variety of things all within the District. Now, of course we've got students working different...uh, we have weather coming up and we have a short period of time when we can do projects. So, one of the great things with working with Jeff and the Park Rangers is, you guys are all very flexible about how much we can get done. For instance, some of those projects we did over a two-class period. The spring class did work and we came back and finished it up in the fall. We don't want to bite off more than we can chew because when our class ends, it's over. So, we really need partners like you guys who can be flexible and give us something really real. So, let me just say this and I'll wrap up. We are funded by the Illinois Department of Transportation. So, the money for this program comes from Blackhawk College from IDOT. They are really happy with what we do here and one of the main things is working in the Parks. So, these students are really doing something that is something that they can go back to...take their family to and see it years from now. And, also get that feeling that they are really doing a real project that's really going to impact people. And so, I couldn't say more about our relationship with the Forest Preserve District with Jeff and the staff, it's been great. And, we appreciate your support."

President Swanson stated, "Well, we sure appreciate what you do and we are going to open it up for some questions. Dr. Simmer has a question and Ms. Woods as well. Dr. Simmer?"

Commissioner Simmer was recognized.

Mr. Simmer stated, "I got a couple..."

President Swanson interrupted, "Could you please use your mic for the folks at home...thank you."

Commissioner Simmer asked, "I actually have a couple of things for ya. How many students on average do you have? How long do the classes go? And, uh...do they end up with an Associate's Degree or something. How does that work?"

Mr. Fessler answered, "It's non-credit...so, they get a certificate for completing this...although they do a bunch of other training things that they get certificates for like LIFT training, OSHA, CPR, First Aid. So, they get a series of certificates but the main one is really graduating from this 3-month program."

Mr. Simmer stated, "Okay."

Mr. Fessler added, "So, the program is three months...and so, like I said and it is full time. So, you are there 8:00-5pm...and of course if they are out in the field, they might start a little earlier and get done a little earlier."

Mr. Simmer stated, "Alright."

Mr. Fessler asked, "And, what was your other question?"

Mr. Simmer asked, "Three months... Oh...number of students?"

Mr. Fessler answered, "The number of students...so, uh...during Covid, it's been kind of a struggle."

Mr. Simmer stated, "Alright...sorry."

Mr. Fessler added, "But generally, it's between 12 to 15 students."

Mr. Simmer stated, "Alright."

Mr. Fessler continued, "And, most recently we have had eight and this last one, we had four graduates. When I am in recruiting mode, the classes start in August and so, I have left some of these on the back table if anybody wants those. So, people can come and get signed up for this program now."

Mr. Simmer asked, "How do people get to you? I mean, does it cost?"

Mr. Fessler answered, "There is no cost to the program."

Mr. Simmer asked, "Do they just come up and sign up?"

Mr. Fessler answered, "Yeah, so there are a few steps. So, they will need to meet some of the requirements that we have going into the building trades. So, they need to be 18 yrs. or older. They need to have a High School Diploma or G.E.D. They have to have a Driver's License and pass a drug test. We also give them a basic math and reading test; which most everybody passes...but, occasionally we have some people that do not. Then, we do interviews. We want to hear from someone that this is a job that you are really interested in doing into the future. And so, we don't want somebody who is just sticking their toe in the water and you

kind of find that out when you are doing an interview. Those are the steps to get into the program. Right now, there are orientations I am doing in June and July for a class that starts August 15<sup>th</sup>. They can sign up by going to our website; which if you just put HCCTP at Blackhawk, you'll find it or you can call me. My number and email are all on this card that I left in the back."

Mr. Simmer stated, "Okay."

President Swanson stated, "Ms. Woods has a question...following that Mr. Morthland. Ms. Woods?"

Commissioner Woods was recognized.

Ms. Woods asked, "I was wondering if you did any ramps?"

Mr. Fester answered, "Well... Um, we have done concrete sidewalks that act as a ramp. But not actual ramps. Everything we do needs to be on public property and so, we can't do...for instance, a ramp for a person at their home."

Commissioner Morthland was recognized.

Mr. Morthland stated, "Well, thank you very much. I appreciated it in my time at Blackhawk College. And, there was that one project at Building 3 that required a take two...but hey, better learning, right?"

Mr. Fessler stated, "Yeah, yeah...yeah."

Mr. Morthland added, "It's an excellent program."

Mr. Fessler stated, "Thank you."

President Swanson added, "I would also like to lift up the great partnerships that we have with the construction trades, especially, Laborer's 309 when they did the project at Loud Thunder with the bathroom. That benefited everybody because if you remember that old facility, you had to get a running start to get up on to the commode."

(Group laughter)

President Swanson added, "So, fixing the platform helped us all out. I really appreciate it. Are there any other...oh, wait we have a couple more? Ms. Normoyle and Mr. McNeil. Ms. Normoyle?"

Commissioner Normoyle was recognized.

Ms. Normoyle asked, "Thank you. Is there also a focus on bringing people in who are generally underrepresented in the building trades in this program?"

Mr. Fessler answered, "So, uh...and we do try to bring as many minorities and women into construction. And, that has been generally a super experience. The trades have been very welcoming. We have had a whole bunch of women and people of color who have gone through the program and have gone on to become an apprentice and a journeyperson."

Ms. Normoyle stated, "I saw Sonia when I was at the Bridge opening."

Mr. Fessler interrupted, "Sonia is one of our stars...yes."

(Overlapping between Ms. Normoyle and Mr. Fessler)

Ms. Normoyle added, "I recognized her from an earlier program."

Mr. Fessler added, "...and she's on here...a couple of our gals are on this."

Ms. Normoyle stated, "That's great."

Mr. Fessler stated, "Absolutely."

Commissioner McNeil was recognized.

Mr. McNeil asked, "Thank you. I appreciate the info. and I know you have to be 18 yrs. old to start this program. How do you plant the seed at the High School level to market this to the Seniors?"

Mr. Fessler answered, "Well, we go to those career fairs and I have gone to many High School events and talked to classes. We will get a few people come in straight out of High School...and, I just had one guy who went straight from High School through our program to apprentice in the cement masons. We get a lot of people, like I mentioned, and diversities is a goal and one of it is age. So, I have a bunch of people in their 20's a lot of times...30's, 40's, and the oldest person that went in as an apprentice through our program was 50 years old. So, we really have an interesting group usually of people of different ages. It's usually just one or two that come straight out of High School. We are going to need to get more of those as the population keeps aging and people are retiring."

President Swanson asked, "Are there any other questions for Mr. Fessler? I will say, Mr. Fessler, your timing is great. We don't normally give thank you gifts to our presenters, but Mr. Craver had the great idea that we are just doing our latest harvest of honey from Loud Thunder Forest Preserve. Yes, you can get your own jar, if you drive out there. But, it was very thoughtful of Mr. Craver to bring this. So,

we as a Commission would like to give you that and as a very special partner...one of our Forest Preserve District lapel pins. Friends, would you please join me in thanking Mr. Fessler."

(Group applause)

President Swanson stated, "Thank you very much."

3. Commissioner Mielke moved to approve the May 17, 2022, Forest Preserve Commission meeting minutes, as presented. Commissioner M. Moreno seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Beck, K. Bogdonas, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, M. Burns, D. Cremeens, C. Enburg, E. Langdon, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, L. Thompson, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

**TOTAL YES                    21**

**TOTAL NO                    0**

Motion carried.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS (NONE) Three calls were made.**

5. **PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS:**

President Swanson stated, "As for the President's Comments, just a couple of quick things. I want to thank Mr. Brunk for making us aware for the loss of the mother of two of our fellow Commissioners, Larry and Michael Burns. And, I just want to tell our fellow Commissioners that you are held in the hearts and the prayers of many at this time of loss. So, your loss is shared by us. Thank you. Other than that, I wanted to say that people are out enjoying the preserves. The weather was phenomenal last weekend. That really helped in a lot of ways. You noted that jar of Loud Thunder Honey, Jeff wants me to point out there is still plenty in the camp office, if you want to head out there. Also, I would like to lift up something that's in your packet that I want you to be paying attention to in the future...the Executive Committee got a report on this. The City of Rock Island is in negotiations around a parcel of land near the Bally's Casino. They are doing an environmental assay, so we don't have to make any decisions now, but I do want you to keep tabs on this. But, if this were to come through as a clean assessment, there is a chance that we could be adopting/accepting another major gift of the Forest Preserve. This one, we would not have to do anything to. I see the look of...(chuckles) this is the area out by the Bally's Casino, the wetlands. So, basically, its land that has been determined to be undevelopable."

Mr. Simmer asked, "On 92...the other side of 92?"

President Swanson answered, "Both sides...yeah, both sides of Centennial Expressway, just South of...there is a map in your packet. It's just South of the I280 exchange. There is still a lot of investigation to be done. But, I encourage you to keep tabs on the process and watch how the city proceeds with its environmental assessment on that. So, I wanted to make sure you were aware of that. Uh, but if that were to come to pass, it would really come without any strings. If in the future, people like Jeff and Mike and so forth...if they get grants that other agencies might want to pay for the basic improvements, that would be an option but there is no expectation that we would do anything but holding it in trust. So, please keep tabs on that."

6. Commissioner Thompson moved to approve the Claims and Forest Preserve Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$716,253.24, as presented. Commissioner Cremeens seconded.

Commissioner M. Moreno moved to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Sowards seconded.

D. Beck, K. Bogdonas, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, M. Burns, D. Cremeens, C. Enburg, E. Langdon, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, L. Thompson, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

**TOTAL YES**            **21**

**TOTAL NO**            **0**

Motion carried.

7. Commissioner Simmer moved to waive the reading and approve the Transfers of Appropriation, as presented. Commissioner Vyncke seconded.

Commissioner Thompson moved to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Normoyle seconded.

D. Beck, K. Bogdonas, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, M. Burns, D. Cremeens, C. Enburg, E. Langdon, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, L. Thompson, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

**TOTAL YES**            **21**

**TOTAL NO**            **0**

Motion carried.

President Swanson stated, "And now, the moment that many of you have been waiting for...that's why the chambers is packed of course with all the..."

(Group chuckles)

President Swanson continued, "...but I want to give you an update and entertain, if appropriate, a motion to approve a new name for our new Forest Preserve. To remind you of the process; which was really driven by the Executive Committee of the Forest Preserve Commission. We accepted names from the public and we were just overwhelmed by the response. It was fantastic. In one of the threads we saw, was that there were quite a few submissions that were honoring the Native heritage of or area. Well, that's in keeping with our current Preserves. Illiniwek is a word that's not really from this area. It's from the Ojibwe people and it was what they used to described the people who lived here...the Kaskaskia, the Peoria, the Cahokia and so forth. And then we have Loud Thunder that we are very proud of; which is an anglicized version of the name of Loud Thunder's son (meant to say Chief Blackhawk's son). And so, that's a great way to keep the tradition but we've never had those...a park that's got a name in the Sauk language. So, we established communication with the Director of the Department of Language for the Sauk Nation in Oklahoma. And, in consultation with her, the name that we would like to put forward is AMÔWA; which is the Sauk word for Bee or Bees. Uh...which ties into the work that Ranger Petersen, Ranger Mills, Mr. Craver and others have done in terms of habitat and restoration that have brought to critically endangered species of bees back to Rock Island County. The American Bumble Bee and the Rusty Patch Bumble Bee. So, it's kind of celebrates the work of the professional team. It is true to the heritage of our region...and, it's also kind of a challenge to us to be mindful of the smallest parts of the echo system that are very important. So, with that background, I would entertain a motion to approve AMÔWA as the name."

8. Commissioner Mielke moved to approve the name AMÔWA for the new Forest Preserve, as presented. Commissioners M. Moreno and Simmer seconded.

Commissioner Normoyle moved to approve the previous roll call vote.  
Commissioner L. Moreno seconded.

D. Beck, K. Bogdonas, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, M. Burns, D. Cremeens, C. Enburg, E. Langdon, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, L. Thompson, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

**TOTAL YES**                    **21**

**TOTAL NO**                    **0**

Motion carried.

President Swanson stated, "Congratulations, friends...we have a name for our new park."

(Group applause)

President Swanson added, "And, I should note that Ms. Mohr who is the Director of Languages for the Sauk Nation has left the door open that if we get to a dedication and naming, that there may be a delegation coming from Oklahoma. Wouldn't that be a spectacular celebration for our community? So, more to come on that."

**9. Comments from Commissioners: (None)**

10. Commissioner McNeil moved to approve all Routine Reports from the Director and Departments Heads of the Forest Preserve Commission, as presented. Commissioner Sowards seconded.

Commissioner Normoyle was recognized.

Ms. Normoyle stated, "There are all kinds of things to lift up in the reports...lift up the Miller donations. That was very generous of them and certainly made the transition to prairie much more feasible. So, well done."

President Swanson added, "If you look at the history of this District, it wouldn't have been able to do what it has done without the cooperation of private individuals, corporations and organizations. Thank you, Ms. Normoyle, for lifting that up. Are there any other questions or comments?"

Commissioner Simmer moved to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner L. Burns seconded.

D. Beck, K. Bogdonas, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, M. Burns, D. Cremeens, C. Enburg, E. Langdon, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, L. Thompson, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

**TOTAL YES 21**

**TOTAL NO 0**

Motion carried.

The next meeting of the Forest Preserve Commission is Tuesday, July 19, 2022, at 5:30pm, immediately following the meeting of the Rock Island County Board.

President Swanson declared the Forest Preserve Meeting recessed at 6:50pm.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,



KAREN KINNEY  
COUNTY CLERK AND SECRETARY  
OF THE FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION

KK:rw