1996 S. Kirk Rd. Suite 320
Geneva, IL 60134

Forest Preserve District, Planning and Utilization Committee Meeting Minutes

President Bill Lenert, Chair Cherryl Strathmann, Vice-Chair Deborah Allan, Jennifer Abbatacola, Alex Arroyo, Mavis Bates, Chris Kious, Myrna Molina, Ted Penesis

Thursday, June 25, 2026 9:30 AM 3rd Floor Board Room

I. Call To Order

The Forest Preserve District Planning and Utilization Committee meeting was held Thursday, June 25, 2026 at the Administration Offices located at 1996 S;30. Kirk Road, Suite 320, Geneva, IL 60134. Chair Strathmann called the meeting to order at 9:30AM.

Remote Attendance Approval

Commissioner Molina

PRESENT	President Bill Lenert
	Chair Cherryl Strathmann
	Commissioner Jennifer Abbatacola
	Commissioner Chris Kious
	Commissioner Myrna Molina
	Commissioner Ted Penesis
ABSENT	Vice-Chair Deborah Allan
	Commissioner Alex Arroyo
	Commissioner Mavis Bates

Also Present: Commissioners: Juby (Remote): Exec. Dir. Haberthur; CFAO Petschke & staff Carrano; Ops. Dir. Jensen & staff Estes; NRM Dir. Chess; Dir. of Planning & Land Protection Rooks-Lopez & staff Tegge; HR Dir. Clough; Dir. of Comm. Engagement staff Kovach; Admin staff Figliozzi, Rafferty and Attorney Sterk of Ancel and Glink.

II. Approval of Minutes of May 28, 2026

RESULT:	**APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT**
MOVER:	Chris Kious
AYE:	Jennifer Abbatacola, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Myrna Molina, Ted Penesis, Cherryl Strathmann
ABSENT:	Deborah Allan, Alex Arroyo, Mavis Bates

III. Public Comment (Each Speaker is limited to three minutes)

None.

IV. Bids and Proposals

TMP-26-794 Resolution Approving a Bid for Cattail and Common Reed Control at Eight Forest Preserves

Dir. of NRM Chess presented the bid for eight forest preserves. Native broad-leaved cattail (Typha latifolia) was once abundant across the Kane County landscape comprising an important role in the composition of marshes. Over time, the introduced narrow-leaved cattail (Typha angustifolia), and hybrid cattail (Typha x glauca) have largely replaced the native species.

Hybrid cattail is an aggressively spreading species that often forms monotypic stands of itself, at the exclusion of native flora and fauna. Its dense growth habit minimizes its utility to native wetland fauna; ducks cannot swim through mature stands, and its quickly closes open pockets of water used by turtles to bask. Similarly, common reed (Phragmites australis) is a frequent invader in the region's wetland communities. Common reed is a tall (up to 15') perennial grass that spreads vigorously through lateral shoots called rhizomes. To combat this spread of invasive species, the District utilizes a variety of treatment methods including mechanical and chemical control. As cattail and common reed populations commonly occur in standing water, access can be difficult without the use of specialized amphibious equipment that the District does not own. Accordingly, contractors were sought to bid on summer 2026 control projects of multiple, separate infestations of cattail and common reed across eight preserves.

DISCUSSION: *Chair Strathmann asked how the non-native invasive species was introduced to this area. Dir. Chess explained that the most common form of introduction was the use of ornamentals planted for landscapes. Commissioner Abbatacola asked how long mitigation of invasives species takes. Dir. Chess responded that the mitigation process is different for each invasive species, the invasive cattail is a lifelong battle. Commissioner Abbatacola asked how the District handles unintended consequences. Dir. Chess responded that the treatment is done by hand control when necessary to limit this. Additionally, chemicals used are specific to comply with the Army Corp of Engineers requirements and they are all aquatic safe. Commissioner Abbatacola asked how the public is notified when applying chemicals. Dir. Chess responded that the company posts signs while applying the treatment. Commissioner Abbatacola asked if the District could remove the invasives without chemicals. Dir. Chess explained that staff could remove some mechanically, however best practice is getting in the water and pulling from the root, therefore it is challenging to mitigate as it would be weather dependent. The most efficient way to mitigate these types of invasives is through chemical treatment designed for aquatics. Exec. Dir. Haberthur explained that the chemical treatment is always the last resort. Staff evaluates each species and handles the mitigation for best practices and efficiency.*

RESULT:	**MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE**
TO:	Forest Preserve District Executive Committee
MOVER:	Chris Kious
SECONDER:	Ted Penesis
AYE:	Jennifer Abbatacola, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Myrna Molina, Ted Penesis, Cherryl Strathmann
ABSENT:	Deborah Allan, Alex Arroyo, Mavis Bates

V. New or Unfinished Business

TMP-26-795 Resolution Approving Amendments to the Agricultural Land Use Policy

Dir. of NRM presented the updated agriculture policy with the District. The District currently protects over 24,000 acres of land in Kane County, of which, approximately 5,230 acres is being farmed (primarily row crops and hay) as an interim land management practice until these fields can be ecologically restored. The majority of the District's farmed acres are under annual Farm License Agreements. Over 35 local farmers have annual license agreements with the District. The District has the responsibility of implementing best management practices and sound stewardship on all its holdings, including farmland. Accordingly, the District implemented an Agricultural Land Use policy in April of 2024 to establish governing rules for the stewardship and licensing of the District's agricultural lands.

Along with clerical and grammatical updates, three substantive modifications to the current policy are being recommended as follows:

- Modification in rental rate calculation
- Neonicotinoid soybean seed treatment prohibition
- Multi-year license provision

Rental Rate Calculation Modification

Current rental rates are based on average yields of non-irrigated corn crops based on the soils present within the field. Changes are proposed to better align with the District's soil assessment and to set rates for fields not yet a part of the closed bid procurement process to a market rate. New rates would be based on the soil productivity index for Illinois to classify land as Class, A, B, C, or "not prime" soils. The average soil productivity index is then modified by the Illinois Agricultural District Cash Rent Adjustment Factor as produced by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service to reach a cash rent rate for each class as follows:

Land Class	SPI	Rent
Excellent (Class A)	133-147 (Ave 140)	$312.00
Good (Class B)	117-132 (Ave 125)	$264.00
Average (Class C)	100-116 (Ave 108)	$210.00
Fair (Not Prime)	<100	$190.00

Neonicotinoid Seed Treatment Ban for Soybeans

Neonicotinoid pesticides, aka "Neonics," are a class of broad-spectrum insecticides that farmers can purchase as a seed-coating on their soybean seed that distributes throughout the plant as it grows. This method of delivery distributes neonics throughout the soil and adjacent waterways and has deleterious impacts to our local pollinators and wildlife. Other methods of insecticide control that are more environmentally sensitive are both readily available and effective.

DISCUSSION: *Chair Strathmann asked if the farmers apply the chemical to the crops. Dir. Chess explained that the farmers purchase the seed treated with the pesticide. Studies have determined that the application with the seed is not beneficial, this includes the damage impact that the chemical has on the wildlife. Commissioner Kious commented that a hypothesis on what is causing the decline in the honey bee population is linked to the use of this pesticide. Dir. Chess noted that the District has been testing for the presence of "neonics" in kestrels.*

Commissioner Abbatacola asked how many acres of land are being rented in comparison to privately owned farm land in the County. Exec. Dir. Haberthur responded that the District is the largest publicly owned farm land manager, noting that 26% of the forest preserve is agricultural land. There was further discussion regarding the potential reaction of the farmers towards the changes in rent. Dir. Chess noted that modifications of the rental rate are a more positive option than a bidding process where some who have farmed for generations could lose their rental property if they were to be out bidded. President Lenert explained the financial rates and expectations for the District.

RESULT:	**MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE**
TO:	Forest Preserve District Executive Committee
MOVER:	Ted Penesis
SECONDER:	Chris Kious
AYE:	Jennifer Abbatacola, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Myrna Molina, Ted Penesis, Cherryl Strathmann
ABSENT:	Deborah Allan, Alex Arroyo, Mavis Bates

TMP-26-782 Resolution Approving a Contract with Wight & Company for Final Design & Engineering Professional Services for the Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve Wildlife Overlook

Dir. of Planning and Land Protection Rooks-Lopez presented the contract for the final design and engineering for the wildlife overlook. Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve contains the first wetland mitigation bank created by the District. The volume and diversity of birds that have returned to this wetland is unrivaled by any previous projects completed by the District. Multiple state and federal threatened and endangered species have been seen utilizing the site, and the word of this success is widespread amongst the "birding" community. As a result, birders have inundated the site hoping for glimpses of these rarities. This increase in visitors to the

preserve has created issues with the establishment of the wetland plants required for the mitigation bank. The proposed wildlife-observation platform was included as a key project for the 2024 Land Acquisition & Preserve Improvement Referendum. It includes the construction of a fully accessible raised observation deck that will be installed close to the water. It will allow visitors of differing abilities access to view the birds and the wetland, without causing damage to the plant community and disturbing the birds' activities. In 2025, the District selected Wight & Company to prepare preliminary design and grant assistance for the project. In January 2026, the District was awarded funding assistance from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) through the Open Space Land Acquisition & Development grant (OSLAD) which, will reimburse up to $600,000 for development and engineering. Wight and Company has a full understanding of the project and required permitting, as they are the design firm that completed the original concept and preliminary design that resulted in the OSLAD Grant award. A scope of services was developed, and Wight submitted a proposal for engineering, permitting and construction services for $179,500. Additionally, $18,000 shall be set aside as contingency to cover any unanticipated additional costs that may arise during design, permitting, and construction document creation for a total project amount of $197,500.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Abbatacola asked about ADA compliance. Exec. Dir. Haberthur commented that during the design reviews there were a number of ADA compliant facilities with the same style of structure. He noted that the current design is the best option to allow the ADA compatibility and flexibility. President Lenert mentioned that the District was awarded a $600,000 grant and noted that this would help offset the total project cost.*

RESULT:	**MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE**
TO:	Forest Preserve District Executive Committee
MOVER:	Bill Lenert
SECONDER:	Ted Penesis
AYE:	Jennifer Abbatacola, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Myrna Molina, Ted Penesis, Cherryl Strathmann
ABSENT:	Deborah Allan, Alex Arroyo, Mavis Bates

TMP-26-799 Resolution Approving a Contract with Engineering Resource Associates for Preliminary Engineering and Permitting Services for Deer Valley & Big Rock Creek Restoration at Big Rock Forest Preserve

In 2021, the District closed the Deer Valley Golf Course within Big Rock Forest Preserve. The land on which this 9-hole course was operated is bisected by Big Rock Creek, which is considered the highest quality waterway in Kane County. The District then began restoring the land to appropriate natural communities which consist of a mosaic of creek corridor, oak/hickory woods and tallgrass prairie. The first phase of the project was the initial conversion of the cool season turf grasses that made up the playing areas to a place-holding native prairie mix. The next proposed phase is for engineering and permitting to develop a site-specific watershed and water quality plan for Big Rock Creek. Best Management Practices will be utilized to address runoff from District property and the upstream agricultural land uses to include "dirt work" that reties Big Rock creek to its historic floodplain and integrates a "treatment train" of settling ponds that cleans surface water as it flows into the creek.

The District utilized a request for qualifications process to select a consultant. Three firms responded; and Engineering Resource Associates (ERA), Warrenville, IL was selected. A scope of work was developed and a total fee of $34,390.00 was established. Additionally, $610.00 shall be set aside as contingency to cover any unanticipated additional costs that may arise during design, for a total contract price not to exceed $35,000.00

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Kious asked if there were any long-term repercussions from the land being a previous golf course. Exec. Dir. Haberthur responded that no repercussions, the*

dirt was removed, and the reason for closing the course was to save the downstream from any of the pollutants caused by golf courses.

RESULT:	**MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE**
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ABSENT:	Deborah Allan, Alex Arroyo, Mavis Bates

VI. Closed Session to Discuss Land Acquisition, License Agreements, Potential Litigation and Personnel

None.

IV. Communications

Dir. of Community Engagement Metanchuk promoted the current programs held by the Natural Education center. Additionally, kayaking and fishing programs are available for the season.

VIII. Chairman's Comments

None.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:22AM.

RESULT:	**APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE**
MOVER:	Chris Kious
SECONDER:	Ted Penesis
AYE:	Jennifer Abbatacola, Chris Kious, Bill Lenert, Myrna Molina, Ted Penesis, Cherryl Strathmann
ABSENT:	Deborah Allan, Alex Arroyo, Mavis Bates

Chair Cherryl Strathmann
Forest Preserve District Planning and Utilization Committee
Forest Preserve District of Kane County

Respectfully Submitted,

Gabriella Figliozzi

Gabriella Figliozzi
Recording Secretary