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

Forest Preserve District, Planning and Utilization Committee Agenda

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

Thursday, August 27, 2026 9:30 AM 3rd Floor Board Room

I. Call To Order

The Forest Preserve District Planning and Utilization Committee meeting was held Thursday, August 27, 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 9:31AM.

Remote Attendance Approval

None.

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

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

II. Approval of Minutes July 30, 2026

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

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

Tom Burgan, resident of Geneva, Kane County, spoke in regards of the flag pole located in the Fabyan Japanese Garden. He stated that he walks by the preserve daily and has not seen an American flag on the pole. He felt that staff needs to add a flag on the pole.

IV. Bids and Proposals

TMP-26-1070 Resolution Approving a Bid for Prescribed Burns at Seven Forest Preserves

Dir. of NRM Chess presented the bid for prescribed burns. The Forest Preserve District of Kane County currently owns and manages approximately 16,000 acres of natural areas, with that figure growing every year with new acquisitions and agricultural conversions. Those natural areas are a mix of grasslands, wetlands, and woodlands containing a variety of species. One thing that all of those various communities have in common is a dependence on fire. The communities present across northern Illinois evolved with fire as a regular occurrence and have come to depend on its presence to maintain their structure. Fire helps keep the grasslands open by killing trees and shrubs

that try to invade. Oaks have developed thick fire-resistant bark that allows them to thrive under these conditions where species like Maples cannot. Human development has halted the frequency of wildfires and the intentional conduction of prescribed burns is a necessary component to maintaining the ecosystem health of the District's preserves. To supplement burns conducted by staff, bids were sought to conduct burns at seven preserves.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Bates asked if volunteers are included in this project. Dir. Chess responded that the District utilizes volunteers for a lot of projects, this one included. However, the bid is for contracted professionals. Commissioner Allan asked what the timeframe was for re-burning each preserve. Dir. Chess indicated that a 2–3 year cycle is ideal for rotation, however the District covers a 3-5 year cycle due to staff availability. Chair Strathmann asked about wildfires. Dir. Chess responded that they do occur, this past burn season the District dealt with a wildfire that was caused by a powerline rubbing on an oak tree. He stated that no one was injured. Commissioner Kious commented that some preserves are close to neighborhoods and companies. Dir. Chess responded that yes, the purpose for contracting professionals is mainly for the higher liability areas. Commissioner Penesis commented that the Morton Arboretum was the front runner of prescribed burns in the area. He stated that the benefits are ideal in providing opportunity for the native vegetation to grown in.*

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

TMP-26-1072 Resolution Authorizing a Bid for Native Seed Purchase to Restore Lands at Various Preserves

Dir. of NRM Chess presented the bid for native seed purchase. Native plants are the basis of all native ecosystems, and therefore are the basis of our work in the Natural Resource Management department. Our native insects coevolved with these plants, and cannot survive on imported plants. In turn, all of our fauna that prey upon our native insects cannot do so if those insects are not present due to non-native or low-diversity plants occupying the space of our native plants. This year's seed bid represents a project-driven approach to determining seed needs. This is the fifth-year mixes were bid by option with seeds bagged by species. This approach both maximizes value and ensures quality of the delivered product. All of the seed specified in our bid is slated to go onto the ground this winter, to support ongoing restoration projects. The bid was publicly advertised with four (4) vendors responding.

DISCUSSION: *Chair Strathmann commented that the bid details is an example of how dedicated the District is on restoration. Commissioner Penesis agreed and stated how much work staff does to fulfill the mission. (Commissioner Lewis stepped away at 9:47AM). Commissioner Abbatacola asked if the seed expires if staff is not able to plant everything right away. Dir. Chess responded that it varies by species, some seed does expire, the seed is housed in a climate-controlled area and the more sensitive seed is planted first. Commissioner Abbatacola asked about the cold prep. Dir. Chess explained that the germination is specific to species. Commissioner Abbatacola asked if the District sells any extra seed left over. Exec. Dir. Haberthur responded that there is not enough seed in general, he noted that the District partners with other counties due to the high demand. Native seed has become more popular and staff has been purchasing early. The goal is to restore the agriculture to prairie.*

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

TMP-26-1077 Resolution Approving a Bid for the Resurfacing of Cart Paths Along Holes 10-18 at the Hughes Creek Golf Club In Elburn, IL.

Landscape Architect Tegge presented the bid for resurfacing the cart paths at Hughes Creek golf course. The existing cart paths at Hughes Creek Golf Club were installed in various phases, from the late 1990s to the early 2000s and are showing significant signs of deterioration and failure in large sections. In 2025, the District began resurfacing holes 1-9 in two separate projects. The proposed bid will focus on pulverizing-in-place and resurfacing the existing footprint of cart paths along holes 10 through 18. Decomposed granite areas on Hole 10 and Hole 18 will also be upgraded to asphalt. This project will complete the cart path resurfacing needs at Hughes Creek Golf Club. The bid was publicly advertised and the qualified, lowest bidder was Obsidian Asphalt Paving of West Chicago, Illinois, with a base bid cost of $212,732.04. Additionally, staff is requesting a 10% contingency of $21,273.20 to cover any unanticipated costs during construction, for a project total not to exceed $234,005.24.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Kim Young asked what the life expectancy of the pavement would be. Staff Tegge responded an estimated 20 years with standard wear, noting the project should be completed by the end of October.*

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

V. New or Unfinished Business

TMP-26-1073 Resolution Authorizing Support of an Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) Grant Application for Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements at Red Gate Road Pedestrian Bridge within Fox River Bluff Forest Preserve

Dir. of Planning & Land Mgmt. Rooks-Lopez presented the resolution to apply to an ITEP grant. In 2012, the District was gifted the Fox River Bluff Bridge at Red Gate Road by the City of St. Charles. Since that time, the bridge's wooden decking has experienced an accelerated rate of deterioration. District staff have completed surface repairs as necessary, but the ongoing deterioration has made it increasingly difficult to maintain the decking and keep pace with needed repairs. At only 14 years old, the bridge is experiencing deterioration sooner than would reasonably be expected. In late 2023, the District contracted with Alfred Benesch & Company to conduct an assessment of the bridge including conceptual engineering designs and cost estimates for the necessary repairs. The assessment determined that full repairs to the bridge's superstructure and decking could cost in excess of $4,000,000. Given the significant cost of the anticipated improvements, staff is requesting authorization to apply for funding through the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP). If awarded, the ITEP grant would reimburse up to 80% of the project cost, up to $5,000,000, for engineering and construction. If awarded, ITEP funding could reimburse up to 80% of eligible engineering and construction costs, subject to the applicable $5,000,000 maximum grant amount. Securing this funding would significantly reduce the District's financial obligation while allowing the necessary improvements to the Fox River Bluff Bridge to move forward.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Penesis commented that he remembered when the bridge was built and noticed that it was deteriorating right away. Commissioner Roth stated that the issue had been progressing with continued public complaints. Exec. Dir. Haberthur responded that the District has been working to fixing the issue, a $30,000 investment was made to temporarily fix the boards, otherwise the bridge would need to be closed down. He added that Senator Don DeWitt was aware of the situation and is in support of the District applying for the grant. President Lenert asked about the notice timeframe of the awards. Dir. Rooks-Lopez indicated that the award announcements can take from 8 months to a year with ITEP. President Lenert commented that the District received*

ownership if the bridge as a gift from St. Charles, the District did not have any authority when it was constructed unfortunately.

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

TMP-26-1082 Resolution Authorizing a Bid for the Fox River Trail Path Improvements- Phase 1 Construction Project

Operations Dir. Jensen presented the phase (I) construction. In November 2023, the Board approved a contract for professional design services with HR Green Engineering to address several ongoing concerns along an approximately two-mile stretch of the Fox River Trail through South Elgin and St. Charles. In July of 2026, the Board approved a change order that would allow the needed improvements to be organized into three phases for completion. Phase 1, presented here for consideration, focuses on safety and erosion concerns. Improvements include the installation of safety rail segments where the trail is directly adjacent to the river, culvert replacement, drainage improvements, and shoreline stabilization. This phase also includes resurfacing the trail from the pedestrian bridge to the entrance of Tekakwitha Forest Preserve. Phases 2 & 3 will focus on retaining wall reconstruction and trail resurfacing respectively in separately bid future projects. The District conducted a formal bidding process for the proposed Phase 1 improvements. The project was publicly advertised, and three (3) bids were received. EarthWerks Land Improvement and Development Corporation, Batavia, IL submitted the qualified, lowest bid in the amount of $693,042.00. A 10% contingency of $69,304.20 is recommended to address any unforeseen or additional costs that may arise during construction, bringing the total project amount to $762,346.20.

DISCUSSION: *Commissioner Linder questioned the significant discrepancy within the bids. Dir. Jensen responded that there was no indication the higher bidder company did not want the project, however the lowest bidder did recently complete the District's archery project.*

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

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

None.

VII. Communications

Community Engagement Dir. Metanchuk presented upcoming events. The Kane Foundation Annual Golf Outing will be held September 10, 2026 at Hughes Creek Golf Course. The funds raised will go towards the second phase of the nature play space project. The Great Orb Hunt will begin September 10 and run through the 30th at Leroy Oakes Forest Preserve and Burnidge Forest Preserve. Sunday, September 27, 2026 the Harvest Fall Festival will take place in Oakhurst Forest Preserve. Lastly, the Volunteer Recognition Dinner will be held on Monday, September 28, 2026 at Elgin Community College.

VIII. Chairman's Comments

None.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:15AM.

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

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Gabriella Figliozzi

Gabriella Figliozzi
Recording Secretary