

September 10, 2018

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Lisa Sprinkle, Marketing Coordinator

Re: September Staff Report

Executive Director (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

- In early September, CCFPD hosted a meeting of 3 Disciplines, Visit Champaign County, and representatives from Mahomet police, Champaign County sheriff's office, and Cornbelt Fire to review plans for the September 23rd Triathlon to be held at Lake of the Woods. 3 Disciplines anticipates more than 150 participants to sign up for the race, with hopes of growing it into an annual event topping out in future years at several hundred entrants. Course and registration volunteers are still needed! Contact Kristin at ktetzaff@ccfpd.org.
- With the Master Plan amendment submitted to the International Dark Sky Association, we have now been informed that our application to designate Middle Fork as the state's first Dark Sky Park is complete and in the hands of the review committee. A decision will be made by October 10.
- At its September meeting, the Friends Foundation narrowed down its fundraising priority list to the following projects: Pt. Pleasant restoration, Willow Pond restoration, Kickapoo Rail Trail phase two, Homer Lake Interpretive Center architectural design, Botanical Garden enabling garden improvements, and improvements to the Lake of the Woods peninsula as a match for OSLAD. The timeline for these fundraising efforts will span several years in most cases.
- Another new member has joined the Foundation board. Jennifer Vallowe, Mahomet resident and Stratum Med executive, was unanimously approved prior to the board's September meeting. The board now stands at 12 members.
- The Champaign County Sheriff's Office and Illinois Emergency Management Agency reached out to the District to assess our interest in partnering on new weather alert technology that the county is considering both within Champaign-Urbana and in several rural areas. A first meeting is scheduled with public safety representatives later this month.

Business and Finance (John Baker)

- Received the estimated 2018 Equalized Assessed Valuation from the Champaign County Assessment Office. The EAV estimate is provided annually to local governments and serves as the basis for tax levy calculations for the succeeding year. CCFPD's EAV is estimated at 4,144,407,108, an increase of 3.9% over 2017. Total new property tax revenues are expected to increase to \$143,519 which breaks down as follows:
 - Estimated new construction and returned TIF totals \$82,985,140 and at the expected 8.92 limiting rate would generate \$70,797 in new property tax revenues.
 - For the tax-capped EAV portion the 2.1% CPI rate will generate \$72,722 beyond the 2017 total.

- Spoke with Yvonne Odom of the Farm Services Agency for further information about the District engaging the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation as farm operator for District lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program and potentially other acreage enrolled in Federal farm programs.
- Met with Pro Shop and Golf Course Operations supervisors to review the Golf Fund for budget submissions. This included identifying any expenses or revenues missed or duplicated in the budget submissions and reviewing expectations for course recovery and subsequent revenues.
- Began investigating vendors and expenses for development of a five year District IT plan and toward addressing IT disaster recovery. Began addressing other 2017 audit recommendations with the Foundation, including amending its financial policy and updating the shared services agreement.
- Researched bonding scenarios for District large projects that are beyond the capital reserve's funding capacity. The District will continue to make principal and interest payments on the 2011 Museum bond issue until December 2021.
- Prepared various scenarios for the compensation committee's review as it contemplates 2019 wage increases for District employees.
- Conferenced with Fran Bell and Barham Benefit Group on BBG's new benefits enrollment application.
- Responded to audit firm questions on the District's RFP for 2018 to 2022 audit services.
- Continued reviewing and projecting revenue and expenses trends to develop the 2019 budget.

Human Resources (Fran Bell)

- Human Resources continued to work with various departments on the District's PDRMA Loss Control Review. The review is set to be completed no later than November 2018.
- Revisions to personnel policies are ongoing with two sections completed for Board review and/or approval this month.
- Human Resources is working on updates to the employee performance review process.
- The Compensation Committee met this month to continue discussing the 2019 compensation plan. As part of this discussion, the committee reviewed new position requests and presented a recommendation to the Executive Director.

Grants (Jarrod Scheunemann)

- Staff submitted a grant proposal to the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois toward the replacement of existing bird feeders at Homer Lake Interpretive Center. Squirrels and time have tarnished our current feeder's ability to attract birds to the bird viewing room. We also submitted two proposals to PDRMA to possibly fund online training material development for staff and volunteers and also to create portable "volunteers at work" signage. Staff are already committed to create online material in 2018 and this grant would significantly improve the HR salary line item if funded.
- We received notification from the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois that the District has been awarded \$5,500 from the Marajon Stevick Foundation Grants. This will provide for

the purchase of two additional dark sky compliant lights for the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve and a telescope to include in our Dark Sky programs!

- Bob Espeseth was named the Outstanding Citizen Volunteer of the Year by the Illinois Association of Park Districts and Tom Kacich received their Top Journalist Award. Both will receive their respective awards at their Best of the Best Banquet on October 12th.
- Megan McCoy was awarded the capacity building grant from the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois for \$1316! This funding will support her online attendance of the IUPUI fundraising school. Coursework at IUPUI will help Megan to build a plan toward new growth in our development efforts.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- Angie Clayton and I attended Social Media training in Bloomington on Monday, August 20.
- Worked with local artist Jan Adams to develop a sketch of what the waterfall/pond will look like when renovated. Two large banners with the sketch now hang on the construction fence, letting visitors know what to expect and how to contribute to the project.
- The first of two videos produced by Campfire Concepts was completed. This video featured Fred Newport as a steward of Homer Lake. So far, the video has been featured on Facebook and will soon be added to the website.
- Mary Ellen and I spoke to the Champaign Kiwanis Club on Thursday, September 13.

• **Social Media Numbers**

	FACEBOOK	+/-	INSTAGRAM	+/-	TWITTER	+/-
CCFPD	2,448	+29	703	+30	504	+1
KRT	2,477	+18			108	+4
MGP	1,586	+30	379	+21		
HLIC	504	+19				
GC	1,084	+25	175	+3	39	+4

Volunteers (Kristin Tetzlaff)

- The annual volunteer recognition event was held at the Salt Fork Center on September 12, 2018. More than 30 District volunteers attended. The guest speaker was Lesley Deem from the UI Department of Entomology and director of the Pollinarium.

Planning and Construction Department (Jon Hasselbring and Mike Fry)

- Since the August Board meeting the Construction Department has been extremely busy with the Botanical Garden pond/waterfall project. Work completed so far:
 - A 2,500 square foot borrow pit was excavated to a depth of 8 feet in order to provide clay fill for the pond and contain removed sediment. Approximately 500 cubic yards of clay was excavated.
 - 1,100 cubic yards of sediment was removed from the bottom of the pond by a hired contractor, and hauled to the borrow pit by CCFPD staff.

- 166,000 pounds of concrete containing large rebar were deconstructed, removed, and recycled.
- The Construction Department would like to note its appreciation for assistance received on the project thus far. Truly a group effort, Middle Fork, Homer Lake, Natural Resources, Lake of the Woods, and Golf all provided equipment and staff. It is a great feeling that all departments work together for the betterment of the Forest Preserve.
- Roofers are 90% complete with the administration building reroof project. Remaining work includes gutters, downspouts and aluminum trim.
- On September 5, Mike Fry and Michael Dale represented CCFPD at the Career Exploration Night at Parkland College. Current and prospective students in the Applied Science programs visited with Forest Preserve staff, discussed experience in the fields of construction and horticulture, as well as current employment opportunities at the district.
- On September 6, Jon attended the UI Sustainability Capstone class and presented a proposal to study the feasibility of renewable energy in the form of solar arrays throughout the district. Thanks to Jacob Pruiett and Peter Goodspeed for their efforts in creating CCFPD's proposal video for this project.

Natural Resources (Mike Daab)

- Michael Daab joined fellow District staff and volunteers to participate in the Middle Fork River Cleanup on Saturday, August 18, 2018.
- Peter Goodspeed successfully passed his Commercial Drivers' License test, and is now qualified to operate all District trucks and haul heavy equipment, which will increase efficiency of Natural Resources management.
- Peter and Michael have been conducting interviews for the fall 2018 Natural Resources Seasonal position.
- NR staff continues to manage invasive plants in our natural areas. Seed collection efforts are increasing as more seed becomes available from late summer through fall.
- Michael Daab attended the National Recreation and Parks Association's Directors School at the Hyatt Lodge in Oak Brook, IL, from August 26-30, 2018. Presentations and discussion on leadership, strategy, human resources, and community connections were valuable, and he is looking forward to Year 2 of the school in 2019.
- Peter Goodspeed, Emily Williams, and Dalton Kerans attended the Grassland Restoration Network Workshop in Kane County, IL on September 5-6, 2018. The workshop was an excellent opportunity for the staff to network and discuss restoration with their fellow professional land managers.
- Michael Daab, along with assistance from Jacob Pruiett, led a hike for the East Central Illinois Master Naturalists' 2018 Natural Areas Management Series on September 6, 2018. Site history and ecological restoration practices were discussed with the group along a 2 mile hike featuring the Point Pleasant Natural Area site at the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve.



Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson and Doug Sanders)

- We had 3,280 players in August and revenue of \$81,904. These numbers are down considerably compared to 2017. This decline correlates to the condition of the course, specifically the greens. In comparison, we had 4,459 players and did \$111,544 in August of 2017. This is a drop of approximately 26%. Joie and his staff are doing a tremendous job on the greens, which have really started to respond, despite some less than favorable weather conditions in August (mainly extreme heat). We look forward to their continued improvement, and have kept the public up to date through social media on the improving conditions.
- On a positive note, we were voted the News-Gazette's Top Golf Course in their People's Choice Awards. Voting ran through the end of May and we received the most votes out of 18 area courses. This is an honor we do not take lightly as it puts even more emphasis on providing a product that central Illinois residents have come to appreciate and enjoy. All golf course staff played a significant role in this award! The award was presented to us on August 16, prior to the Board meeting, along with awards to the Museum and Lake of the Woods park. These are great accolades and we congratulate all other departments involved!
- At the aforementioned August Board meeting, some of our golfers attended and spoke regarding their concerns for the golf course. The Board requested a tour with staff to see the conditions and, on Thursday, August 28th, the tour was held. We felt this was an important step, not only to hear the concern of our customers, but for the Board to see firsthand the damage and recovery process.
- Our Monday Night Two-man League concluded on the final Monday of August. In its inaugural year, we had a full field (24 teams) and are excited to make some adjustments that will make this league even more enjoyable moving forward.

- The golf course received its recertification as a “Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary” in August. The press release is attached. Major credit to Doug Sanders, and thanks to Master Naturalist and CAC member, Denise Ingram, for their hard work on this process!
- Below are the outings and tournaments we held in August, with the table showing total players and income from the events. We did have two other golf outings choose to move their events elsewhere, due to the course conditions (Behnke Ryder Cup and Champaign County Grasshoppers). We shortened the Club Championship from two days to one this year and we doubled the participation. The Champaign County Farm Bureau increased their numbers by about 30 players from last year’s event!

Champaign County Farm Bureau	94	\$3,196.00
Piatt County FS	26	\$676.00
Mahomet Christian Church	77	\$2,002.00
Club Championship	32	\$640.00

- Several upgrades took place at the irrigation pump house this past month. These included repositioning and alignment of the base and manifold assembly, anchoring of the base, installation of new butterfly valves on the jockey and #1 main pump assemblies, and recalibration of the flow sensor valve. A new pressure relief valve is on order with shipment and installation expected in early September. This valve maintains constant pressure within the pump station and protects components from fluctuations.
- As with most departments, several summer seasonal staff left the District to return to school. The majority of summer help this year were new to the golf course operations but did an amazing job following directions and completing daily tasks such as mowing, trimming, and general course cleanup. Hopefully the majority of these individuals will return next summer. Those part-time employees that remain have all worked for the department for at least two years and will remain on staff well into the fall when the course closes for the season.

Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)

- The Museum of the Grand Prairie (MGP) participated in the Pop-Up Museum at the Cohen Building in Downtown Urbana as part of the Urbana First Friday celebration with a revival of the special exhibit, *Joseph Royer: An Architect on the Prairie*. The building owner was pleased with the result and has extended the showing for several more days in September.
- The Starwatch on August 11 drew more than 100 people to Homer Lake.
- Mark Hanson presented a program on the *History of Chanute Air Field* to the Rantoul Rotary on September 4.

- The MGP 1968 exhibit received free print publicity from the Public Eye (a publication of the Independent Media Center) as well as free publicity from WEFT radio.
- Smile Politely published a very complimentary article about the 1968 exhibit on May 30, 2018, and has featured another article on the upcoming 1968 Lecture Series which offers a variety of lectures on everything from Midcentury Modern architecture and *Vietnam Vets against the War* to a showing of *Night of the Living Dead* with commentary.
- Homer Lake Interpretive Center (HLIC) welcomes Cathy Schneider, our new Interpretive Naturalist! Cathy has worked in environmental education for nearly twenty years starting at the Leslie Science Center in Ann Arbor, MI. She has a degree in Natural Resources and Environment with a concentration in Mathematics from the University of Michigan.
- Both facilities (HLIC and MGP) hosted a table for several hours at the Champaign County Museum Network's booth at the Sweetcorn Festival.
- Jennifer Wick, Public Program Specialist, and her colleagues at HLIC raised and released over 60 monarch butterflies so far this year! The monarch butterfly is being considered for the endangered species list, with the decision slated for June 2019.



- Pat Cain, Public Programs/Visitor Services Coordinator, spent Friday August 17 at the Illinois State Fair with the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area and Looking for Lincoln Coalition demonstrating 19th Century games and toys.
- Pat Cain assisted Kristin Tetzlaff with recruiting volunteers at UIUC's Quad Day.
- Pat Cain and Marina Montez-Ellis (garden program specialist) collaborated with Mike Dale to present a special garden program to the Garden Club of Decatur.

Lake of the Woods (Doug Sanders)

- The majority of the garden and operations' summer seasonals finished their work for the year. The majority of seasonals were returnees which made operations run efficiently. Remaining staff members are now working second shift and fall cleanup in the garden and landscaped areas.
- Staff harvested a large number of pumpkins, squash, and other items this year for fall landscape decorations. Sheila Stout, part-time garden staff, is currently working on painting faces and other graphics on pumpkins. Sheila is very artistic and has painted the stepping stones to the Discovery Garden and other decorative items for the area landscaping.

- In cooperation with the Museum, garden and operations staff finalized placement of the Vanishing Acts Exhibit in the Botanical Garden and bordering nature trail. This exhibit will remain in place until the end of the year before being utilized at other District preserves.

Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)

- We spent considerable time mowing the intersections along the KRT from St Joe to Main Street in Urbana.
- A new gate has now been installed at Hidden Acres to deter individuals from driving past the parking area and down to the pond or onto the trails.
- We assisted the construction crew by providing our backhoe for the pond renovation at the Botanical Garden.



Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)

- Middle Fork staff hosted a very successful first annual Middle Fork River Cleanup Day here at the preserve in August. Special thanks to all of the volunteers that showed up to help us clean 2.5 miles of the Middle Fork River. Also, thanks to the District staff who helped coordinate the river cleanup. Volunteers and staff collected over a ton of garbage that day including tires, TVs, water softeners, and all sorts of garbage.
- We also hosted a public forum to discuss the Willow Pond restoration.



Mike Daab, Jarrod Scheunemann, Jacob Pruiett, and Matt Kuntz spoke to about 45 patrons about pond issues, and possible plans of action to bring the pond and swim beach back in working order.

- Due to public health regulations, the swim beach was closed during the Labor Day Weekend as it showed levels of bacteria that were over the acceptable limit. The swim area was retested the following week and is now cleared for use.
- Special thanks to Christy Wallace for another successful campground naturalist summer. Challenged by campers busy with other activities, Christy works diligently to ensure environmental education is passed on to our visitors and guests.

Kickapoo Rail Trail (All)

- On September 7, Mary Ellen, Brian, and Jon attended a pre-construction meeting for Phase 2a of the Kickapoo Rail Trail. Contractors and engineers mobilized on September 10 to begin layout and installation of erosion control measures. The proposed completion date for this project is November 16.
- Mary Ellen and Jarrod met with staff from Urbana Park District, the city of Danville, and Vermilion County Conservation District to discuss future fundraising and grant writing for the Kickapoo Rail Trail. This subcommittee was formed to review needs and coordinate efforts to fund the remaining sections of the original 24.5 mile KRT, along with any new spurs or additions to the trail in the future.
- Tickets are now available for the KRT fundraiser at Sleepy Creek, scheduled for Friday, November 16, at 7pm. The Friends Foundation is partnering with the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation to host the event. The evening will feature a silent auction and music by Dustin Danger. Tickets are \$50 per person or a table for ten sponsorship at \$450. Check with Sarah, Lisa, Megan, or Mary Ellen for tickets.
- Lisa met with the Public Relations and Engagement subcommittee to develop outreach goals and timeline. First priority is development of a shared Facebook page and KRT website.
- We received a promotional video of the KRT created by Chris Knight. Chris is new to town and was interested in promoting the trail and local community. We posted the video to the KRT Facebook page and on the CCFPD You Tube page at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WezgajUqXSI>

District Cultural Competency Initiatives

- The Homer Lake Interpretive Center is featuring the exhibit, *Journey Stories*, as part of our Welcoming Week celebrations this month. *Journey Stories* is an educational poster exhibit that explores how movement has shaped the nation. It takes a broad look at American expansion and migration, from the earliest European settlers and Native American displacement, to the effects of transportation advancements on modern mobility.
- Welcoming Week programs in September will include a night hike, Welcome in the Wilderness, Making Ice Cream with New Friends, and a program on Illinois ticks & mosquitoes. The publicity for Welcoming Week programs this year included a quote from the District's Katie Snyder about the ten cultures represented at last year's ice cream-making program.
- Pam Leiter and Katie Snyder attended the New American Welcome Center's August advisory board meeting.
- Pam has been invited to be on a NAWC steering committee that will develop a community-wide integration plan for all of Champaign County's immigrant community members.
- The Parks & Diversity Working Group held their bi-monthly meeting in August. CCFPD and UPD staff attended.
- Katie Snyder attended a seminar at the YMCA on Immigrant Families presented by Connie Choi and Madison Hardee of CLASP.
- Katie Snyder attended a meeting of the CU Fresh Start-Community Coalition.

- Barb Garvey participated in the Connecting to Collections webinar, “Whose Heritage? Objects, Politics and Collections Care,” August 22, 2:00 - 3:30 presented by M. Susan Barger, PhD, Fellow-AIC
- Jean-Rene Balekita, a Congolese musician and his band Bomoyi, performed for the final Concert in the Garden to a great crowd. The CAC assisted with handing out CCFPD information and making ice cream, a special feature of the last concert.
- Katie Snyder and Stacey Clementz set up a series of programs to serve the Douglass Center monthly throughout the school year, alternating cultural and natural history programs.
- Mary Ellen, Katie, and Pat met with staff of the YWCA to discuss partnering in the Y’s Women in Leadership program. A team of five young women, UI students in a variety of fields, would work with the Museum and Education Department to research and help devise strategies to keep teens and young adults engaged in programming and educational opportunities provided by the District during a time in their lives when other activities tend to draw them away.