

February 1, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Lisa Sprinkle, Marketing Coordinator

Re: February Staff Report

Executive Director (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

- On Wednesday, January 30, the Midwest experienced extremely low temperatures coupled with high winds, which led to dangerous wind chill temperatures. For visitor and staff safety, the District closed its offices, as did most other public agencies, schools, and many businesses in the area. Regardless, many staff did have to brave the frigid conditions to oversee the services that we were not able to cancel, including payroll processing, facility and golf simulator reservations, and training sessions. Thanks very much to those staff that made it in to work that day.
- *Illinois Partners*, the magazine publication that goes out to more than 330,000 Farm Bureau members across Illinois, is including a short feature on Middle Fork River Forest Preserve's Dark Sky Park designation in its spring edition.
- Peg Busch and Will Timmons of the Friends Foundation accompanied me to a meeting at Carle Foundation to continue developing a partnership that is mutually beneficial for the medical facility and the District. Carle's most recent Community Health Improvement Plan outlines its three primary priorities, one of which is to "reduce obesity and promote healthy lifestyles." We discussed roles that the District could play in achieving that community goal and how we might further both of our missions by working together. A second meeting will take place in the spring to continue the dialogue.
- Bill Goodman, Scott Hays, and I met on February 13 with State Senator Chapin Rose and Village of Mahomet administrators to discuss how the Village and the District might collaborate on upcoming projects. Senator Rose encouraged the District and the Village to research projects of benefit to the residents of Mahomet, including but not limited to a dog park. We also discussed the upcoming capital bill and OSLAD's restriction on pond dredging.
- After the meeting with Senator Rose, Scott, Bill, Dan Waldinger (Mahomet Parks & Recreation Director), and I met to discuss intergovernmental cooperation in the development of the Sangamon River water trail. At this time, our staff will be assisting in the development of safety and interpretive signage at the Sangamon Greenway, owned by the Village. Eventually, an intergovernmental agreement will be prepared to delineate the two agencies' roles in further developing launch sites and making other improvements along the river.
- I attended the annual meeting of the Champaign County Soil & Water Conservation District on February 8. Several hundred people attended the event including many members of agriculture community in east central Illinois. The keynote speaker is the manager of corporate sustainability at ADM in Decatur. She spoke about ADM's sustainable agriculture initiatives and specifically promoted the SWCD's S.T.A.R. program that assists farm owners evaluating their own sustainable practices and soil health. As you will recall, our farm operator has begun evaluating our farming practices to see where we might make our own STAR modifications.
- John Baker, Dara Edgington, and I are currently assessing the impact and developing cost scenarios should the State of Illinois adopt minimum wage legislation. We are using the recently approved Senate plan as the basis for discussion, although the final bill may contain different

language. A study session or board discussion may be warranted depending on the outcome of our internal evaluations.

Business and Finance (John Baker)

- Received initial word that the Government Finance Officers Association will officially award the District its Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for FY2017! This was the District's first Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.
- Worked with Barham Benefit Group and MetLife to resolve several discrepancies in billing for dental, life and disability insurance billing. Though the District submitted current information twice to MetLife, several retired or terminated employees were included in the initial billing and some employee benefit selections were not accurate. Finally, we paid the January and February bill using the District's data. We are still waiting on confirmation from MetLife that their records are now accurate.
- Continued reviewing 2018 financial transactions in preparation for the next audit to ensure accuracy of all postings and recording of assets and liabilities.
- Hosted Katie Bermingham and Faith from CliftonLarsonAllen on January 10 and 11 for preliminary review of District internal controls and standard financial transaction practices. Staff reviewed and updated internal control documentation in preparation for this initial review.
- Engaged Lauterbach Amen for the District's Other Post-Employment Benefits report required every three years by audit standards. This review considers the financial impact of retiree benefits on the District. Though retirees pay for their own benefits, their age and health history are included in the calculation of District rates and so impact District expenses. Illinois statute requires IMRF employers to offer health insurance benefits to IMRF retirees through age 65.
- Received notification that IMRF's new assumed investment rate of return is 7.25%, which is 25 basis points less than the 7.5% rate which prevailed for the past decade plus. This change plus negative 2018 market performance will cause District rates to increase for 2020. The current rate of 7.78% is the lowest since 2008.
- Issued 1099s to District independent contractors who earned \$600 or more in 2018.
- Received Economic Interests Statement notice and updated list of employees involved in purchasing decisions. Economic Interest Statements are due May 1.
- Prepared initial 2018 projections by month for each fund to check cash flow for payments and investing and to ensure District maintains 2018 adequate reserves. Initiated tracking of 2018 budget savings and overages.

Grants (Jarrod Scheunemann)

- Exciting news that you probably already know: IDNR announced the OSLAD grant awards for FY19 and we received our very own award letter for \$152,400! We are anticipating a fully executed contract in the next couple of months. Upon arrival, we will have two years to complete the Peninsula project at Lake of the Woods. This grant is a 50% match that will support the demo and relocation of the Swiss Valley shelter to the peninsula, a 1/3 of a mile looping trail with accessible picnic tables, the demo of the boat house and construction of a new shelter, the removal of the paddleboat dock, and installation of a floating dock with accessible kayak/canoe launches. Fortunately, OSLAD allows reimbursement for staff salaries related to construction work, so close to a 1/3 of our match will be absorbed in this way. **Additionally,**

Champaign Rotary awarded \$5,000 as part of their Cannon grant program to kick off our “match” funding! The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation will be an important partner as we seek additional donations for this work.

- IDNR recently opened applications for the Bike Path and Recreational Trails Program funds. We are discussing projects that would fit within their interests. Applications are due by March 14.
- The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation has replied with questions for a number of our recent applications (requests totaling \$43,000). Hopefully, this is a good sign that they are interested in our projects!
- Tara Hohoff, an associate mammologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey reached out to us about partnering on an INHS application to the American Wildlife Conservation Fund grant program (\$2,250). The funds from the grant would be used to purchase iPads, materials, and software to monitor bat activity at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve. The District would provide evening access to the site and also solicit volunteer work for the program, should Tara receive the grant. The INHS will be responsible for data collection, data entry, and data storage for the duration of the program.
- Jennifer Wick is working with the Illinois Raptor Center to use our recent Walmart Grant (\$500) to bring a raptor to Migration Fest this spring.
- Katie Snyder partnered with a local teacher to submit a grant with the C-U Schools Foundation to develop a Museum of the Grand Prairie program surrounding the Boneyard Arts Festival (\$965).
- Barb Garvey received a Notice of Funding Opportunity related to the 2014 Museum Grant award that has been significantly delayed. We have forms to submit by February 25 to hopefully begin the process to release the funds to begin construction on a new Large Artifact Storage building for the Museum of the Grand Prairie.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- Champaign County Forest Preserve has made it into the voting round for the “Tops In the 217” sponsored by the Illini Radio Group in several categories! These include: Summer Camp, Fishing Spot, Hiking, Park, Kids Museum, Camping, Driving Range, Fireworks Display, Local Attraction, and Golf Course.
- Social Media Monthly Numbers

	FACEBOOK	+/-	INSTAGRAM	+/-	TWITTER	+/-
CCFPD	2,630	+44	852	+52	498	-8
KRT	2,531	+3			110	+0
MGP	1,769	+31	494	+17		
HLIC	614	+65				
GC	1,140	+15	195	+3	59	+0

Human Resources (Dara Edgington)

- Year to date, Human Resources has posted 16 jobs for the District: two full-time positions and 14 seasonal positions. Six offers have been made and an additional two offers are currently underway. The most urgent hiring needs for the months of February and March are for LOW-Ops, Pro Shop, Golf Course, and Natural Resources. Our target is to fill as many as 38

positions for these departments [combined] between now and March 31. Additional seasonal hiring for all departments will be ongoing, with Middle Fork, Homer Lake and the Education Department hoping to begin filling their positions in early April.

- This year, Human Resources worked with the Homer Lake Interpretive Center staff to create and post a new seasonal position titled Interpretive Center Assistant. The purpose of this seasonal position is to give Interpretive Center staff increased schedule flexibility, as well as allowing them to perform less clerical duties and dedicate more resources to program development and delivery. The position is being paid for by the reallocation of a portion of HLIC's approved seasonal hours.
- Dara attended her first Risk Management meeting with other department heads and supervisory staff on February 6, during which she listened to supervisor concerns about the current hiring and onboarding process. Based on that discussion, Human Resources will be exploring options to streamline our current processes, with the goal to present alternative solutions to hiring managers beginning in March and solicit their feedback.
- Dara also attended her first Lunch & Learn session for our volunteers on February 4, where she was able to learn more about volunteer opportunities within the District, as well as meet and speak with some of our regular volunteers.
- Due to the vacancy in the HR role for the past few months, the annual evaluation process was delayed slightly for 2018; however they are currently underway and will be completed by the end of February. Assessing the current evaluation process and exploring options for its restructuring is a priority for Human Resources in 2019.

Volunteers (Kristin Tetzlaff)

- Earlier this month the District also held the first of our quarterly Lunch and Learns at Salt Fork Center at Homer Lake. The event was well attended by both staff and volunteers. Mike Daab did an excellent job as the speaker, talking about "Fire and Its Modern Uses" and the education staff was very helpful in preparing for the event as well. We received several compliments from the volunteers and were privileged to have Smokey Bear as a special guest!



- Ryan Pankau and Amanda Christenson from the UI extension office met with Mary Ellen and me to discuss the District's sponsorship of the East Central Illinois Master Naturalist program. While we have been a sponsoring agency to this program for many years, there was no current sponsorship agreement on file. With all of us being relatively new in our positions, the

discussion was overdue and productive. Out of this meeting, we have information to develop an updated sponsorship agreement as well as a plan to help the District gather ECIMN volunteer hours that may be getting missed. We are working on streamlining how we categorize volunteer hours so that ECIMN can adjust how they ask for hours so they better align. By doing so, I would be able to audit the hours reported to ECIMN to see how well they match what we receive. Our hope with this is to ensure that hard work from our volunteers does not go unaccounted for.

Planning and Construction Department (Jon Hasselbring and Mike Fry)

- The trencher attachment for the Bobcat arrived and was immediately put to use trenching a line between the Golf Course cart barn and maintenance shed to make a security system connection. Natural Resources assisted by clearing a path and removing invasive species in the process.
- Work continues on the Discovery Area at the museum. The construction crew rebuilt the sloped entrance flooring to comply with accessibility code standards. The existing wood flooring was sealed to avoid direct contact between patrons and treated wood. Drywall installation, lighting replacements, and various small projects involved in the redesign are also underway.
- Planning, construction, and LOW operations staff coordinated with Mahomet Township contractors, who replaced a culvert beneath the north bike path. The new culvert quickly drained storm water from drain tiles and the overflow pipe from a pond on the golf course.
- Timed with the north bike path closure for township drainage improvements, construction staff replaced another culvert that had separated and was causing sinkholes and deterioration of the trail surface. Winter weather prohibits asphalt patching, so the trail surface is being monitored and re-dressed as needed.
- On February 22, Jarrod and Jon presented the District's proposed improvements for the Lake of the Woods Peninsula to IDNR staff and the OSLAD committee.
- The Planning Department coordinated with Golf Course and Middle Fork staff on capital equipment research and quotes.

Natural Resources (Mike Daab)

- Michael Daab presented on prescribed fire and its use in natural areas management to District volunteers and staff as part of the Lunch & Learn series on February 4 at the Salt Fork Center.
- Natural Resources staff helped prepare for and staff the Volunteer Herbicide Certification Training held for regional natural areas stewards at the UI Extension on February 9.
- Natural Resource Technician first round interviews have begun. We have received 60 applications for the position, with several good resumes.
- NR staff has continued work to remove invasive woody species and dying ash trees throughout the last month, although the bitter cold in mid-January allowed time to clean and organize around the shop and office as well.
- Michael Daab shared information regarding Natural Resources careers at the 28th Annual 8th Grade Career Conference at the iHotel and Conference Center on January 16th and 24th.

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

- Obviously, we were closed for play outdoors in January, but our revenue for the month was \$95,110.86. This is compared to \$6,276 in January of 2018. This is directly related to the

Anniversary Pass Sales and increased simulator play. Sales of the Anniversary Pass continued to be strong, as we sold 425 more during the month. This brings our grand total of Anniversary Passes sold through January 31 to 1,174. Our final mail drop to 25,000 homes in the area went out last week and the sale will conclude on February 8. We are energized by the response and gearing up for a very busy and successful 2019 golf season. Let's hope the weather cooperates with us this year!

- Simulator golf play has been constant. League play is in the final stretch and will conclude the third week of February. Our January revenue for the simulators was \$2,512. This brings our season total (November 1 – January 31) to \$10,715.50. This is a \$1,644.50 increase compared to the same time frame last year.
- Staff has worked to transition calendars, schedules, files to 2019. This includes clearing out all daily report and invoice folders, updating the website to 2019 lessons, events, and programs, and preparing reservation and entry forms for all tournaments, outings and events.
- FE Moran Security just completed a test of all of our fire, weather and security alarms. One sensor in the snack bar was not working and will be replaced, but all other systems were functioning properly. FE Moran is also in the process of having the security system installed (added to the system) in the Cart Barn. They are working to install the proper lines, keypads and motion sensors. This work should be completed in the very near future.
- Battery Specialists + Golf Cars has just completed recall work on our fleet of golf carts. There was an issue with a fuel injector and sensor, which needed to be replaced. This will allow the carts to start properly when the accelerator is pushed, which had become a major issue during last season. Maintenance staff will now begin the process of changing oil, spark plugs, and detailing each cart in preparation for the 2019 season.
- David Sebestik spent Tuesday, January 29 at Lincoln Trail Elementary, teaching the basics of golf to PE classes, using the SNAG golf equipment. This was supposed to be a three-day outing for him, but the cold weather and school cancellations reduced it to one.
- The Golf Committee met again on January 24. Dates were finalized for spring cleanup days (March 12 and 14). The GO L.O.W. initiative brochure was also finalized and approved. Copies of the brochure were provided to the board.
- Golf Course maintenance staff are currently finishing up the maintenance work on equipment. We will be hiring back part time seasonal employees to service 60 golf carts before March 1.
- The Golf Course Superintendent attended the training to renew his pesticide license for the next three years.
- The Golf Course Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent will be attending two seminars this coming month – one on mowing and cutting techniques and equipment, and the other on turf disease control.

Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)

- The Smokey Bear exhibit at the HLIC, which celebrates Smokey's 75th birthday, continues until the end of February.
- Demolition/de-construction has begun on the Discovery Room at MGP. Staff and volunteers have removed walls, platforms, artifacts and props. Construction staff has built a code conforming ramp into the Discovery Room proper, sealed the floor, and built some partition

walls. In addition, Mark Hanson, Jen Grove and Jan Adams have been working on graphics, text, artifact choices and removal.

- Over the course of the last year, Barb Garvey arranged for the replacement of seven *Looking for Lincoln* signs in Champaign County, as the materials from which they were made had failed. The last of the signs was delivered February 8 to Mahomet and the Champaign County Courthouse personnel.
- The MGP began a new online exhibition on its Facebook Page called *Collections Corner*, building on the popularity of the 50 for 50 Facebook feature. Each week a new artifact will be highlighted with appropriate photos and interpretive text about one of the 25,000 objects in the collection.
- Jennifer Grove, registrar at the MGP, met with staff from the Champaign County Historical Archives to talk about collaboration and loan of materials for an exhibit about one-room schools in Champaign County.
- The MGP basement experienced flooding, primarily in the Lincoln exhibit, as a result of the rainfall after the subzero temperatures. A combination of ice jams in the popup drains, heavy rain, and some grading issues created the problem. Steps are being taken to correct the issues with Jon Hasselbring's help.
- Jennifer Wick joined the board of the Champaign County Audubon Society as a member-at-large.
- Pam Leiter was elected president and Pat Cain was elected vice president of the Champaign County Museum's Network at its December meeting.
- Pat Cain has embarked on a master's degree in history at Illinois State University. He will be taking advantage of the tuition reimbursement program at the District to pay for his books, having earned a tuition waiver at ISU for himself.
- Barb Garvey attended the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area Steering Committee meeting on January 23, and the Lincoln Legacy Committee Meeting on February 6.
- Pat Cain attended a special meeting of the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area with bicycling enthusiasts to investigate the creation of bike tours and bike events along the Lincoln Circuit.
- Because the MGP had such a good result from weekend open hours in February last year, we have opened the museum for limited hours, from Thursday to Sunday, 1-5pm this year. So far we have had good attendance, and Smile Politely picked up our extended hours for an article.
- Bruce Vaughn of Champaign donated a Celestron 31042 AstroMaster 114 EQ Reflector telescope to the District for use in Dark Sky public programming.
- Barb Garvey was invited to speak at Windsor of Savoy on a monthly basis after two successful fall lectures. The first talk, *A Winter's Tale*, concerned the history of winter weather in east central Illinois was given on January 22.
- Art and music students from Centennial High School, in recognition of their school's 50 year anniversary, came to the MGP to study the year 1968 (as part of a CU Schools Foundation Grant). Works produced as a result of their visit will be on display at the Museum of the Grand Prairie during the Boneyard Arts Festival in 2019.
- The MGP's first lecture in the 2019 Garden Lecture Series, "Trees



and Insects: Pollinators to Pests,” was given by Mike Jeffords, emeritus from Illinois Natural History Survey. The Garden Lecture series is focused on the life and health of trees this year to coordinate with the *Vanishing Acts* exhibit.

- A homeschool class on the Oregon Trail was offered in January. The program proved so popular that Katie Snyder opened two additional classes, one specifically for middle and high school students.
- Seasonal and part-time positions in the Museum and Education Department were posted – many thanks to our new HR generalist Dara! At the Interpretive Center, we are experimenting with a new 200 hour per year seasonal position this year to help staff the Center on Saturdays and provide support to public programs.
- Several short-eared owls have been consistently sighted a few miles east of Homer Lake. Staff saw 4-5 owls at once! The photo shown here was taken by Jeff Bryant, local birder and nature photographer.



Lake of the Woods, River Bend, Sangamon River and Botanical Gardens (Doug Sanders, Tammy Bruehl, and Michael Dale)

- Michael Dale attended the iLandscape show in Schaumburg, IL from January 30-February 1. While there he attended several educational classes on topics that included annual flowers, proper pruning techniques, and plant diseases. He also attended the exhibit hall where they had new plants and technology in the industry on display.
- Doug Sanders and Michael Dale attended the Illinois Pesticide Training clinic and successfully tested for their applicators’ licenses. The State is now issuing a license for a period of three years.
- The Christmas tree recycling drop off location at LOW yielded approximately 350 trees this year. In an effort to avoid transfer of reported diseases all of the trees this year were burned.
- Botanical garden staff continue to be busy in the greenhouse with plant propagation for the spring season. In addition, they are renovating the Prairie Sampler Bed located directly south of the greenhouse.
- Staff continue to perform service and repair of equipment. This is part of the department’s annual preventive maintenance program.

Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)

- Jacob Pruiett was asked to present at the Vital Lands Summit this month. His presentation focused on drone technology and uses in our field.
- As weather permits, dead and declining ash trees are being cut and removed from the preserve.
- Work continues with our engineers on the Pt Pleasant project to identify the best solution to manage wetland hydrology.
- Invasive removal work continues at the Miners Trail location.

- Middle Fork staff is currently researching mapping technology integrated with our drone to determine its possible uses within the District.

Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)

- During the two coldest days of the year we attended pesticide training and passed the necessary exams to renew our licenses for another three years.
- Our thanks to Jarrod Scheunemann for his efforts to finally get IDOT to change the directional signs on route 49 and 2200 east.
- The winter weather provided opportunities for sledding, cross country skiing, and ice fishing. We had several ice fishermen out but very little was caught.
- The heavy rains in the early part of the month and the frequent snows thereafter have created an unusual drainage issue on the main road, which is causing problems for visitors. This has only happened one other time in the last 28 years and it should be the last time we have this issue after the drainage project is completed this summer. (see picture)



Kickapoo Rail Trail (All)

- The Champaign County Chamber of Commerce selected the KRT as one of its “Champaign County First” initiatives for the coming year. Projects were selected based on their potential to benefit Champaign County citizens, spur economic development, and improve the county’s quality of life. Government and business partners on the Champaign County First team agree to advocate with one voice on behalf of the chosen initiatives at both the federal and state level. On January 24, Jon presented Kickapoo Rail Trail benefits, progress, and financial needs to the Champaign County First committee. A trip to Springfield, originally scheduled for January 30, was postponed to a later date due to the extreme cold. Mary Ellen will attend on behalf of the District.
- The KRT fundraising committee (with representatives from Vermilion County, Urbana Park District, and the City of Danville) continues to meet. This month, we discussed developing a small pool of resources to fund expenses in support of the trail, such as events, temporary signage, and training for trail partners. The fundraising committee has also been looking at designs for donor recognition to be placed on the trail.
- The new KRT website went live! www.OneKRT.org Pam Leiter, as part of the KRT Public Relations & Education committee put this together.
- VeoRide, the Champaign-Urbana bike share program, has consulted the Village of St. Joseph about expanding its service area to include the village. This would allow bike share users to borrow a VeoRide bicycle and use it on the KRT to commute back and forth between Urbana and St. Joseph. More discussions will take place with the village before the proposal is put up for approval.

- Mary Ellen met in January with the new county sheriff, Dustin Heuerman, and chief deputy, Shannon Barrett, to discuss issues related to unauthorized use of the trail. We continue to enjoy a good relationship with the public safety community on the KRT and at all our sites.

District Cultural Competency Initiatives

- Pam Leiter attended the local Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration & Awards event on Jan 18 with keynote speaker Rev. Father Michael Pflieger from the Chicago area.
- Pam Leiter is on the New American Welcome Center’s committee developing a community survey to assess needs related to immigration and services. The committee completed a draft of the survey in January and will be piloting it in February.
- The inter-agency Parks & Diversity Working Group met this month and outlined goals for the year.
- Pat Cain and Katie Snyder presented a paper on their “Civil War to Civil Rights” field trip at the Illinois State University History Education Symposium, *Building Your Social Science Toolkit* on February 8.
- Katie Snyder was invited to present materials from the museum at the National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAAPID) at Stratton Elementary on February 12.
- The MGP’s third annual School’s Out Martin Luther King Celebration was a great success with over 120 participants. MGP partnered with the Champaign-Urbana Trauma and Resiliency Initiative to create decorative rocks with positive messages for children to hide throughout the community. The rocks also had a note which said “resiliency rocks” and led people to their Facebook page. The program got a great front-page article in the Mahomet Citizen.
- Barb Garvey mounted an exhibit at Parkland in honor of African-American History month, in the D wing entitled, *All in the Name of Caring: African Americans in Health Care in Champaign County*. It will run from February 4 to 28.

