Executive Director (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

- Dara and I attended a webinar hosted by PDRMA on the cannabis regulation and tax act, set to become law on January 1. Dara provides more information below. She and I will attend the upcoming IPRA Legal Symposium, which will also focus on how the new law is expected to impact employers and park/recreation agencies in particular. Legal experts acknowledge that their guidance will continue to evolve as employees and job applicants test the limits of the new act in the court system.
- The second annual Illinois Championship Triathlon took place at Lake of the Woods on September 22. As noted, participation was down from last year although those who did participate felt it was a very good event. We are working with Visit Champaign County and 3 Disciplines to determine if a date change to spring might increase attendance for 2020. The fall date may be too close to another long-standing triathlon event put on by the Illini Triathlon club.
- Interviews for the deputy director for planning and development are well underway. We were fortunate to get a highly skilled pool of candidates for the position – both internal and external.
- The Friends Foundation is making plans for year-end giving. The focus of the Nature’s Appeal annual campaign for 2019 will be Willow Pond, Lake of the Woods peninsula, and the solar-powered charging station for the KRT. The Leaflet containing the appeal will also include an update on conceptual planning for a new Interpretive Center, but no ask for support at this time.

Business and Finance (John Baker)

- Met with three of five Board members regarding how program budgeting might be applied to District financial reporting. Also met with the Citizens Advisory Council to discuss future public engagement in the District’s annual budget process and how program budgeting could assist this effort.
- Consulted with Leisure Interactive regarding their Point of Sale (POS) solution for the Middle Fork camp store. When implemented, the system will be fully integrated with our campground reservation system, cost less than $600 annually, allow for pre-orders to be made at the time of camping reservations, include credit card swipe and bar-coding capability, and provide consolidated weekly reporting of accounts receivable. Matt and I discussed an implementation timeline to have the POS added prior to the next camping recreation season.
- The IT committee determined that an Information Technology Audit of current systems, functions, and security is needed to set a baseline for the committee’s work. We have contacted and received a proposal from ClientFirst for this purpose. The committee meets again October 28, at which time a representative of ClientFirst will answer District questions and discuss direction for the IT audit.
- Drafted and reviewed various compensation scenarios in collaboration with Dara Edgington and the compensation committee.
Coordinated discussion of capital equipment needs with department heads and administration staff. The meeting was highly cooperative, with departments indicating equipment replacements that could be delayed for at least a year, consideration of less expensive alternatives, and the current performance and potential for costly repairs if the requested equipment were to be delayed. Departments also stepped forward, offering to assist each other with sharing equipment.

Updated year-end projections for the capital reserve discussion and as a baseline for the 2019 budget.

Reviewed funding opportunities for proposed 2020 capital projects towards building an optimally funded 2020 budget. Sought the status and possible timelines for upcoming land acquisition – adding this information to the 2020 budget based on current assumptions of potential grant awards and seller readiness.

Met with Mary Ellen, Chris Edmondson, David Sebestik, and Joie Torres to discuss 2020 budget, capital and maintenance projects, and to upgrade the benchmarking of golf course performance.

Prepared tentative tax levy ordinance based on operating budget submissions received and upon projected cash balances for affected District funds.

Initiated internal discussions regarding the Foundation budget, including grant matches the District needs for 2020 projects.

Prepared and issued three roofing contracts, and one to address drainage issues near the Homer Lake Forest Preserve entrance.

Attended the City of Champaign’s Property Tax Joint Meeting on October 7. TJ Blakeman reviewed construction projects within the city’s jurisdiction and their projected impact on equalized assessed valuation.

Participated with the finance and purchasing assistants in three hours of training on the District’s upgraded financial system. Both the Accounts Payable and General Ledger modules are substantially improved with many more canned reports, simplified querying for reports, more effective managing the Chart of Accounts, and locking down monthly ledgers once the accounting period has closed.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

Deron Molen with WAND TV interviewed Joie Torres, Mike Daab, and Michael Dale on Thursday, September 26, for a feature news story centered on who makes Lake of the Woods look so good. It will air the week of October 21 during their Discovering Central Illinois series. Also, WAND will be broadcasting live from the Museum of the Grand Prairie at 4pm, 5pm, and 6pm on Monday, October 21.

The Citizens Advisory Committee wrapped up its planned outreach for the year at the Urbana Market at the Square on Saturday, October 12. Since starting in May, they tabled at 23 events ranging from Farmers Markets in Urbana, Champaign, Rantoul, Mahomet, and Homer to popular events put on by the Urbana and Champaign Park Districts.

Applications are being accepted to fill three positions on the CAC committee that will come open in January.
• Social Media Monthly Numbers

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Human Resources (Dara Edgington)

• HR Departmental Visits continued this month with visits to the Golf Course and Natural Resources departments.
• Joie Torres joined HR for a Parkland [Recruiting] Visit on September 12.
• Mary Ellen and Dara attended PDRMA’s webinar “Marijuana in the Workplace” on September 30. Presently, PDRMA’s guidance is to cease pre-employment screening for marijuana except where required by federal law to do so (e.g. for CDL license holders). Fortunately, this guidance aligns with the consensus previously agreed upon by District leadership. To be clear, we will still conduct pre-employment drug screenings for all other illegal substances, just not for marijuana. However, we will continue to do reasonable suspicion and post-accident screenings for marijuana. We are currently looking at holding an inter-agency workshop with Champaign Park District to train supervisors on the new, more stringent criteria surrounding the reasonable suspicion/post-accident drug screening processes resulting from the new law.
• On September 24, Mary Ellen, John, and Dara met with Barham Benefit Group to review 2020 renewal information. We are pleased to report that there will be no increases to our medical or vision insurance premiums for 2020. There will, however, be a 6% increase to dental insurance premiums.
• On September 25, Dara was able to discuss health plan details for the City of Champaign with their benefits coordinator, Karen Hampton. Petitioning to join the City’s health insurance will be a long process, if it is indeed feasible at all, so we asked Karen to give us some details before pursuing that option further. Overall, the City’s plan looks like a promising option; however, as they are just coming out of grandfathered status with Health Alliance, it is too risky for the District to join this year or even next—not until they have time to generate some data on their rate increase trends. However, HR will continue to monitor this option for the future.
• Mary, Kristin, and Jarrod coordinated on the follow up for the S.I.G.N.S grant (Safety in “Given” Nature Situations) that PDRMA awarded us earlier this year. This grant is for safety signage specific to our volunteers (see photo at right). Thanks
to their efforts, the District now owns four portable signs, all available to our volunteers to use while conducting trail work.

- Mary liaised with PDRMA and downstate districts on the upcoming quarterly Central Illinois Safety Coordinator meeting. PDRMA staff will be at the meeting, scheduled for November in Bloomington, to answer questions on claims reporting and will also give updates on PDRMA’s new Loss Control Review process.
- Mary has also taken the lead in working with PDRMA and Bodine Environmental Services on the cleanup/disposal of some old golf course maintenance chemicals. The chemicals had been stored in a locked room that is no longer used. Upon investigation, staff found that several of the containers had seeped onto the floor and mixed together. Thank you to Mary, Joie, Mike Fry and the other staff who were involved in resolving this issue.

**Grants (Jarrod Scheunemann)**

- We submitted an application to the Lumpkin Family Foundation (LFF) to request support for the hiring of an architectural firm to create conceptual designs of a new nature center at Homer Lake Forest Preserve. LFF will visit the Homer Lake Interpretive Center to meet with staff and learn more about our needs on October 11. Hopefully, this is a good sign of things to come.
- David Leake and the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society were named as finalists for the Route 50 (local government trade magazine) Ally Award. The award ceremony will be held at the League of Cities National Summit in San Antonio, TX in November.
- Jarrod was the keynote presenter for the Illinois Therapeutic Recreation Summit. He made a connection with AllenForce, an organization dedicated to using recreation to help veterans. Mike Fry and Bill Goodman are also connected to organizations who serve veterans. Jarrod is hoping to leverage these connections in the near future to determine how the Forest Preserves could impact the lives of veterans and find funding sources to implement the ideas that are generated.
- We made our first purchase related to the Lake of the Woods OSLAD peninsula project. Two accessible transfer stations for the new dock were purchased through matching funds provided by the Champaign Rotary’s Cannon Grant.
- With the public museum grant no longer on hold, architectural design tweaks are underway for the long-awaited Large Artifact Storage building at the Museum of the Grand Prairie. We remain optimistic that the $57K, which is owed to us by IDNR for another public museum grant we received ages ago, will also be reimbursed in the near future.

**Planning and Construction Department (Mike Fry)**

- The Construction Department continues to make progress on multiple projects. Two new shelters have been erected through grant funding – one at Homer Lake and one at Middle Fork. The design is a timber frame configuration, which is a more natural look than the existing metal shelters that were removed. Also, materials continue to arrive for us to finish fabrication of new entry signs for Middle Fork and Homer Lake.
Natural Resources (Mike Daab)

- Natural Resources staff has been working hard to collect seed for our upcoming ecological restoration projects. In addition to the staff collection efforts, we have been hosting volunteers over the last month as well. Seed collection events have taken place at Sangamon River and Lake of the Woods preserves. Staff hosted iHelp, a University of Illinois student campus-wide and beyond day of service, on Saturday, September 28. Although overnight rain made the morning a little wetter than we would prefer for collection, a respectable amount of seed was gathered. We then hosted a group of younger students, 5th graders from Mahomet-Seymour's Lincoln Trail Elementary School, on Tuesday, October 7. The students were full of enthusiasm and did a great job at the task in the short time they were with us.

- James McAuliffe, NR Technician, attended the Forestry Stewards Guild's "Restoration Forestry Guild Gathering: Bottomlands, Bluffs, and Birds" workshop in LaCrosse, WI on September 24 and 25.

- We have been working at the Lake of the Woods Golf Course to identify hazardous trees to be removed by professional arborists, as well as those that will be removed during the chainsaw-training course we are hosting through PDRMA in November.

- We have received trees we purchased for fall planting and have been either planting them, or distributing them to the appropriate departments for planting.

- On Sunday, October 6, Mike Daab worked with donor Dani Tietz and a platoon of volunteers to get forty trees planted at Collins Pond. Dani was looking for a way to celebrate her 40th birthday with a meaningful gift to the world, and we were happy to work with her on this project. We extend our thanks and appreciation to Dani, her family and friends who volunteered to plant and protect the trees, and Homer Lake staff for their support with the project.

- Natural Resources staff assisted the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy with its annual river cleanup event on Saturday, September 14. We used six canoes from Homer Lake in addition to the USRC fleet, and were able to get 21 tires and much more trash out of the river. Thanks to everyone involved for another successful day of improving the health of our local river!
Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson and Joie Torres)

- September was an interesting weather month, as Champaign County experienced the fourth warmest September on record (and warmest since 1998). We also saw a good amount of precipitation, specifically the last weekend of the month, with a total of 7 inches of rain falling on the golf course in a 48-hour period. The total player count was 3,623 and our revenue for September was $77,894.53. The player count is about 500 ahead of our past five-year average and the revenue is right at the last five-year average. The heat, followed by the wetness, at the end of the month did hurt these numbers somewhat.

- We had a good month of golf outings in September. We hosted five events with a total of 240 players, revenue of $10,099.06, and merchandise sales of $2,103.60. We once again held two Big Merchandise Scramble events. These are very popular and are aimed at reducing merchandise inventory in the Pro Shop. We limit each field to 15 teams of 6-players. For the $100 entry fee, each player receives lunch, dinner, drinks, 18 holes of golf with a cart and one ticket for the merchandise raffle at the end of the event. Each participant is guaranteed a prize, with the prizes ranging from a shirt and dozen golf balls up to the grand-prize of a new set of irons. As noted in the chart below, we had a full field of 15 teams in the first event and 12 teams participating in the second event. This allowed us to clear almost $11,500 of merchandise from the shop to the participants in the events. Prize and cart staging pictures are shown above.

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<table>
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<tr>
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• September saw the end of our Women’s and Men’s Associations. These leagues played each Wednesday from the end of April through the end of September. The women had 24 participants this season, between the 9 and 18-Hole Associations. The Men’s League saw an increase in participation, with 106 paid members, and a weekly average of 60-70 Men participating in the 9-Hole league event.

• Jason Troyer has begun his PGA/PGM Associate Program Qualifying Level online course work (to become a PGA Teaching Professional). He has six months to complete this step, before moving on to Level 1.

• FE Moran completed installation of the keypad and alarm system for the golf-cart shed, located at the northeast end of the parking lot. This will add a much needed level of security, as this was the only building on the golf course property that was not alarmed. This facility has now been added to the Resident Guard security call list.

• The golf course condition continues to improve. We have received many compliments from our patrons. The maintenance crew is doing a great job keeping up with the mowing now that the Mahomet area has finally received some much-needed rain. In mid-October, we are scheduled to complete fall aerating tasks. The process includes pulling cores, top dressing sand, and brushing the sand on the greens. Aeration helps to remove thatch on the greens and allows water and chemicals to reach the soil and turf root system. The top dressing sand process helps to minimize the thatch to a desired threshold and improves putting play by smoothing the greens. The Par-3 course has been aerated, top dressed, seeded and fertilized. Our goal is to establish the Par-3 greens for next season’s play.

**Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)**

• The Friends Foundation authorized funds in the Homer Lake Interpretive Center’s (HLIC) donation box to be designated toward a new Center. We also developed a half sheet flyer to let visitors know that the District is planning for a new Center in the future, and how they can donate.

• Mark Hanson has drafted a Disaster Plan for the museum’s collections with numerous facilities maps. The next step for the plan, before Board approval, will be to integrate life-safety guidelines from the District’s emergency response plan into the document.

• Collections inventory has now reached the 70% completion mark. All of the expansion storage unit (the room within the Ed Center building) and most of the exhibits have now been inventoried.

• Mark Hanson has been working with several CAC members, particularly Roger Digges, to process Tomlinson Cemetery materials. Accession of Elizabeth Hanson’s archives is complete.

• The Museum of the Grand Prairie (MGP) welcomes two new Customer Service Retail Associates, Kathy Love and Angela Whitlock. Kathy and Angela are both former volunteers and are sharing the third receptionist position. Kathy previously worked in medical administration; Angela is working on a PhD in Arts and Technology.

• September, as always, is a very busy month with environmental education school programs and other programs occurring nearly every day. Most of our school programs this fall are at Homer Lake – things continue to grow at HLIC!
• A food-chain in action caused a lot of excitement among the 120 sixth graders from Jefferson School while they were at Homer Lake for the Pond Life field trip. This northern water snake caught a small catfish, and patiently stayed near shore despite dozens of kids watching, exclaiming loudly, and taking pictures from just a few feet away.

• HLIC staff are experimenting with 3rd Saturday hikes at Homer Lake this fall; come on out to enjoy the season!

• The HLIC resident snake wowed audiences at the Champaign Public Library this month.

• Stacey Clementz taught a Climate and Carbon Project Learning Tree e-unit workshop at Touch of Nature Environmental Center in Makanda, IL for the first Edventures workshop. This workshop is a full immersion, professional development opportunity for K-8 educators and resource specialists. They were trained in a PLT e-unit as well as participating in field-studies with natural resource and forestry experts. They also developed outdoor leadership skills with the Touch of Nature Environmental Center staff. Participants gained hands-on learning opportunities that they can bring back to their students. This workshop was hosted by the Environmental Education Association of Illinois and fully funded by a grant from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Inc.

• Jennifer Wick attended a webinar entitled Engagement and Education with Monarchs provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

• MGP had an Outdoor Paint Party in the Botanical Garden just after the waterfall opened, using the pond as a backdrop. A dozen painters were instructed by watercolorist Sally Walsh.

• MGP had another highly successful Prairie Stories event. This year the event featured blacksmiths from Colonial Williamsburg (Shel Browder) and Historic Jamestowne (Steve Mankowski). The evening before Prairie Stories, Shel and Steve discussed their work at an all new program, Blacksmiths and Brews: Night at the Museum. JT Walker’s sold beer, the museum sold tickets. The event brought out a good, younger crowd.
• MGP staff have kept the tradition of offering a Take a Child Outside program, this year with a *Scavenger Hunt in Nature* led by garden educator, Marina Montez.

• The MGP education staff have created two new traveling trunks. One provided hands-on learning opportunities about *Women’s Suffrage and Women’s Rights*, the other about *Westward Expansion*. Both had their first checkouts this September!

• Katie Snyder, Sandy Osborne, Marina Montez, and a host of volunteers premiered a revised version of an older program with *Prairie Days*, and all hands-on day for 2nd graders (3 sessions) and a 1968 program for Homeschoolers in junior high or high school.

• MGP presented its first program in our new series *History On Tap!* Greg Pasley provided a great presentation on Mahomet history and JT Walker's Brewery hosted us. Every seat was taken at the brewery!

• MGP will be hosting another, *Blues and Brews: Night at the Museum* on November 8 to accommodate a contract with Kilborn Alley. The band has been rained out of its Homer Lake concert twice this year.

• Barb Garvey gave a talk at the Windsor of Savoy on *19th Century Immigration in Champaign County* on September 24.

• Katie Snyder and Stacey Clementz applied for and received word of an award of $750 from the Optimists Club to support scholarships for camps and public programs. Thank you Optimists!

**Lake of the Woods, River Bend, Sangamon River Forest Preserves (Doug Sanders, Tammy Bruehl, Michael Dale)**

• As noted in the Executive Director’s report, on Sunday, September 22, Lake of the Woods hosted the 3 Disciplines Illinois Triathlon Championship. This was the 2nd year for the annual event. Participants can sign up for various levels of swimming, biking, and running activities through LOW. Staff assisted event personnel with grounds preparation, event set-up, facilitation of the event, and tear down.
• Staff took a number of the department’s trucks and trailers in for their IDOT Test Lane Inspection. State law requires a number of our vehicles and trailers to be safety inspected every six months. This check involves inspecting various parts of the vehicles such as brakes, lights, horns, mirrors, windshield wipers, and tire tread.

• With colder temperatures ahead, staff are starting to make several seasonal transitions. Depending on the temperature, several facilities without heat, and all outside drinking fountains, will be closed down within the next 30 days. In addition, plants are being moved into the greenhouse and the grounds are being cleaned up and prepared for the winter season. Note that the 5pm closing time for Lake of the Woods, Sangamon River, and River Bend preserves will begin on November 3.

**Middle Fork River Forest Preserve (Matt Kuntz)**

• Camping numbers continue to be above average for this time of the year due to cool weather and dry conditions.

• Middle Fork welcomes Eric Roth to our operations crew as our new full-time employee. Mr. Roth has a degree in Forestry from Southern Illinois University, and has experience in the parks and recreation field.

• We have scheduled Jackson Construction to replace the roof at the Activity Center, which was damaged in a severe storm back in May. We are doing a complete roof replacement and PDRMA will cover the portion damaged in the storm.

• Middle Fork staff have been planting more replacement trees throughout the preserve user areas. These trees are filling spots from ash removals.

**Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)**

• It was good to see the construction crew start on the Oak Ridge shelter replacement. This will be a great improvement once it’s completed in early October and I’m sure it will be appreciated by patrons who enjoy that picnic area. The old metal structure was recycled and brought in approximately $20 in revenue.

• The water level in the lake, as a result of the lack of summer rainfall, has caused us to shut down the Natural Playscape stream pumps a month earlier than normal. They were pulling more water into the well housing than what could be replaced, causing the pumps to overheat.

**Kickapoo Rail Trail (All)**

• We mowed all the rural intersections along the KRT from St. Joe to Main Street in Urbana to ensure good visibility. We also used a drag on the trail for the first time to smooth out some areas where work done with the skid steer had made the surface rough and uneven. Cyclists showed their appreciation as they rode by.
• Temporary yard signs were placed at the intersections reminding people that it is harvest season and to watch out for grain trucks.
• Silent auction items and attendees are still needed for the KRT Sleepy Creek Winery Fundraiser on Friday, November 15. It’s a great venue and event. We hope to see you at the event and we appreciate your help! Check with Mary Ellen, Lisa, or Jarrod if you need tickets.
• More than twenty Illinois Marathon participants have given $311 to the KRT efforts through the Illinois Marathon registration page so far. If you know any runners who would be interested in running for a good cause, please connect us with them!

District Cultural Competency Initiatives (All)
• Barb Garvey and Pat Miller attended the American Alliance of Museums’ Facing Change opening reception/dinner in Chicago on September 10. It was a great opportunity to recognize that large institutions, like the Chicago History Museum and the Lincoln Park Zoo, struggle with the same diversity challenges that we do.
• Members of the Museum Advisory Committee were given an Intercultural Development Inventory by the Facing Change project as a way to assess our readiness for the training.
• Katie Snyder attended the Minority Teachers Retention and Recruitment Conference provided by Champaign Unit 4. She went to sessions on Black Girls, LGBTQ students, and Implicit Bias.
• Jennifer Wick and Katie Snyder each hosted a table at the Welcoming Week kickoff event in downtown Champaign. This was the first year that the New American Welcome Center had organized something like this, and while attendance was not as high as anticipated, it was still a great event as they were able to greet many people. In addition, Katie Snyder organized the artists for the Welcoming Week kickoff.
• Katie Snyder and Jennifer Wick both hosted Welcoming Week activities at their respective locations. Katie brought back the Ice Cream with Friends on September 30, a day when Champaign and Mahomet Schools were out of session. Jennifer hosted a program, More Than Migration, on Thursday September 19 at HLIC.
• Rantoul High School brought a group of developmentally-challenged students to the MGP for a tour led by Katie Snyder. They were practicing how to behave in a museum in preparation for a spring trip to Springfield. The Botanical Garden waterfall had just opened, so they also got to see it right away!