

April 10, 2018

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Lisa Sprinkle, Marketing Coordinator

Re: April Staff Report

Executive Director (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

- The Dark Sky Park application is currently under revision, per guidance from the International Dark Sky Association. It will be resubmitted to IDA by the May 28 deadline.
- The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation submitted a grant application to fund two additional dark sky-compliant lights and a telescope for public programming for the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. The grant application totaled \$5,500. Award notifications will be made in 60-90 days.
- I attended a meeting of the Champaign County Community Coalition on March 14. The CCCC was created to identify critical community issues that impact the lives of youth and their families. A role for the district is not immediately clear but our involvement in this group will provide an opportunity for networking and sharing our information with a new and diverse audience.
- The Friends Foundation is seeking additional members as we embark on the foundation's fortieth year of existence. The foundation began life as The Harvesters in 1978 with support of the museum and its collection as its primary mission. Many of today's foundation members have served for many years and will be looking to retire from the board soon. A committee of the board will develop an application form for interested individuals. Names of potential candidates can be submitted to Mary Ellen.

Business and Finance (John Baker)

- Received IMRF notice of District pension funding at 2017 year end. On an actuarial basis, pension funding increased from 80% to 90% in 2017. The IMRF portfolio, like the US stock market, had an excellent year. Note: on a market basis, the District's IMRF pension funding is 102%.
- IMRF also provided early notice of the District employer rate expected for 2019. The rate is anticipated to drop from 10.33% for 2018 to 7.78% next year. This is expected to reduce required District pension contributions by nearly \$50,000.
- Finalized review of employee purchasing card activity and updated purchasing limits for most employees, including the Board-approved increase in department head limits to \$2,500.
- Worked with the auditors for the first week of field work. In preparation for the audit, staff completed several tasks:
 - Identifying, reviewing and posting all payroll and payables accruals to 2016 balance sheet,
 - Capitalizing and disposing fixed assets acquired or sold in 2017,
 - Reviewing and reconciling payroll withholding liabilities, including IMRF and health insurance,

- Reviewing and reconciling District Paylocity, ActiveNet and other vendor data for 2017 with the MSI general ledger,
- Providing information to Lauterbach Amen for update of other post-employment benefits report, and reviewing and accepting report before submitting to auditors,
- Updating internal control documentation for all District financial functions,
- Documenting internal controls and all financial procedures for the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation.
- Worked with Clifton Larsen Allen towards preparing the federal Form 990 – Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax and the state AG990-IL Illinois Charitable Organization Annual Report for the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation.
- Enjoyed participating in the March MadWellness Challenge. 100% of Business and Finance section employees participated!

Human Resources (Fran Bell)

- Human Resources has been actively involved in hiring and onboarding of new and returning employees. The District’s hiring activity since January 1 is outlined in the table below. The majority of these job postings and employees hired are for seasonal positions.

Hiring by the Numbers

(as of April 6, 2018)

Department	Positions Posted	Applications Received	Employees Hired
Administration	1	5	0
Construction	0	0	0
Golf Course (Maintenance and Pro Shop)	5	85	26
Homer Lake	2	18	1
Interpretive Center	3	42	2
Lake of the Woods	4	67	7
Middle Fork	3	21	0
Museum	1	20	0
Natural Resources	2	73	2
2018 Total to Date	21	331	38

- Human Resources developed a safety refresher training for all staff in preparation for the PDRMA Loss Control Review. The training focused on several key areas that most impact our employees including PDRMA’s Core 6, hazardous flora and fauna, and slips/trips/falls. The training also provided information on the processes that employees should follow in case of an accident, incident, or injury. Almost all current staff attended one of four training sessions which were held in early April. Staff members who were unable to attend the April sessions

will be required to attend a make-up session in early June (which will also include any seasonal employees hired between now and then).

- Emergency Response Guides that the Safety Committee have been working on creating have arrived (pictured). They will be distributed to staff and will also be available in vehicles, large equipment and educator backpacks. The pages are waterproof, so will be able to be quickly used in all kinds of conditions.
- Instead of staff focusing on NCAA basketball March Madness, Human Resources encouraged staff to participate in the March Mad-Wellness Challenge which challenged employees to focus on various wellness activities over a 4 week period. Points were earned for participating in activities designed to promote a greater awareness of physical and mental wellness as well as financial wellness and conservation. A total of 26 staff members signed up to participate.
- Human Resources attended several webinars this past month. Topics included: Navigating Generations in the Workplace and Diversity is a Part of our DNA.
- All District Operations staff (including seasonal) will be wearing the new Hi-Visibility green shirts (pictured) this season. These will make it easier to spot staff in the field for safety purposes as well as for visitors.



Volunteers (Kristin Tetzlaff)

- In late March, I hosted two trainings for volunteers after my return from maternity leave. The first training was on troubleshooting for Volgistics and was attended by just three volunteers. This was the second time I hosted a training on this, both with low turnout. I am cautiously optimistic that this means volunteers understand the system as presented to them via the initial instructions I send after they fill out their application. I will evaluate the need for periodically holding trainings on this in the future as new waves of volunteers apply.
- The second training was for the 2018 Trail Steward Program. Despite a snowy morning, all but one of the volunteers who RSVP'd were in attendance. (Also, a big thanks to Mike Daab and Doug Sanders for helping with the morning.) Combined with volunteers from last year, our total number of 2018 Trail Steward volunteers are 53 individuals representing coverage of 90% of the trails across the district. This number includes newer areas such as the KRT and Hidden Acres. Trail Stewards are expected to maintain their trail for twelve months – we run the dates from April 1 to March 30 of the following year.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- Social media update: Facebook followers: CCFPD has 2,174 (+154), Kickapoo Rail Trail has 2,339 (+12), Lake of the Woods Golf Course has 978 (+11), Museum of the Grand Prairie has 1,367 (+57) and Homer Lake Interpretive Center has 305 likes (+53). Instagram followers: CCFPD has 513 (+20), Museum of the Grand Prairie has 249 (+9) and Lake of the Woods Golf

Course has 118 (+5). Twitter followers: CCFPD has 493 (+7), Kickapoo Rail Trail has 101 (+1), and Lake of the Woods Golf Course has 23 (+3).

- Matt Kuntz and Lisa presented about our Dark Sky Park project to the Hope Meadow retirement community in Rantoul.
- Lisa wrote an article about the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden for the summer issue of Community Concierge.
- Created and printed new full-color tri-fold campground brochures.
- Planning has begun for the 2018 Freedom Fest. Sponsorship letters were mailed in late March and we have reached out to new vendors for participation this year.
- Lisa attended training on March 27 through the Urbana Business Association on **Revamping Your Marketing & Social Media Strategy**.

Planning and Construction Department (Jon Hasselbring and Mike Fry)

- Jon had a conference call with Professor Madhu Khanna and Associate Director Morgan White with the University of Illinois' Sustainability, Energy, and Environment Fellows Program (SEE FP). SEE FP partners university students minoring in sustainability with local agencies to complete life-cycle and impact analysis for real world problems and projects related to sustainability. Thank you to Commissioner Kerins for providing information about this program. Please see attached program flyers.
- Contractors installed HVAC equipment for the temporary Museum storage room in the CCFPD administration building basement.
- The Planning department received three bids for district fuel supply on Tuesday, April 10.
- The Planning department received four bids for the Homer Lake tractor on Tuesday, April 10.
- The Construction department rebuilt the Izaak Walton kitchen, which was damaged when a frozen water pipe burst earlier this year. This also provided an opportunity to investigate and repair a roof leak near the building's main entrance.
- The Construction crew and Middle Fork staff collaborated to install electrical pedestals and wiring for a new row of electrified campsites. Eastern Illini Electrical Cooperative has mobilized to complete transformer and primary wiring installations.



Natural Resources (Mike Daab)

- Natural Resources staff has been spreading our woodland and savanna seed mix in active restoration areas at Sangamon River Forest Preserve, Lake of the Woods, and Homer Lake.

- The prescribed burn season has been generally poor this year, with precipitation and low temperatures impeding the use of fire on the landscape. We have met our goals for burning at Sangamon River Forest Preserve, but it is unlikely that we will burn all eligible acres remaining throughout the District. Fortunately, we have had very successful and productive spring burn seasons in 2016 and 2017, and so the poor weather this year is not as detrimental to the overall program as it could have been otherwise.
- Natural Resources Technician and seasonal candidate review and interviewing were completed by Michael Daab and Peter Goodspeed. Once again, we were fortunate to receive applications from many qualified candidates, and look forward to welcoming the new additions to our department soon.
- We are pleased to include a report by James Ellis and Kevin Wolz, "Vegetation of Tomlinson Pioneer Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve." We always welcome such thorough reporting of the flora at our sites, for historic record as well as timely management decisions. The authors found the Tomlinson site to have good floristic quality, but encroachment by aggressive native and non-native species will need to be managed to maintain or improve the vegetation community.

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

- To say this "spring" has been a disappointment so far would be an understatement. We opened the golf course on February 27 and only had 10 playable days in the month of March (20 players or more). The majority of these days, we did not have carts available, since the course was so saturated. We had 525 players in March. In comparison, we had 783 players in 2017, in what was also a poor month for weather. On a positive note, we made \$33,735 this March, as opposed to \$30,102 in March of 2017.
- The golf simulators have been taken down, and the clubhouse cleaned and prepped for rentals, as of March 27. We did get some extended play/revenue from the simulators in March, since the weather outside was not conducive to golf. We had our first clubhouse rental on Saturday, March 31.
- We have recently completed the interview and hiring process for all of our seasonal employees (Cashier, Snack Bar, Beverage Cart, Maintenance, Starter/Ranger). We are now in the process of scheduling orientations with HR and training sessions for each position within the golf course department. It is now just a waiting game for the weather to improve to begin work for the 2018 golf season.
- Speaking of new employees, I was fortunate to participate in the interview process for the new Golf Course Superintendent position, along with Fran, Doug and Mary Ellen. We had a good crop of applicants and are excited with the possibility of a new hire in the very near future.
- David Sebestik and Nick Berger have begun work on their R/Serving certification (Alcohol Servers Knowledge Certification). I will also be having all snack bar and beverage cart employees completing this certification, if they have not done so already. The certification is good for 3 years and can be completed and renewed online.

- Chris has completed the online portion of the HELP1 program through PDRMA and attended the classroom trainings in Normal on Tuesday and Wednesday, April 10-11.
- The District's golf course renewed its annual Audubon International membership. We have been a member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses since 1996. We are due for a site visit later this year.
- As weather allows, staff are performing daily inspections and course maintenance. In addition, they have enhanced the course with new t-blocks, yardage markers, and greens flags.
- Staff continue performing maintenance of equipment (mowers, sprayers, and sand rakes). As time allows they are also cleaning and organizing the office, shop, storage buildings, and outside grounds.
- Alex Saltsgaver has joined the maintenance team as a part-time staff member. Alex will be working approximately 15 hours per week through Champaign County Regional Planning's WEX program.

Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)

- The Interpretive Center's new *From Rail to Trail* exhibit opened on April 7. Response in the community has been very enthusiastic!! Also, for the exhibit opening, we had Dale Jenkins, longtime Illinois Terminal employee and Illinois Traction Society president, give a fascinating presentation on the interurban in Illinois. It was standing-room only (45 people), and was live on Facebook. Those who missed it can still see it on the HLIC's Facebook page. Dale also brought us a video of the interurban trains in action, which will also be posted on our Facebook page.
- On April 8, the Museum of the Grand Prairie opened, *Manning the Guns: the Service of Jesse M. Dowell*, a small exhibit detailing the service of Jesse Dowell whose former farm has been transformed by the District into the Buffalo Trace Prairie. Notable in the exhibit are the examples of trench art, artillery shells which have been sculpted into art works. These can be viewed on the National Archives project, Remembering *World War I*.
<https://www.historypin.org/en/rememberingww1/dowell-trench-art-collection/geo/51.451768,-0.113656,11/bounds/51.318927,-0.286127,51.584224,0.058815/paging/1/pin/1104088>
- Stacey Clementz led, along with Jennifer Tariq and Meghan Bowe, a facilitator workshop for Project Learning Tree in Peoria, IL.
- Pam Leiter hosted a table of nature games and Pat Cain and Katie Snyder hosted a table of historic games and toys at the first annual Playful By Design Symposium at UIUC on April 6, along with the Spurlock Museum, Krannert Art Museum, and the Orpheum Children's Science Museum. The symposium featured Gaming Pedagogies, Digital Literacies & the Public Humanities; it was supported by the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (IPRH).
- The Champaign County Audubon Society will once again be sponsoring the Bird Migration Festival in May.
- HLIC staff offered our first of several Letterboxing for Beginners program.
- HLIC welcomes Drew Costenbader as Seasonal Naturalist this year. She will start mid-April. The MGP welcomes Michelle Farley, grad student in Anthropology as our seasonal Day Camp Educator. And the Department also welcomes back Christy Wallace for her 11th year as Campground Naturalist!

- Stacey Clementz and David Evans attended and worked at the 2018 EEAI Conference held at the Peoria Zoo.
- Stacey Clementz is on the search committee to hire the first ever Executive Director for the Environmental Education Association of Illinois.
- The HLIC has about 100 new Facebook likes so far this year (last year we had about 100 new likes for the entire year).
- Barb Garvey created a Community Board (display) for the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area 10-year celebration. The board celebrates Champaign County's contribution to the National Heritage Area.
- Barb Garvey photographed and documented the fading Looking for Lincoln wayside signs throughout the county in an effort to have them replaced by the fabricators. Many have been approved for replacement.
- Mark Hanson submitted a grant to the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board to secure digital reproduction of magnetic tapes from the East Frisian Oral History Project undertaken by the museum in 1994. In that year, interviews were conducted with residents of the East Frisian cultural group in the northeast corner of Champaign County. If granted this project will preserve the results of this very important study.
- The construction crew installed bird netting at the back door of the museum/entrance to the Education Center to keep birds from perching on the sprinkler pipe and creating waste underfoot.

Cultural Competency Initiatives

- *A Place for All People*, the Smithsonian African-American poster exhibit, will be displayed inside Headquarters through the end of the year, and will then be added to the department's Civil Rights loan kit.
- Katie Snyder attended the Parent-Community Initiative Meeting at Garden Hills to promote District programs. CUSD Unit 4 is undertaking this initiative with Garden Hills, Stratton, and Booker T. Washington schools.
- Katie Snyder and Stacey Clementz collaborated to present a program for the Douglass Center afterschool students. Katie presented a portion of the Museum's Civil Rights field trip, and Stacey took the students on a nature walk.

Lake of the Woods, River Bend, Sangamon River and Botanical Gardens (Doug Sanders)

- Due to the break in weather in early March, staff got a jump on spreading mulch in landscaped beds and around trees throughout the public areas. According to the Integrated Pest Management system, mulch is considered a mechanical method of controlling weeds and minimizes the use of chemical pesticides.
- In accordance with IDOT's regulations, the bi-annual safety inspections were completed for all of the department's trucks and trailers.
- Crystal Lake Fisheries of Ava, Missouri delivered 1,155 pounds of rainbow trout (800-900 fish) to the main lake in preparation for the annual spring trout season.

- Tony Sparks, Larry DeVore, Brian Decker, and Tammy Bruehl completed an in-house safety and operation training in preparation for the mowing season.
- Tammy Bruehl and Michael Dale completed PDRMA's online preparation course "HELP 1 – Essentials of Human Resources" and attended the second portion of the training on April 10-11.

Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)

- The weather was not ideal for conducting prescribed burns, but we were able to get a few areas done in between the rain and snow.
- Sure Dry completed the crawl space drainage project at the residence. Drainage tile was installed around the perimeter and covered with 3 tons of wash rock one bucket at a time. A new sump pit and pump was installed. The space is much drier now that ground water is caught as it rises instead of surface draining.

Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)

- Phase 3 of the electrical renovation has begun. We are looking at a possible completion date of April 20. We have completed the electrical expansion and are near fully booked for Memorial Day weekend.
- Our campground hosts from last year will be coming back for one more year.
- The campground opened for the year in April, but has not seen much business so far due to the poor weather.

Kickapoo Rail Trail (All)

- The wet weather and wind caused a few signs along the KRT to fall over so we've collected them as we get notified.
- Jon and Brian Taylor met with Village of St. Joseph officials on March 21 to discuss plans for amenities and improvements near Main Street.
- Jon met with Farnsworth Group on March 30 to review progress drawings for Phase 2a of the Kickapoo Rail Trail.
- Tree removal for Phase 2a of Kickapoo Rail Trail in St. Joseph has been completed by Michael Poor. This removal project was necessary for the construction of the trail between 5th Street and 7th Street in the Village. Several black walnut trees, and a few hackberry trees, were selected for protection throughout the construction process. Trees removed primarily consisted of invasive species, including siberian elm, tree of heaven, and bush honeysuckle.
- We learned in early April that the KRT was nominated for and received a preservation award from the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA). The award notes the following preservation benefits: maintaining the railroad history, adaptively reusing the rail line, and restoring the prairie along the trail. All PACA awards will be highlighted in an upcoming issue of the News-Gazette.
- Mary Ellen spoke to members of the Edge-Scott Fire Protection District about the Kickapoo Rail Trail in late March. Edge-Scott has public safety jurisdiction for the western end of the trail – from Main Street in Urbana to County Road 1800 East. During the conversation, the fire

department mentioned its interest in securing grant funds for a utility vehicle that would be suitable for reaching a trail user in distress.

- A grant of \$2,500 in cash and \$2,500 in product was awarded to the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation by the Columbia Sportswear Company in support of the KRT. Champaign Outdoors (formerly Champaign Surplus) submitted the application on our behalf as a member of the Columbia Grassroots Outdoor Alliance. The \$2,500 in Columbia product will be used to purchase giveaways that can be provided to donors who contribute a certain amount to the KRT.