

September 9, 2014

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Lisa Sprinkle

Re: September Staff Report

**Executive Director (Dan Olson)**

- We welcome Mike Fry to the District as the new Construction Manager. Mike has been in the construction business in many capacities for a number of years.
- The Sierra Club Prairie Group had a full house for the Kickapoo Rail Trail Fundraising Event that was held at Sleepy Creek Vineyard. We greatly thank the Club for organizing and hosting this event. More than \$3,000 was donated toward the trail. In addition, Sleepy Creek Vineyard allowed use of the building and its amenities for free.
- We formally revealed the Old Homer Park signs in a public ceremony. Pam Leiter led the introductions and Ray Cunningham from the Homer Historical Society gave an overview of the history of the park and the original purveyors. Miriam Edwards was in attendance. She and her husband Bill donated the land to the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation several years back. We thank the many members of the HHS for the photos, assistance with text, and funding for the sign.
- We held the final staff meeting with Barbara Heller to finalize our 2015-2019 Strategic Plan. We are targeting the October Board meeting for her to present the final draft.
- We have met with the National Golf Foundation on a few occasions making progress towards the Golf Study. We are on track to have them present their findings to the board in October. A final draft will be written after that meeting with the Board of Commissioners.
- The NRPA Congress conference is the week of Oct. 14. Last year, they began a live streaming of the Congress for those that could not travel. Live streaming is available again this year and registration for it is now open at: <http://www.nrpa.org/Congress2014/Live-Streaming/>
- Despite hot weather, we had a very nice staff and family cookout and foot golf outing at the Golf Course Clubhouse. Thanks to the GC staff for getting us set up on food and foot golf. I had a great time learning the ins and outs of the game.
- Although the Citizens Advisory Committee did not have a formal meeting this month, they have been making good progress on a site plan for the Sylvester Property Expansion including an interview with Larry Rishel. In addition, they continued their presence at the Urbana Farmer's Market.
- The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation met. The new officers are Dan Noel – President, Joe Lamb – VP, Bob Espeseth – Secretary, and Meredith Mills – Treasurer. The main focus continues to be on fundraising for the trail and the waterfall. A new appeal letter is in the works and should be sent out this month.
- Compensation committee meetings, Risk Management meetings, Project meetings, and Budget meetings all continued this month.
- There will be a need for executive session.

### **Deputy Director/Grants (Mary Ellen Wuellner)**

- We are busy gearing up for Saturday, Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>'s River to Rail Ride! Final business sponsors are: Champaign Cycle (\$1,000), Durst Cycle & Fitness (\$100), Cycles Plus – Danville (\$250), Kickapoo Landing (\$250), Taylor Studios (\$50), Carle Foundation (\$500), Prospect Bank (\$500), Common Ground Food Co-op (\$100), and Casey's General Store (\$100). The sponsorship total of \$2,850 will help to offset event expenses including snacks for riders, t-shirts, breakfast for riders and volunteers, band expenses, and promotional and safety signage. *Acoustic Mayhem*, a local folk group, will play during breakfast from 7:30 to 9:30 am, and *Waterfowl* (folk/rock) will play from 12:45 to 2:00 pm when riders return to the Middle Fork Activity Center. To date, 53 riders have pre-registered, and we anticipate at least that many more to register on the day of the event.
- The Champaign Cycle Used Bike Sale was held on September 6 as a benefit for the Kickapoo Rail Trail. Nearly 100 bicycles were either donated or consigned. About 75 bicycles were sold netting a total of approximately \$3,700 for the rail trail project. A huge thank you goes to Peter Davis of Champaign Cycle and his staff for coordinating the event, and to Terry Rathgeber, Dan Noel, Lisa Sprinkle, and Doug Sanders for their assistance during the sale.
- Grants submitted during the last month include: 1) a request of \$3,314 to the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois for Discovery Room improvements at the Museum of the Grand Prairie, and 2) a \$20,000 proposal to New Belgium Foundation to assist with the Main Street bike lane that would take riders from the end of the rail-trail to Weaver Park. The latter grant is highly competitive, and with national foundation grants it often takes several tries to get funded. I am not overly optimistic about our chances this year but a second submission in 2015 may be more competitive as a result.
- The Friends Foundation has begun working with a UI group, Students Consulting for Nonprofit Organizations, in the areas of fundraising and marketing for the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden waterfall and pond restoration project. The group offered its assistance to the foundation and believes it might have ideas to supplement our current fundraising efforts.

### **Administration (John Baker)**

- Filed the 2013 audit with the State Comptroller, PDRMA and the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board (required in the District's 2011 bond issue). The Federal single audit is also completed and filed with the Federal Audit Clearinghouse.
- Drafted initial report on new and adjusted staffing requests for 2015.
- Provided employee salary scenarios towards achieving the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile market positions by 2018 to the Compensation Committee.
- Executed contracts with Hey Associates (Willow Pond Engineering study) and Jackson Construction (Middle Fork Showerhouse Roofing).
- Met with Andy Griswold and Jan to consider Paylocity's payroll and human resources applications.
- Met with John Katsinas, District health broker, and Jan towards costing of 2015 health care plans. Health Alliance, the District's current provider, will provide quotes after November 1 at the earliest.

- Betty and John continued working with Commerce Bank and Harris to finalize the back office procedures and upload of all transaction data.
- Draft Foundation Budget was prepared for review by the past and present FPDF treasurers. Foundation audit information was excerpted from the District audit and provided to the FPDF.

### **Human Resources (Jan Runion)**

- Posted openings for Planning Director, NR Technician, Museum Registrar and Museum Customer Service positions on Applitrack.
- Reviewed applications and resumes for Planning Director.
- Mike Daab hired Brad Nelson for the NR Technician position and Katie Riopelle hired Ellen Andrews for the Museum Customer Service position.
- Continued revisions of the 2015 Compensation Policy.
- Continue to revise job descriptions for consistency.

### **Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)**

- Fall-Winter Program Guide is now available.
- Sept/Oct Leaflet was mailed and is available in several locations throughout the District.
- Seven interpretive signs have been replaced at River Bend. New signs include: Sunset Lake; River of Plenty; Restoring the Forests of River Bend; Forests along the Sangamon; Feathered Friends; Prairie Past and Glaciers Make Gravel. These signs were paid for by a grant from the Champaign County Audubon Society.
- Final interpretive signs for the Odle Trail have been completed.

### **Construction (Bryan Stevens)**

- Finished hauling dirt from Sangamon River Forest Preserve to the golf course with 130+ loads.
- Power washed and sealed River Bend Shelter.
- Worked in the Museum Gallery on various projects.

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

- The Museum and Education Department held a dedication of the Old Homer Park interpretive sign on Sept 6, in conjunction with the Homer Historical Society, who co-sponsored it.
- Three new interpretive panels are in development for Homer Lake. These are funded by a grant from the Champaign County Audubon Society.
- Several temporary interpretive signs have been placed in the Discovery Garden to coordinate with this year's Gardening Exhibit in the Museum of the Grand Prairie (MGP).
- We had a successful Museum and Education Department Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon at Homer Lake Forest Preserve; 13 volunteers and their families attended. A short program was presented by Susan Voskuil called "Then and Now" Gardening.
- Two schools are participating in programs funded by our Education Fund this fall. Funds pay for field trips to the Exploring Your Prairie program at Lake of the Woods (including bussing), as well as a coordinating program in the schools in the spring.

- Stacey Clementz attended the Association of Nature Center Administrators (ANCA) conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan.
- Chelsey Walsh attended the week-long Certified Interpretive Guide workshop at the Cincinnati Nature Center. This certification is provided by the National Association for Interpretation.
- MGP staff Valerie Hall, Katie Riopelle, Susan Voskuil and Barb Garvey participated in the field review of Illinois Association of Museums nominations for awards in the *Exhibits* category.
- Pam Leiter, Stacey Clementz, Barb Garvey and Mary Ellen Wuellner visited the Tyner-Fuller Nature Center and the Ryerson Woods Welcome Center to gather information about LEED certified nature centers in the area.
- We thank Stephanie Middendorf for her time as a CSRA for the museum; Ellen Andrews, previously a seasonal worker, was hired to replace her. We thank Cathy Barnard for her times as the Naturalist/Garden Educator. Her position will be filled early next year.

#### **Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Dave Torrens and Dave Huber)**

- Golf maintenance staff aerified greens. The greens are healing nicely with 80% to 90% recovery. The new aerifier worked without problems.
- Dave Torrens met with a contractor to obtain an estimate to repair the proshop and snack bar roofs using a spray-on system.
- Golf staff assisted the National Golf Foundation representatives with their initial visit to the golf course.
- FootGolf is doing well; the year to date numbers are: 269 plays totaling \$1,958.
- Presented to the Visit Champaign County sports council about FootGolf on Wednesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>.

#### **Natural Resources (Mike Daab)**

- Mike Daab attended a Drain Tile Mapping for Conservation at the Morton Arboretum on August 15.
- All NR staff will attend the Grasslands Restoration Network meeting at The Nature Conservancy's Nachusa Grasslands in September.
- We are in full seed collection mode, as we work to secure seed for restoration projects at Homer Lake and the Kickapoo Rail Trail.
- Mike Daab and Kate Smith participated in a mussel survey at Sangamon River Forest Preserve. The site was originally surveyed three years ago, and this year the discovery of a Fawnsfoot bumped the total number of different species found at the site to 15. The survey was led by Steve Buck from the University of Illinois and sponsored by the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy.

#### **Lake of the Woods, River Bend, Sangamon River and Botanical Gardens Operations (Doug Sanders & Larry Beckett)**

- The Enabling Garden water feature project is nearly complete with additional Class X gravel and landscaping installed. The remaining landscaping should be completed in early October when the remaining plant material arrives. (see attached photos)

- The boat rental season ended on Labor Day weekend. We exceeded our projected goal of \$5,669 by \$1,187.
- Along with the key boxes that were installed at all of the rental facilities, address signage has been posted at Lake of the Woods Pavilion, Elk's Lake Pavilion, and Izaak Walton Cabin.
- In preparation for the large artifacts building renovation next year, the transfer of supplies, materials, tools, and equipment is nearly complete from the Lean-To greenhouse and shop. The majority of these items were taken to the SRFP shed and barn.
- Scrap metal collected over the past year was hauled to Advantage Recycling in Urbana. In exchange for 6,080 pounds we received \$608.

### **Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)**

- Brian Taylor participated in the tour of the Rishel property that Dan gave to the CAC.
- Our seasonal staff has returned to school, but two are still working on weekends.

### **Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)**

- Lincoln's Challenge Academy has started their fall class of volunteer work at the Middle Fork. Some duties scheduled include help with invasive removal and re-graveling of campsites.
- The Willow Pond engineering study has started at the preserve.
- The superintendent's residence addition is still in progress and should be finished by the end of the month.

### **Volunteers (Pat Simpson)**

- Pat attended the Education Department's Volunteer Reception on Aug. 15 and highlighted upcoming events for which we need volunteers, including the Prairie Stories event on Sept. 13 and the River to Rail Ride on Sept. 20.
- Pat attended the Orientation Pizza Party for the East Central Illinois Master Naturalist Program.
- Pam Leiter and Pat met with Manuel Colon, Recruitment Coordinator, Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, U of I, on Aug. 26<sup>th</sup> to further discuss collaboration with this department. Most importantly, we received information on how to initiate a process of securing interns through their course credit internship program.
- Pat attended the Sierra Club fundraiser for the Kickapoo Rail Trail on Aug. 28 and, again, sought volunteers for the River to Rail Ride.
- Throughout the month, and working often with Mary Ellen Wuellner, Pat has contacted major cycling clubs in Champaign County, U of I student natural resource and sustainability clubs, the Master Naturalist Program, and donors to the Kickapoo Trail to secure volunteers for the River to Rail Ride. Thus far, about 15 volunteers have been secured, including a group from a U of I service fraternity.
- Pat met with Diane Wilhite, the new Coordinator for the East Central Illinois Master Naturalist Program (ECIMN), on Aug. 28. The object of the discussion was to obtain more detailed and specific information from ECIMN with regard to the types of volunteer activities Master Naturalist engage in within CCFPD preserves. A new reporting form was designed and will be implemented in the next quarter.

- Thanks to the work of Mary Beck and Lisa Sprinkle, most volunteer forms are now online and can be submitted electronically.

**Special Projects (Tom Pike)**

- Filing professional engineers and staff inspection forms on dams, road bridges and walk bridges in the district.
- Helping district staff on estimates for proposed purchases on their 2015 budget.
- Working on updating projects on the facilities inventory.
- Working on creating a 10-year capital equipment schedule.