

September 10, 2015

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Commissioners
From: Lisa Sprinkle, Marketing Coordinator
Re: September Staff Report

Executive Director (Dan Olson)

- We have set September 28 as a preliminary date (and October 6 as a fall back date) for the artist to deliver the Public Art League piece into the Garden. Installation should only take one day. The Foundation is discussing having a garden event in the spring centered around the piece and to help highlight fundraising for the Botanical Garden Pond.
- There were several speaking and event engagements this month. I spoke to C-U Sunrise Rotary and the Mahomet Rotary about the Kickapoo Rail Trail. We took the Kickapoo Rail Trail message again this year to the St. Joseph festival thanks to several Foundation, CAC and Board members.
- I have spent quite a bit of time working and meeting with staff on budget items including another look at the vehicle drawdown that began three years ago, capital projects, operating costs, HQ training budget line items, and an evaluation of technology needs.
- I want to thank Jan and Mary for organizing this year's staff appreciation picnic and Joe Hopper for being our resident chef. There were games (some supplied by staff) and a very competitive pedal boat race. I enjoyed seeing staff together despite this being a very busy time of the year.
- The Golf Compensation study is nearing completion. We have had good discussion with the Hay group. A recommendation for all employee compensation is currently being examined by the Compensation Committee. We will have a full recommendation to the board in the annual budget process.
- This year I requested that the Freedom Fest Committee have two additional monthly meetings after Freedom Fest to further evaluate revenues, committee volunteers, and organization for the following year. These meetings have proven to be worth the effort. We have recruited another new member to the Committee as well as discussed other important issues.
- We are working District-wide to become compliant with the new Chip and Sign credit card regulations that were recently put forth via Executive Order. Only one point of sale location is left to upgrade.
- Staff has submitted four nominations to our internal IPRA/IAPD Community Service Award Committee. This year two of them are joint nominations with other agencies or foundations.

Deputy Director/Grants (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

- Three new grant applications were submitted over the last month: 1) \$14,000 to Lumpkin Family Foundation for the Pt. Pleasant wetland conservation study, 2) \$1,610 to the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois for the accessible walkways at the proposed Rotary Hill mini-playscape, and 3) \$500 to \$2,500 to PDRMA for retrofitting the two emergency exit doors on the Museum of the Grand Prairie. Notification on all three grants is expected within 30 to 60 days, and projects 2 and 3 would require additional District funds to complete.
- Planning is in high gear for the September 19 River to Rail Ride. Event sponsors this year include: Carle, Champaign County Bikes, Champaign Cycle, Cycles Plus, Fuhrmann

Engineering, Prairie Cycle Club, Sleepy Creek Vineyards, Central Illinois Produce, Casey's General Store, Durst Cycle and Fitness, Common Ground Food Co-op, Taylor Studios, Prospect Bank, Great Harvest Bread Co., and Kickapoo Landing.

Administration (John Baker)

- Received the estimated 2015 Equalized Assessed Valuation from the Champaign County Assessment Office. The EAV estimate is provided annually to local governments and serves as the basis for tax levy calculations for the succeeding year. CCFPD's EAV is estimated at 3,625,184,894, an increase of 1.8% over 2014. New Construction totals 53,448,710 and at the current 8.82 limiting rate would generate \$47,142 in new property tax revenues. The property tax freeze proposed in SB318 will not affect these new property taxes but, if passed, will eliminate \$25,107 in the CPI increase on the tax-capped EAV. In 2017 the impact of the SB318 freeze would be \$89,376 for a 2% CPI.
- Reviewed SB 318 and confirmed with IAPD's Jason Anselment that the District's:
 - Debt Service Extension Base (DSEB) for bonding is not affected by SB318. Proposed PTELL legislation has not affected the District's bonding authority. At present our DSEB will increase annually by the CPI.
 - Property taxes on existing EAV properties will be frozen at 2015 levels for 2016 and 2017. In effect the legislation will set the CPI rate at zero.
 - Property taxes on New Construction will generate new revenues. As the legislation was originally proposed and as it stands at present, the CPI freeze does not affect how this new EAV values are calculated. These additional taxes are based on the existing limiting rate and the New Construction EAV estimate just received.
- Researched the specific legality of staff-initiated transfers from the corporate to the golf fund to cover shortfalls in the latter fund:
 - The Illinois Governmental Account Audit Act (50 ILCS 310) requires local governments (including forest preserve districts) that appropriate more than \$5000 each year to undergo an annual audit by a license public accountant. Auditing provisions in this statute are specific, including the requirement that "The audit report shall contain statements that conform with generally accepted accounting principles" which are established nationally by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB).
 - GASB Statement 31 addresses "internal investment pools" and requires an overdrawn fund to report its position in the investment pool as a balance sheet liability, not as negative cash. This also means that another fund in the same investment pool must report a balance sheet receivable to offset the liability. Essentially one fund in the pool has loaned another fund in the pool money to cover the deficit. This is the practice that District staff have followed in making these transfers to address golf fund shortfalls.
 - For the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, the Illinois Funds acts as the internal investment pool with each fund having a share of the total account balance. The 2014 audit (Note 4) included two separate inter fund transfers, \$120,000 to purchase golf carts in 2010 and \$69,299 inter fund borrowing to cover the cumulative golf overage from 2014. The former transfer was planned, presented and approved by the District Board of Commissioners, while the latter was necessitated by audit requirements established in Illinois statute.
 - Staff intends to propose language in the financial policy to address these transfers.
- Applied at the Farm Services Agency to add 26 acres at Middle Fork to the District Farm in exchange for withdrawing 27.46 acres contiguous to and including a portion of the Point Pleasant Wetland. The new acreage will be restored and proposed for inclusion in the Conservation Reserve Program. We are also investigating adding this tract and other existing

CRP acres to the new pollinator program. Reviewed the current farm contract and discussed potential changes with Matt Deering. The recommended option for the 2016 farm is to amend the current contract to reflect the acreage exchange.

- Discussed potential contract changes with the current tenant farmer for the District. He is agreeable to the changes. The new acreage will need preparation by early November for farming next year, making this dependent on Farm Services Agency approval of the including the new tract in the sodbuster program prior to October 31.
- In process of reviewing District compliance with new credit card mandates and the need for improved software applications, including online facility rentals and program registrations.
- Met with Bobbie Herakovich regarding treasurer responsibilities and staff support for that role.
- Initiated budget discussions with the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation to ascertain any new programs, events, or campaigns the Foundation plans to undertake in 2016. Staff will draft a 2016 budget for Foundation review at its October meeting with finalization in either November or December.
- Gathered and report information on current District telephone usage and proposed new features to MediaCom for their programming of a new PRI telephone circuit that will be implemented in conjunction with the upgraded internet bandwidth coming this fall.
- Upgraded the cash handling procedure and deposit template for Middle Fork camping and camp store revenues, including reconciliation of deposits as they are received by Administration.
- Met or consulted with several department heads, Dan, or District committees on proposed budget line items for 2016, including 2015 compensation package; requests for new, augmented or reclassified staff positions, capital equipment and technology needs and capital projects.
- Met with Dan, Jan and Amanda Wethington of the Hay group regarding the golf study.

Human Resources (Jan Runion)

- Held a “meet and greet” for new employees and promoted employees: Tammy Bruehl, Michael Dale, Jim Blythe, Austin Haskett.
- Met with Unemployment Consultants regarding their services.
- Met with Red Cross regarding their services and a potential blood drive held at the District for the Mahomet community.
- Barham Benefit Group met with the Compensation Committee to discuss different plans and costs for healthcare benefits.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- The trailhead signs for Buffalo Trace have been printed and the frames are on order. These signs were paid for by the Second Wind Running Club and will be installed this fall.
- Our graphic designer, Adrienne Kizer, left her position at the end of August for a full-time job at the University of Illinois. She is still helping us on several projects as we look for a replacement.

Natural Resources (Mike Daab)

- On September 5th, the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy hosted a mussel survey at Lake of the Woods. Two additional species were recorded for the LOW location.
- We have entered the prime seed collection season for our restoration projects, and much time has been spent in the field collecting over the past month.

Planning and Construction Department (Jon Hasselbring and Mike Fry)

- The Construction Crew completed the next phase of ADA accessible concrete walks in the Botanical Gardens. Many thanks to LOW Operations for their contributions during concrete pouring, and afterwards with the installation of boulders and mulch.
- The Construction Crew and Homer Lake Operations began installation of ADA accessible parking spaces and walkways at Homer Lake's Salt Fork Center. (see attached photo)
- Jon Hasselbring and Mike Daab attended a two-day online instructor-led training course titled, "ArcGIS I: Introduction to GIS", provided by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). The course introduced key functions used in ArcMAP, the industry's leading GIS software. Course concepts focused on creating GIS maps, locating and analyzing existing geographical data, performing spatial analysis, and sharing maps with the public.



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

- Lake of the Woods Golf Course has retained its designation as a "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary" through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, an Audubon International program. Dave Torrens, Golf Course Superintendent, led the effort to maintain sanctuary status on this course. Lake of the Woods Golf Course was designated as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in 2004 and is one of 911 courses in the world to currently be designated as such. (See attached letters).

Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)

- Pam Leiter and Pat Simpson presented CCFPD volunteer opportunities at the Master Naturalist welcome dinner.
- Pam Leiter is working with two graduate students this semester in the Urban & Regional Planning Department at UIUC to evaluate cultural diversity among CCFPD users, identify trends in Champaign County, and develop a training for M&Ed Department staff. This contact was made through the CU Immigration Forum.
- The HLIC set an all-time record for August visitation and donations at the door. This is likely due in large part to the extensive marketing via Homer Hometown Proud and the excellent weather all month.
- Homer Lake bluebird boxes fledged 121 bluebirds this year. Many thanks to Betty & Richard Reinhold for this, and their many years of monitoring the nest boxes!
- The Museum of the Grand Prairie's Museum Mondays program was presented with an Award of Excellence from the Illinois Association of Museums.
- The Grand Prairie Story exhibit was presented with an Award of Merit from the Illinois Association of Museums.
- We said farewell to Garden Program Specialist, Cara Grabowski who took a full-time position with the USDA in Soil Science.
- We welcome Tammy Abramson as a new Customer Service Retail Specialist at the Museum of the Grand Prairie. The Department also welcomes Olivia Webb and David Evans as Seasonal Naturalists.
- We held our first Education Expo on September 3. The expo featured activities from each of our educators and was aimed at attracting new homeschool families, scout groups, church groups and other non-traditional educational groups.
- The Museum of the Grand Prairie hosted a visit from the Historical Administration MA Program at Eastern Illinois University. Eighteen students and four professors met and talked

to all professional staff. Individual students are planning projects with the museum in the future.

- Many thanks to Construction for our new outdoor chalkboard at the outdoor classroom .

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

- On August 19, 2015, IDNR contracted Little Grassy Fish Hatchery of Makanda, IL to stock the main lake at LOW and Sunset Lake at River Bend with approximately 3,000 channel catfish. LOW received approximately 500 fish and River Bend received 2,500.
- The concrete work to the entrance of the Botanical Garden was completed in August (see attached photo). In the coming year additional landscaping will enhance the area as plant materials become available.
- Closing for the year on September 7, staff had a successful rental boat season. They exceeded the projected annual revenue by \$807.



Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)

- Met with Garret from PDRMA on Tuesday, August 11.
- Installed gutter guard on the maintenance building.
- Applied coldpatch to the roads.

Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)

- We had another successful holiday weekend with the Labor Day Weekend. Just a few cancellations were made for the weekend due to the heat, but otherwise was a busy holiday.
- Work continues with the Lincoln's Challenge Academy volunteer corps. The cadets continue to help with various projects each week inside the preserve. For the last few weeks we have been focusing on adding more gravel to campsites.
- More research continues with FY 2016 equipment and project needs.

Volunteers (Pat Simpson)

- We trained two new volunteers on data entry and research tasks to be carried out at Headquarters. Two other volunteers were recruited to help maintain grounds at Lake of the Woods on an ongoing basis.
- An Eagle Scout project was completed. Several trees were planted at the Lake of the Woods Golf Course as a result of this project. Dave Torrens helped to supervise a group of Boy Scouts and parents on the day of the planting.
- Another Eagle Scout project to improve trail markings on the trails at Buffalo Trace is in the final planning stations. Jonathan Hasselbring was especially helpful in moving this project along, meeting several times onsite with the Eagle Scout hopeful and the Volunteer Coordinator to map out the route of the trail and to specify preferred sites and types of signage.
- I attended the Illinois Nature Conservancy Volunteer Steward Network meeting at Sugar Grove Nature Area on Aug. 25.

- I met a group of volunteers from Farm Credit of Illinois to introduce them to steward work in the District. Following this meeting, the group completed clean-ups at Lake of the Woods and Sangamon River respectively.
- I joined Natural Playscape stewards for a clean-up of the area. Weeds were mulched, garbage removed, and new pea gravel spread out in the boulder area. A new steward was recruited by Eileen Borgia, CAC member, to work exclusively on the developing Monarch Waystation at the site.
- I attended the Master Naturalist Board Meeting on Aug. 17.
- Volunteer forms were updated and revised to accommodate being put online and allowing for an electronic signature.