

November 6, 2017

MEMORANDUM

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

Interim Director/Grants (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

- Lisa and I spoke to a small but enthusiastic group from the Champaign Exchange Club on October 23. We provided an overview of the district and answered questions related to our history, hunting and fishing regulations, the Kickapoo Rail Trail, and characteristics of the preserves.
- We received a notice from the Sangamon Valley Public Water District that they have tested and will continue to test their wells to ensure that the water supplied to Mahomet customers remains free of methane gas. This resulted from concerns related to the Peoples Gas leak discovered at Manlove Field, north of Mahomet, leading to the contamination of several private wells near the natural gas field.
- Jon and I met with a representative from the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois to discuss our recent \$5,000 grant request for Middle Fork's Dark Sky Park project. This means we have cleared the first step in the two-step approval process. An award decision will be forthcoming at the end of November.

Administration (John Baker)

- Selected Tammy Abramson as the new financial assistant from a pool of 21 applicants. Tammy will begin work with the District on November 13. Tammy has extensive private sector experience in financial management, is frequent visitor to and lover of the forest preserves!
- Met multiple times with Fran Bell and the Compensation Committee toward preparing the proposed 2018 compensation package and policy.
- Met multiple times with Mary Ellen Wuellner, Jon Hasselbring, and Fran Bell toward balancing the 2018 operating budget, including drafting a list of potential reductions and providing an excel tool for reviewing various scenarios for bringing the operating budget into balance.
- Met twice with Golf management and Mary Ellen regarding 2018 golf fees and how to increase golf rounds and revenues.
- Prepared and submitted the "Black Box" advertisement for the District's tax levy. Drafted the annual tentative appropriations ordinance and mandated public notice documents and requirement.
- Received \$7,190 in Conservation Restoration Program payments from the Farm Services Agency. Because the 2008 Farm Bill began phasing out CRP payments to government entities, this the last CRP payment the District will receive.
- The Middle Fork farm produced 3,939 bushels of soybeans this year for revenue of \$36,885 and 3,839 bushels of corn for \$11,482. The farm should net about \$29,000 this year on its operations.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- Social media update: on Facebook CCFPD has 1,926 (+12) followers; Lake of the Woods Golf Course has 885 (+13); Kickapoo Rail Trail has 2,283 (+16); Museum of the Grand Prairie has 1,187 (+23). Homer Lake Interpretive Center 190 likes (+15). CCFPD has 405 (+7) Instagram followers, Museum of the Grand Prairie has 133(+13) followers. Kickapoo Rail Trail has 98 (+1) followers and CCFPD has 469 (+1) followers on Twitter.
- Lisa attended the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting on Friday, October 27 at the Hilton Garden Inn.
- Lisa is developing a timeline and digital promotional materials for our Giving Tuesday campaign. This year we will focus on raising unrestricted funds for the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation. Giving Tuesday is November 28.

Planning and Construction Department (Jon Hasselbring and Mike Fry)

- The Construction Department is underway with the removal and replacement of Middle Fork's Activity Center ramp. This project is part of the District's Accessibility Transition Plan and will bring the Activity Center entrance into compliance with applicable codes. An accessible parking space is also being added as part of this project.
- The Golf Course residence was remodeled over the last month. The Construction Crew removed rotten flooring in the laundry room, and installed a new door, floor tile, drywall, and trim. Ceilings, walls, and trim boards were repainted throughout the entire residence. GFCI receptacles were installed in the kitchen and bathroom. The installation of new carpet was coordinated with a flooring contractor. Windows have been ordered and will be replaced upon arrival.



Natural Resources (Mike Daab)

- Natural Resources staff planted 15 trees of various species at Lake of the Woods. The trees were donated by the Mahomet Rotary Club in honor of their 30 years of serving the community. Fifteen additional trees were donated to the Mahomet Parks and Recreation Department for their sites. Mike Daab led the tree ordering and coordination of the plantings, with assistance in siting from Mike Dale and planting from the NR crew.
- We hosted volunteer seed collection events at Sangamon River Forest Preserve and Buffalo Trace at Lake of the Woods in October. We thank all the volunteers who came out and contributed their time to help us reach our goals for the year.
- Michael Daab spoke to the Twin Cities Garden Club about invasive plants in east central Illinois on October 17th.
- Michael Daab led the annual talk "Natural Areas of East Central Illinois" for the graduating class of Master Naturalists on October 31st.
- Michael Daab met with staff from the Village of Mahomet, Mahomet Parks and Recreation, and Pheasants Forever, as well as volunteers, in order to discuss ecological restoration efforts in the Mahomet Greenway.

- Brad Nelson, Austin Hasket, and Emily Williams have been working with the Lake of the Woods Operations crew to remove dead and dying trees throughout Lake of the Woods over the past month.

Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Dave Torrens and Chris Edmondson)

- October play was down compared to previous 2 years and this was mainly due to weather. We had 2016 players in October, compared to 2300 in 2015 and 2016. We had 20 of 31 days that were considered “playable”. The majority of October was cool and very wet.
- We sent out postcards to all customers who have over \$15 in Golf Shop Credits, reminding them to spend their credit by December 20, 2017. We also promoted the upcoming 2018 Season Pass Sale and Simulator League on the postcard.
- We have continued to reduce inventory via “Yellow Tag” sale and also by returning some merchandise for credit to certain vendors that allow this process.
- The Golf Simulators have been set-up for the winter season in the Clubhouse. We purchased new screens, hitting mats and light tracks for improved performance and aesthetics. The Simulators officially opened for play on November 1st.
- David Sebestik recorded another radio commercial to promote our Golf Simulator League, which will begin play the week of November 27th.
- We held our first “Hubie Cup” Tournament the weekend of October 6-8. This event, named in honor of retired Golf Professional Dave Huber, featured the top 24 players from the 2017 golf season. All customers received points based on events they played in throughout the season and the 24 highest point totals qualified for the tournament. We had a steak dinner on Friday night and selected teams, which were captained by David Sebestik and Nick Berger. The two teams of 12 players then went head to head on Saturday and Sunday for the Hubie Cup. The response was extremely positive and patrons are already asking how they can qualify next year.
- David Sebestik and I attended the Illinois PGA Section Awards Dinner at Medinah Country Club. Dave Huber was honored with the Bill Heald Career Achievement Award at this event.
- Outings and Events: October 6-8, Hubie Cup – 24 players; October 20, Mahomet Lions Club – 88 players; October 21 – 22 ,2-Person Better Ball Tournament – 96 players.
- The following testimonial was received after the Lions Club Golf Outing. They had 30 players last year and increased to 88 this year..... *“The Mahomet Lions Club recently hosted a fund-raising golf outing at the Lake of the Woods golf course in October 2017. Since this was my first time organizing a golf outing, I was nervous about the details of the outing. However, the staff at Lake of the Woods provided us with many recommendations and timely assistance in planning and then carrying out the event. I would characterize both Dave Sebestik and Chris Edmondson as ‘responsive’ and ‘accommodating’ to our needs. Actually, the entire golf course staff was sincerely helpful. All the golf carts were clean and ready; the course was in beautiful shape. We fielded many compliments on our golf outing and we raised \$5,000 for Mahomet-area charities! We are planning to hold our Club’s golf outing at Lake of the Woods next year, for sure.”* —Andy Sievers/Mahomet Lions Club

Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)

- Pat Cain began a new *Introduction to Fossils* program for a local Wolf Scouts Pack by using the Grand Prairie Story exhibit and hands-on activities. It was well received.
- Mark Hanson and Pat Cain participated with example collections at the Archives Bazaar at the Urbana Free Library on November 4, 2017. This was an expo for institutions in the area that hold archival collections and was part of the Folk and Roots Festival.
- Jennifer Wick completed the week-long Certified Interpretive Guide training through the National Association for Interpretation. She also completed the Master Naturalist training.
- Pam Leiter is taking an online Eppley Course: *Instructor Training Certificate Program for Park and Public Lands Professionals*.
- Stacey Clementz met with a doctoral student in education at U of I, to discuss how we can partner to research what and how sources (human, experiential, media) are deemed credible by children in the age range 6-13 in their construction of knowledge about socio-scientific topics (e.g. climate change, evolution, genetically-modified plants).
- Over the course of the last two years, Stacey assisted with the planning and implementation of the Midwest Environmental Education Conference, a multi-state endeavor. It was held in St. Charles Oct. 11-14. Pam Leiter provided graphic design services for the conference. CCFPD was listed as a sponsor in conference publications.
- Barb Garvey attended the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area Steering Committee meeting on October 24 in Danville, Illinois. Barb is volunteering to be part of the Continuing Education committee of the ALNHA. In addition Barb rejoined the Champaign County Lincoln Legacy Committee to promote Lincoln events here at home.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative

- Pam Leiter continues to lead the inter-agency Parks & Diversity working group meetings. Meeting every other month with UPD and CPD, we are focusing on Human Resources, shared resources, and brainstorming goals which include possible county wide event(s), inter-agency trainings, and sharing best practices, resources and challenges. Our next meeting is on December 19 at the Education Center.
- Pam attended a meeting hosted by the New American Welcome Center's Health and Well-Being working group. NAWC recently received a Gateways to Growth grant. We gave input on the most useful data our agencies would like to see from the grant, and brainstormed end products. From this meeting we learned multiple agencies in Champaign County are interested in cultural competency trainings for frontline staff.

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

- Tony Sparks received his CDL Class A driver's license. This classification includes trailer combination and air brakes.
- Cooperatively, staff have been working with the NR department in the removal of ash and other problematic trees at LOW. For this work we have utilized a 65' lift that enabled us to remove trees near power lines, trim up trees hanging over buildings, and clean out gutters on the facilities that could not be reached with a ladder.

- Staff are also in the process of preparing for the winter season. This includes closing of seasonal facilities, shutting down water amenities, transferring plants to the greenhouse, planting spring flower bulbs, and preparing equipment for the cold temperatures.
- Annual staff evaluations have been completed.

Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)

- We responded to reports of erosion and loose fence boards on the Kickapoo Rail Trail.
- We purchased a sickle bar mower for our Kubota tractor to mow along the edge of the Kickapoo Rail Trail. It has been working very well for this particular application compared to a rotary style mower that threw grass onto the trail which created more work and safety issues.
- I have been meeting with a variety of vendors to get prices on capital projects for the 2018 budget.
- We replaced lights at Walnut Hill shelter with high efficiency LED fixtures.

Kickapoo Rail Trail (All)

- Jon met with Village of Ogden Mayor Gabe Clementz, Trustee Sonja Vickers, and several Ogden business owners on Tuesday, October 31 to discuss development plans for Phase 2 of the KRT.
- A Kickapoo Rail Trail open house meeting was held at the St. Joseph Village Hall on Wednesday, November 8 from 6 – 7:30pm. Staff displayed concept images for wayfinding signs and amenities, as well as maps for Phase 2 proposed development.
- Mary Ellen has been meeting with Vermilion County stakeholders interested in reviving fundraising efforts for the KRT in that county now that we have opened a section of trail here. Several new individuals have joined VC's fundraising team and are now reaching out to prospective donors.
- Although Middle Fork River bridge funds have still not been released by IDNR, Ken Konsis with the Vermilion County Conservation District is considering seeking bids for a two-mile section of trail adjacent to the bridge. Pressure from IDOT to allocate 2010 ITEP funds played a role in this decision.

Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)

- Eastern Illini has started the Phase II Electrical Infrastructure project. The project should be wrapped up the second week of November.
- Staff has completed winter procedures such as water line blowout, shower house shutdown, and water fountain removal.
- Staff has started to mark ash trees throughout the preserve for removal this winter. These trees were seen dying off this summer and fall, and were selected for removal due to alleviate potential hazards.

Volunteers (Kristin Tetzlaff)

- This past September we hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Event at Salt Fork Center at Homer Lake. The event was farm themed; highlighting that CCFPD couldn't have picked better volunteers. The evening held time for mingling, a themed meal, raffles, and talks by our Planning Director, Jon Hasselbring, and Interim Executive Director, Mary Ellen Wuellner. The talks focused on the KRT and the Dark Skies Initiative. There were many compliments received about the event and lessons learned to improve for next year.



- We also participated in U of I's annual I-Help day on September 30 where student groups assisted with seed collection and helped with some gardening. In total, we saw 40 volunteers through that program.
- October was quiet as I had to work a reduced schedule for medical reasons, but of the thirteen volunteers who logged hours into Volgistics for the month they still managed to log over 117 hours!