

**KENDALL COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES**

AUGUST 10, 2016

I. Call to Order

President Wehrli called the meeting to order at 5:58 pm in the Kendall County Board Room.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Davidson, Gilmour, Gryder, Prochaska, Purcell, and Wehrli all were present.

III. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Gryder made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Prochaska. All, aye. Opposed, none. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Citizens to be Heard

No public comments were offered by those present at the meeting.

V. Director's Report

Director Guritz reported that a draft ordinance will be presented for discussion proposing a referendum question to increase the District's PTELL limiting rate and tax revenue extension. This is the best approach for increasing District revenues offset by a portion of the savings resulting from the 2017 series refunding bonds.

The Maramech Forest Preserve floristic quality inventory is in process, with a new species documented, and invasive species threats encountered. The scope of restoration work scheduled for Tucker-Millington Fen has been completed with the contractor. Additional funds will be scheduled in the upcoming year to continue efforts in both nature preserve areas.

The Hoover Nature Play Space project is underway. All service line work has been completed. Efforts are now focused on finding a concrete contractor to build the mud kitchen pad and pour footings for the butterfly garden overlook play house, with hopes that the work will be completed by the end of October.

Forest Foundation Fall Fest planning is underway, with event sponsorship exceeding last year's event.

KC Highway Department has requested District consideration for mitigating and planting 760 trees on District property. Discussion is underway on possible locations, with a major replanting effort considered for Fox River Bluffs under consideration.

Kendall County Highway will need a temporary construction easement at Hoover Forest Preserve for work to be performed on the Fox River Drive culvert. Additional soil erosion and stream water quality protection will be scheduled to address conservation of conservative species known to occur in the stream.

Work to fully integrate RecPro to handle all District program registrations has been completed. The online module will be considered for purchase in the upcoming budget to allow for online registrations.

The District has completed hiring of two new individuals for assisting with grounds maintenance and rental event support at Ellis and Meadowhawk Lodge.

VI. Review of a Draft Ordinance Authorizing Placement of a Binding Referendum Question on the November 8, 2016 General Election Ballot to Increase the PTELL Limiting Rate and Tax Levy for the District's Operating Fund to Support District Capital Projects

Director Guritz reported that the final draft of the ordinance was reviewed by the State's Attorney's Office, bond counsel and Speer Financial Inc. to confirm limiting rates and extension figures presented in the Ordinance.

Director Guritz provided an overview of direction received from the Finance Committee that resulted in the drafting of the ordinance for the purpose of generating additional tax funding offset by the projected tax savings that will be realized with the 2017 refunding bonds.

The 2017 bond refunding savings is projected at \$1,816,000 translating to a \$22.95 savings to Kendall County taxpayers with a fair market home value of \$100,000, with the savings evenly applied between 2018 and 2024.

The proposed increase to the District's General Fund limiting rate would result in an additional levy by extension equating to \$125,000 translating to a \$0.95 increase in taxes for Kendall County taxpayers with a fair market home value of \$100,000.

The District's referendum bond debt service is scheduled to retire in 10 years' time, and when retired, will result in a significant increase in taxpayer savings.

Director Guritz stated that if the question is to appear on the November ballot, approval of the ordinance is needed at the August 16, 2016 Commission meeting.

Director Guritz reported previous refunding efforts in 2015 and 2016 have resulted in an additional \$1.8 million in taxpayer savings.

The Committee of the Whole discussed the proposed ordinance.

President Wehrli stated that the proposed ordinance will let the taxpayers decide whether or not to extend the additional funding to the District.

Commissioner Purcell stated that the increase in the levy would be permanent. Director Guritz stated that after the first year, the District's general fund limiting rate would be determined by formula, but the step increase would be calculated into future levy calculations. Director Guritz stated that in some years, limiting rate increases, but the limiting rate for the upcoming year is scheduled to decrease. Commissioner Purcell stated that while the limiting rate would decrease, the total tax levy is scheduled to increase.

Commissioner Purcell asked whether the Finance Committee had discussed posing a question to lower the District's limiting rate to reduce tax revenues.

President Wehrli stated that this was not under consideration, and questioned whether this had been considered by Kendall County, citing that the District is the only agency to reduce taxpayer obligations twice in the past two years.

President Wehrli stated that he wants to ask the taxpayers to make the decision on whether or not the District should receive a portion of the savings presented with the next refunding opportunity.

Commissioner Gilmour stated that the District will need to work to educate the public on the measure, stating that most taxpayers will not understand what is being proposed, and that the District is only looking to increase their taxes, and that the District will have a very difficult time selling this to the public.

President Wehrli stated that we would be giving the back the savings to the taxpayers, and asking for a little bit of it back with the referendum question.

President Wehrli stated that if there is confusion, the question would fail, and that would be the end of it.

Director Guritz stated that typically, agencies have more time to explain their need and position. In this instance, time is short, but the referendum question is phrased to educate the voters about the need and how funding would be expended. Just having the question posed will help to educate Kendall County residents about the purpose of the District, with media coverage helping to explain the need and savings offset. Director Guritz added that with the District's limited budget and outreach tools, voter education will be limited.

Director Guritz stated that whether or not the referendum question passes, it sends a message to the taxpayers that the District has funding needs to further support the mission, and helps set a level of expectation for what the District can, and cannot accomplish, within current funding limits.

Commissioner Gilmour stated that she disagreed that the voters will understand what they are considering, and why it is needed. Director Guritz stated that if approved, outreach would be supported by The Conservation Foundation, with the District preparing and disseminating fact sheets to increase voter knowledge.

Commissioner Prochaska stated that as the ordinance is written, if the referendum passed, the District would be increasing its tax levy for that year.

Director Guritz confirmed that this would be the case, but at any time, Commission could consider abatement of a portion of the levy, which is the best approach for reducing taxes without impacting the District's limiting rate year to year. Once limiting rate is lowered, the District would be unable to increase the rate by law without an additional referendum.

Commissioner Purcell questioned the need for the additional funding. Director Guritz stated that this was discussed in the Finance Committee.

The District needs additional funding in order to support restoration projects in existing preserves, and to convert cropland cover to natural area. The District currently owns 750 acres in cropland production. Of the 750 acres in production, the District has sufficient funding to convert 150 acres with the remaining referendum bond proceeds. This leaves 600 acres of property remaining for conversion at a cost between \$5,000 to \$7,000 per acre, or \$3,000,000 minimum in deferred restoration costs. The proposed limiting rate increase would help to provide seed funding to continue efforts to restore the lands purchased by the referendum bonds. At the same time, farm lease agreements account for approximately 15% of the District's operating revenues, roughly \$160,000 that will be reduced as cropland areas are converted to natural areas. The additional funding that may be approved by the referendum question will allow the District to continue to make progress on converting the remaining agricultural areas to natural areas in fulfillment of both referendum and grant-funded acquisition mandates. Director Guritz also reported that as more lands come under management for natural areas with increased public access, District costs will continue to increase. Director Guritz cited the need for increased restoration activity in Maramech Forest Preserve, the District's highest quality natural area, as additional justification for Commission approval of the proposed ordinance. Without additional funding to address the increasing threats to preserve areas from non-native exotic species, the District will fail in its mission to conserve species found in Kendall County's natural areas.

The additional funding will also continue allow the District to put forward matching grant funds to secure outside funding.

Commissioner Purcell stated that while the District has made great progress, he personally feels that not enough progress has been made to justify the increase to the taxpayers.

Commissioner Gryder echoed this sentiment.

Director Guritz stated that Kendall County Forest Preserve District carries what is likely the lowest limiting rate of all forest preserve districts in the State of Illinois.

Commissioner Purcell stated that Kendall County has one of the highest collective tax rates for any county in the State of Illinois.

President Wehrli stated that the ordinance presented will allow the taxpayers to decide whether or not to support the ballot measure.

VII. Review of a Proposed Revision to Chapter 4 – Section IX (Field and Team Sports) of the District’s General Use Ordinance

Director Guritz presented a redline version of the proposed revision to Chapter 4-Section IX of the District’s General Use Ordinance as amended by the District’s Programming and Events Committee.

The Committee of the Whole provided direction to move the proposed changes to Commission for approval.

VIII. Review of Fees and Charges for the Proposed Ellis Equestrian Center Pony Club

Director Guritz presented the fees and charges for a proposed Pony Club program for the Ellis Equestrian Center.

The Committee of the Whole provided direction to move the proposed charges forward for Commission approval.

IX. Review of a Draft Bill of Sale for Purchase of a Lesson Horse for Ellis Equestrian Center

Director Guritz presented a draft purchase agreement for the new lesson horse “Candyman.”

The Committee of the Whole provided direction to move the proposed purchase forward for Commission approval.

X. Executive Session

None.

XI. Other Items of Business

None.

XII. Adjournment

Commissioner Gryder made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Prochaska. Aye, all. Opposed, none. Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David Guritz
Director, Kendall County Forest Preserve District