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Eileen Figel

MEMORANDUM

To: President Toni Preckwinkle and the Board of Commissioners
From: Eileen Figel, Interim General Superintendent
cc: Delio Calzolari, Director of Legislative and Governmental Affairs
Date: April 16, 2024

Re: **Agenda Item 24-0174, Proposed Resolution Recognizing and Adopting the Name Shishko Mbishke for the Preserves Known as Cherry Hill Woods Sloughs**

The Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC) is requesting that the Board of Commissioners vote in support of changing the name of “Cherry Hill Woods Sloughs” to “Shishko Mbishke” at the request of the local Native American community.

In 2016, the Forest Preserves of Cook County conducted a review of Forest Preserve location names and, along with the American Indian Center, The Field Museum, and the Illinois State Archaeology Service, determined that the site name “Laughing Sq**w Sloughs” should be retired, as it is a derogatory and sexist slur. After conversations with representatives of the American Indian Center and the Chicago American Indian Community Collaborative, it was decided that the location would be renamed “Muskrat Slough”. In 2018, the Board adopted the Forest Preserves’ Formal Naming Report, intentionally removing the name “Laughing Sq**w Sloughs”.

In 2022, despite the offensive name being removed from all FPCC materials, Google Maps still showed the preserve name as “Laughing Sq**w Sloughs.” After a request to rename the site in Google, the Google team informed FPCC that the name will only be changed if the renaming has been approved by the United States Board on Geographic Names’ Domestic Names Committee (BGN).

FPCC submitted formal paperwork to BGN in April of 2022 to rename the location, however BGN informed FPCC that requests to change offensive names must be submitted to the Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force (DGN) under the Department of the Interior. FPCC subsequently submitted the name change request to DGN.

In September of 2022, FPCC learned through a news article that DGN removed the offensive name and changed it to “Cherry Hill Woods Sloughs”. The name was recommended and approved by the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe-Mille Lacs Band. Illinois does not have any federally recognized tribes, therefore DGN worked with the Minnesota Tribe with historic ties to Illinois.

The DGN then disbanded, leading FPCC to resubmit a request to BGN in October of 2022 to change the name of the location to “Muskrat Slough” to honor our work with local Native American organizations: American Indian Center and the Chicago American Indian Community Collaborative.

In May of 2023, BGN responded that the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe-Mille Lacs Band submitted a counterproposal to FPCC’s request, instead proposing the name Zheshk Bitobig, translated as

Muskrat Slough in Boodewaadamiimowin (or Potawatomi). In June of 2023, FPCC gained consent from community partners to move forward with Zheshk Bitobig as the name of the preserve and then withdrew the proposal to rename the site to “Muskrat Slough”.

In subsequent discussions with Native American community partners and organizations, several spelling variations of the proposed name were considered. Shishko Mbishke (SHISK-ko BEESH-keh) was selected as the most regionally appropriate dialect. This name has written support from the aforementioned community partners, including the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation.

FPCC is recommending that the Board vote to approve the name change to Shishko Mbishke.