

**The Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Conservation & Policy Council**

Minutes for April 6, 2015 ▪ Sagawau Environment Learning Center, 12545 W. 11th Street, Lemont

Call to Order. Council chair Wendy Paulson called the meeting to order at 3 pm. The following council members and others attended:

Advisory Council Members

Wendy Paulson, chair
Commissioner Robert Steele
Dr. Sylvia Jenkins
Falona Joy
Laurel Ross
Linda Mastandrea
Mark Templeton
Michael De Santiago
Robert Castaneda
Terry Guen

Forest Preserve Staff

Amanda Grant
Anthony Tindall
Arnold Randall
Cathy Geraghty
Chip O’Leary
Chris Adas
Cynthia Moreno
Dennis White
Eileen Figel
Erik Varela
John McCabe
Lisa Lee
Lydia Uhler
Mary Pat Cross
Stephen Hughes
Troy Alim
Troy Showerman

Partners

Andrew Szwak (Openlands)
Benjamin Cox (FOTFP)
Emily Harris (Harris Strategies)
Ginny Hotaling (CBG)
Gregory Mueller (CBG)
Jane Balaban (Steward)
Justin Pepper (Bobolink Foundation)
Lenore Beyer-Clow (Openlands)
Richard Gamble (CZS)
Shelley Davis (FP Foundation)

Public Comments. There were no comments from the public.

Approval of minutes. A motion to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2015 meeting of the council was made by Laurel Ross and seconded by Mark Templeton; the minutes were approved by majority vote.

Presentation by the Nature Committee. Co-chair Jane Balaban explained that it is not enough to purchase and preserve the land; we must also repair the damage caused by encroaching development, suppression of fire, changes to water flow, and invasive species. Jane explained how, over the past 40 years, volunteers and staff have worked to restore and manage the land via controlled burns, removal of invasive plants and overgrowth, and collecting and spreading seeds. Jane stressed the importance of public involvement and support. Co-chair John McCabe discussed the current top priorities of the Nature Committee, including:

- Natural and Cultural Resource Management Plan
- Dedication of Illinois Nature Preserves
- Volunteer Engagement
- Conservation Corps

(Also see Attachment 1.) Council members asked the co-chairs to clarify how sites will be prioritized, how the work will be sequenced, and what levels of expenditure will be required to meet restoration goals. Michael DeSantiago warned that the need to “restore plants” may not resonate with urban communities located far from the forest preserves. The council agreed that it is important to tailor messages for target audiences.

Council members also offered the following guidance:

- Messaging should stress that, once these sites are destroyed, we cannot get them back.
- This is a unique time; students understand the value of the environment. This presents an opportunity to create ambassadors via community groups, schools, etc.
- We need to get more people to the preserves. Council members need more information on accessibility of FPCC sites and programs to help spread the word.
- Explore giving virtual tours to learning groups, seniors, or other target audiences.
- Connect with groups (churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.) that are engaging people.
- Address the fears people have about the forest preserves.
- Provide diverse mentors who look like the kids we want to reach.
- Partner with city-based organizations to create demonstration sites in the city—especially in areas which are not close to preserves.
- The Conservation Corps should explore ways to address barriers to employment related to disabilities.
- Collaborate with workforce institutions to make sure kids in urban communities know about career opportunities.

Presentation by the Leadership Committee. Co-chairs Lenore Beyer-Clow and Troy Alim discussed the top priorities for the Leadership Committee, including:

- Establishing a structure and template to document needs and create a baseline which quantifies resources currently being invested by the FPCC and partners, including in-kind investments from stewards and other volunteers.
- Aligning the FPCC budget process with this structure in order to track the implementation of the Next Century Conservation Plan over time.

Council members urged the committee to look beyond tax revenues and explore creative ways to leverage resources, generate new revenue, and build new partnerships with IDNR, federal agencies, and others. Arnold Randall indicated that the forest preserves are exploring a wide range of non-tax revenues including increased revenues from concessions and selling wood from ash trees and buckthorn. However, Arnold cautioned that these non-tax revenues will never represent a majority of the FPCC budget.

Council members asked questions and offered suggestions as follows:

- What percentage increase in revenues over the current baseline is needed to successfully implement the plan? Lenore reported that the committee does not yet know this, but is working on it.
- Other counties have passed referenda to fund conservation work; is this option being considered? Arnold Randall responded that this has not happened anytime recently in Cook County, but we are currently exploring all options.

- Has FPCC considered establishing a revenue-generating branch?
- Can FPCC connect to other Great Lakes conservation programs for broader exposure?
- A large increase in revenues and volunteers is needed, and this will require a culture change. However, we should not shy away from this challenge.
- Explore a new category of open space that would also benefit the City of Chicago and see if we can partner with the City to raise resources together. Even if these sites don't represent ecological priorities, they may be a priority for connecting more people to the preserves.
- Understand trends; look at what has worked in the past and what can work again. Also be prepared for a longer ramp up period as we build the case, followed by more revenues in later years as people understand the value added.
- How does philanthropy factor in? Some don't like to give to government; how do we make the case?
- Consider going to corporations that are already engaged through workdays, etc., and ask if they will support Green Corps or other FPCC programs.
- City Year has successfully used AmeriCorps funding. Can FPCC use this funding source for the Conservation Corps?
- Create a structure to monitor and manage all FPCC outreach to avoid double-asking. Eileen Figel reported that the FPCC development committee, which includes the Forest Preserve Foundation, is doing this.

Finally, council members expressed concerns about having all the information they need to make a final budget recommendation in September. The council agreed to designate representatives to work with committee co-chairs to do a deeper dive on each priority area.

Election of Vice Chair and Secretary. A motion was made by Robert Steele and seconded by Laurel Ross to elect Falona Joy vice chair and Mark Templeton secretary. The motion was approved by majority vote.

Review and approval of amended operating guidelines. A motion was made by Robert Steele and seconded by Mark Templeton to approve the operating guidelines with the proposed amendment to the Conflict of Interest section to read as follows:

- A. No member of the Council shall derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation with the Council. Each Council member shall disclose to the Council any personal interest which he or she may have – or thinks they may have – in any matter pending before the Council and shall refrain from participation in any decision on such matter.

Any member of the Council who is an officer, board member, a committee member or staff member of the Chicago Botanic Garden or the Chicago Zoological Society, or any organization that receives more than \$1 million annually in funding from the Forest Preserves budget, shall identify his or her affiliation when discussing any Council action specifically directed to that agency, including the annual Forest Preserve budget recommendation.

Individual/group fieldtrips. Cathy Geraghty presented options for individual and/or group field trips. Council members agreed to help educate others about the forest preserves by curating a group visit to a specific site and/or program, including:

- Falona Joy offered to host a fieldtrip for Choose Chicago.

- Laurel Ross offered to host a fieldtrip for the Field Museum's action committee.
- Other council members will contact Eileen Figel with specific suggestions.

Adjournment. A motion was made by Robert Steele and seconded by Mark Templeton and the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

ATTACHMENT 1A: NATURE COMMITTEE TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2016

Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Evaluate and prioritize natural area sites and set restoration benchmarks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Refine list of highest priority natural area sites •Evaluate cultural area sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •\$500K continued work w/ PRI •\$10M for natural area restoration work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3-5K additional acres will be under active restoration management

Illinois Nature Preserves Dedication

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Submit one (1) site for Illinois Nature Preserves (INP) designation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Submit three (3) sites for INP designation •Assess eligibility among priority sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Staff time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Enroll 100% of all eligible sites identified in assessment for INP and/or Illinois Land and Water Reserves designation

Volunteer Engagement

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •6,000 individual volunteer visits (Centennial Volunteer Initiative) •2,500 active volunteers •76 site stewards and workday leaders (WDL) •4 courses offered (14 sessions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3,000 active volunteers •25 new certified volunteer stewards and WDL (96 total) •1 online course developed •5 courses offered (17 sessions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •\$500K additional funds for volunteer program (\$200K annual, \$300K one time purchases) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Engagement Plan implemented •5,000 active volunteers •100 new volunteer stewards & WDL (170 total) •10 courses offered (30 sessions)

Conservation Corps

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Expansion strategy completed •55,000 service hours performed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •90,000 service hours performed •Contractor policy in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •\$2.5M (\$800K - FPDCC, \$1.7M - Additional funds needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •150,000 service hours performed