

Forest Preserves of Cook County Conservation & Policy Council
SPECIAL MEETING TO REVIEW SCALING UP VOLUNTEERS POSITION PAPER

July 10, 2020 ■ 2 pm to 3:15 pm

Minutes

Note: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the meeting was held via video conference.

Welcome and Call to Order. Wendy Paulson called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. The following Council members and others attended:

Advisory Council Members

Wendy Paulson, Chairperson
Mark Templeton, Vice-chairperson
Michael DeSantiago, Secretary
Alan Bell
Emily Harris
Laurel Ross
Shelley Spencer
Sylvia Jenkins
Terry Guen

Forest Preserve Staff

Arnold Randall
Eileen Figel

Facilitator

Debby Moskovits

SUV Committee Members

Jane Balaban (committee chair), Cathy Geraghty, Joanna Huyck, Radhika Miraglia, Nicole Pierson.

Maria Pesqueira and Commissioner Moore did not attend. Daniel Suarez, a member of the SUV Committee, was also unable to attend.

Other meeting participants include Jourdan Sorrell for Commissioner Moore, and Tara Meyer for Commissioner Degnen. Justin Pepper of the Bobolink Foundation, Jenn Baader from the Chicago Zoological Society, Benjamin Cox of Friends of the Forest Preserves, Bob Megquier of Openlands and the following FPCC staff: Carl Vogel, John McCabe, Lydia Uhlir, Michelle Uting and Sharon Williams.

Public Comments. Because this is a virtual meeting, public comments must be submitted in writing prior to the meeting. No public comments were received.

Review of draft Scaling Up Volunteers Position Paper. Wendy thanked everyone who submitted comments in advance and thanked Jane Balaban for chairing the SUV committee. Jane thanked all the members of the committee for their hard work and gave a special thanks to Cathy Geraghty for pulling everything together. Jane reported that two vetting sessions were held to allow volunteers and other participants to share suggestions and feedback. Three issues were raised during the vetting sessions:

1. Models. Many participants suggested that the committee define a model of volunteerism. Jane reported that the committee has not come up with a single model which covers all the roles played by volunteers.
2. Broaden the Scope. Participants asked for a broader definition of volunteerism. They felt the draft paper is too focused on restoration.
3. Barriers to Scaling Up. There is an urgent need to recruit and mentor volunteer leaders. The committee revised the paper to emphasize the need to engage, train, retain and sustain volunteer leaders.

Wendy facilitated a discussion of the paper including the following key points:

- The committee felt strongly the paper should endorse the critical role of volunteers in the FPCC. The committee wants to embed volunteerism in the DNA of the FPCC going forward AND recognize volunteers are essential to the ultimate success of the Next Century Conservation Plan.
- The committee urges FPCC to be all-embracing of volunteerism—not just stewardship (the oldest and largest volunteer component).

Questions and comments were offered for each section as follows:

Issue Statement

- There is a need to clarify the issue statement. “Volunteerism” is not mentioned in the paragraph. FPCC cannot get this done without volunteers. The numbers in appendix 1 help drive the importance of this issue. Can these numbers be highlighted in a callout box in the paper? Or the issue statement can acknowledge that “nearly 100,000 volunteer hours are donated to the FPCC each year and this is a critical component for future success.”

Executive Summary

- Consider expanding the background section to include a mention that the FPCC has a department to support volunteers. This is an important part of the framework and should be included in the main paper (not just the appendix).

Position Statement

- Will the paper set goals for increasing the # of volunteers? Will this be measurable? It may not need to be stated here, but this is important to address. Jane explained that the committee has begun to work on this and has developed models to establish measurable goals.

Recommendation 1: Engage

- When addressing human diversity, should the language in this paper be broad or specific? Should the paper call out specific groups we need to engage and add a catch-all so no one is excluded? Or should the paper use a broad reference to “all citizens” and then refer to REDI paper and include a reference to “other marginalized groups”? Should the paper stress the need to engage youth volunteers? FPCC has not been very successful engaging people who don’t know about this effort. A broad statement that encompasses everyone is important; there will be groups that emerge in the future we are not thinking about now and we don’t want to leave anyone out.
- How can we better engage the board? Is this best addressed in the paper or in the implementation strategy?

- Racial equity is a core value; all the papers should talk about this. 1.4 helps with this.
- Also consider addressing climate change and climate resilience; this should be threaded through all four papers in a consistent way. Carl Vogel will help with this.

Recommendation 2: Train

- The initial statement indicates that the needs of the volunteers outweigh the needs of the Forest Preserves. Jane clarified that is not the intent of the statement; the committee is urging that the needs of the volunteers be clearly understood and addressed within the mission and needs of the FPCC.
- Mike DeSantiago suggests also addressing controlled burns which capture the public's interest.
- This section emphasizes ecological stewardship; do we need to broaden the language to include other examples of volunteer training?
- Add a statement indicating that many of these skills are also job- and life-skills.
- The committee should look at the paper once more and either decide to advocate for volunteerism across the board OR focus on stewardship. Implementation needs to focus on the stewardship program AND other areas of volunteerism.

Recommendation 3: Retain

- To gain loyalty and to connect volunteers to the FPCC requires an understanding of the mission. Should the paper include a mission statement for volunteerism at the FPCC?
- Fostering relationships with staff is very important, but "recognition events" should move to implementation. It is too specific to be included here.
- Clarify in 3.3 that this refers to volunteerism at the FPCC.
- Is there a sense that volunteers are not currently fully engaged in the conversation? Jane explained that the issue of communication came up frequently during the vetting sessions. Site stewards want to be more involved in planning. Can this section be reworded to focus on what volunteers can bring to the FPCC instead of what is missing? For example, "by tapping the rich vision and experience of stewards, we . . ."

Recommendation 4: Sustain

- It is important to call out youth and the need to build a stronger volunteer pipeline. We must have future leaders. Nicole explained that the VR team focuses on engaging adults and CEP focuses on engaging youth. This makes sense for an implementation strategy, but it should also be addressed in the paper. Laurel Ross noted that many volunteer groups are "pretty grey", so it is also important to engage young adults, not just youth.

Approval of SUV paper. Alan Bell made a motion to approve the Scaling Up Volunteers position paper subject to the revisions discussed during this meeting. The motion was seconded by Laurel Ross. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote
Wendy Paulson	Yes
Mark Templeton	Yes
Michael DeSantiago	Yes
Alan Bell	Yes
Emily Harris	Yes
Laurel Ross	Yes
Shelley Spencer	Yes
Sylvia Jenkins	Yes
Terry Guen	Yes

The motion was approved.

Roll out strategy. Eileen Figel and Benjamin Cox explained that the process used to roll out the REDI paper provides a good template for the remaining papers. Steps include:

1. Brief President Preckwinkle
2. Conduct small group briefings for Commissioners
3. Formally present the paper to the Board. (The REDI and SUV papers will be presented directly to the full board; Nature-Compatible Recreation will be presented to the Board's Recreation Committee; LAAD will be presented to the board's Real Estate Committee.)
4. Committee to work with like-minded organizations to share the paper broadly. (See REDI example in Table 1.)

The following issue was discussed:

- Should the Council group together the remaining papers for fewer future briefings? Benjamin Cox suggested that each paper deserves a full and thorough vetting. He also believes they will be well-received by the Commissioners. He explained, "You are not coming with complaints; you are coming with solutions. The more they see how invested we are, the greater the impact. We want to optimize our engagement with commissioners." The Council agreed to proceed with each paper individually as indicated in Table 2.

Table 1: REDI Position Paper Detailed 6 Month Rollout Strategy

Date	Audience/Format
June 10	Paper adopted by Council
June 10 to 30	Briefings for President; small group briefings for Commissioners

July 28	Paper submitted to Board
July 29	Call with Environmentalist of Color, AIC and/or Outdoor Afro, CMAP & others to develop rollout strategy
Aug	IEC webinar discussion
Sep	CW webinar discussion
Oct	Additional sharing TBD
Nov	Additional sharing TBD

Table 2: Schedule for Remaining Papers

	Council Approval	Briefings for President & Commissioners	Board Review
Nature-Compatible Rec	7.10.20	August	Sept
LAAD	6.29.20	Sept	Oct
SUV	7.10.20	Sept/Oct	Oct/Nov

Implementation Strategy. Eileen explained that the first five years of the NCCP implementation strategy concludes in December 2020. She and Benjamin are convening the NCCP Committee Co-Chairs to discuss how the next 5-year implementation strategy reporting format should change. Two considerations include (a) How to incorporate the implementation steps outlined in the position papers, and (b) How to reformat the report to make it shorter and more user-friendly.

Approval of Nature-Compatible Recreation paper. Terry Guen made a motion to approve the position paper as revised. The motion was seconded by Sylvia Jenkins. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote
Wendy Paulson	Yes
Mark Templeton	Yes
Michael DeSantiago	Yes
Alan Bell	Yes
Emily Harris	Yes

Name	Vote
Laurel Ross	Yes
Shelley Spencer	Yes
Sylvia Jenkins	Yes
Terry Guen	Yes

The motion was approved.

Adjournment. A motion was made by Mark Templeton and seconded by Laurel Ross to adjourn the meeting. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote
Wendy Paulson	Yes
Mark Templeton	Yes
Michael DeSantiago	Yes
Alan Bell	Yes
Emily Harris	Yes
Laurel Ross	Yes
Shelley Spencer	Yes
Sylvia Jenkins	Yes
Terry Guen	Yes

The motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 3:16 p.m.

Attachment 1: Record of Chat Conversation During 7.10.20 Council Meeting

From Emily Harris to Everyone:

To Laurel's point, would be great to list the Council in Appendix 1. It's a small number by comparison to the others, but worth noting? And what about all our subcommittees - do those partners count?

From Justin Pepper to Everyone:

I agree with Mark's point about the usefulness of putting a number to the current scale. It might also be useful to give a sense of the scale of the need to help underscore why it is critical to dramatically ramp up the number of volunteer leaders.

From Arandall's iPhone to Everyone:

I agree with Mike's point.

From Radhika Miraglia to Everyone:

I agree with Alan that we should be more intentional about our language about diversity. REDI is focused on racial diversity so it does not cover what we're saying here.

From Emily Harris to Everyone:

People with disabilities, and other marginalized communities. Agree with Alan
Is the word citizens problematic?

From Mark Templeton to Everyone:

Agree with Alan's approach

From Shelley Spencer to Everyone:

In point #2 the word "dedicated" is used to describe the volunteers that will be welcomed and empowered. I think it should simply say volunteers (as in all) because it takes time for people to become dedicated.

From Emily Harris to Everyone:

On the first position - can we add climate change and/or climate resilience? It's mentioned in the issue statement but I think it's a key point of inspiration for people to get engaged and should be mentioned throughout the paper.

From Mark Templeton to Everyone:

Arnold makes a good point

From Benjamin Cox to Everyone:

I agree with folks that both/and is probably best to emphasize recognizing the current moment and the intentionality of being inclusive, but also leaving room for those that we miss or don't know in this current time.

From Benjamin Cox to Everyone:

Important note about "citizenry" potentially being unintentionally exclusionary.

From Mark Templeton to Everyone:

Yes

From [Robert Megquier](#) to [Everyone](#):

Yes, it is exclusionary.

From [Emily Harris](#) to [Everyone](#):

In 3.4 I think we should add the word "expertise". Talking about their feelings doesn't feel as strong to communicate the value you're trying to express
Agree with Shelley!

From [Mark Templeton](#) to [Everyone](#):

Yes

From [Benjamin Cox](#) to [Everyone](#):

There might not be a CEP or Volunteer Resources department in 20 years.

From [Emily Harris](#) to [Everyone](#):

Agree with Alan - great point!

From [Benjamin Cox](#) to [Everyone](#):

There wasn't a Resource Management Department 20 years ago.

From [Robert Megquier](#) to [Everyone](#):

I would like to see a call-out box or two with great quotes from volunteers in addition to any boxes that would feature some facts.

From [Shelley Spencer](#) to [Everyone](#):

3.2 needs an "s" on stakeholder(s)