

Forest Preserves of Cook County Conservation & Policy Council

Meeting Minutes for February 9, 2022

Note: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the meeting was held via Zoom video conference. A recording of the meeting is available via [this link](#). Passcode: e%2p6t2?

Welcome and Call to Order. Chairperson Alan Bell called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. The following Council members and others attended:

Advisory Council Members

Alan Bell, Chairperson
Emily Harris
Henrietta Saunders
Laurel Ross
Maria Pesqueira
Mark Templeton, Vice-chairperson
Shelley Spencer, Secretary
Terry Guen

Presenters

Arnold Randall, Forest Preserves
Benjamin Cox, Friends of the Forest Preserves
Beth Dunn, Chicago Botanical Garden
Bob Megquier, Openlands
Eileen Figel, Forest Preserves
Dr. Mike Adkesson, CEO of Brookfield Zoo

Commissioner Stanley Moore and Sylvia Jenkins did not attend.

Staff representing Commissioner Suffredin's office attended. Other meeting participants included representatives from the Chicago Zoological Society, the Chicago Botanic Garden, Friends of the Forest Preserves, Openlands, Audubon Great Lakes, and the Field Museum. A full list of participants is presented in Attachment 1.2.

Eileen Figel stated that live closed captioning is available and may be accessed by clicking on the "Live Transcript" button labeled "CC" at the bottom of the screen OR by accessing the external captioning link in the chat.

Approval of Minutes. A motion was made by Laurel Ross to approve the minutes of the September 1, 2021 meeting. The motion was seconded by Maria Pesqueira. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote	Name	Vote
Alan Bell	Yes	Maria Pesqueira	Yes
Mike DeSantiago	n/a*	Laurel Ross	Yes
Terry Guen	Yes	Henrietta Saunders	Yes
Emily Harris	Yes	Shelley Spencer	Yes
Sylvia Jenkins	Absent	Mark Templeton	Yes
Commissioner Moore	Absent		

*Mike was having technical trouble at the beginning of the meeting.

The minutes were approved.

Public comments. No members of the public registered to address the Council and no written comments were submitted.

Chairman's Report. Alan reported on the following items.

- Alan introduced Dr. Mike Adkesson, the new CEO for the Brookfield Zoo. Dr. Adkesson has met several Council members and welcomes the opportunity to work closely with the District and the Council.
- Governance Committee. Alan provided clarification regarding Council liaison roles and explained he would like to establish a Governance Committee to formalize these roles and to recommend various updates to the ordinance governing the Council. Alan, Sylvia and Mike will serve on this committee and will bring recommended changes to the Council for further discussion.

A motion to create the committee was made by Hank Saunders and seconded by Laurel Ross. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote	Name	Vote
Alan Bell	Yes	Maria Pesqueira	Yes
Mike DeSantiago	n/a*	Laurel Ross	Yes
Terry Guen	Yes	Henrietta Saunders	Yes
Emily Harris	Yes	Shelley Spencer	Yes
Sylvia Jenkins	Absent	Mark Templeton	Yes
Commissioner Moore	Absent		

*Mike was having technical trouble at the beginning of the meeting.

The motion passed.

Council Updates. Alan invited Council members to provide updates and/or request matters be placed on future agendas for further discussion. The following matters were discussed:

- **REDI training for Council members.** Shelley Spencer suggested Council members attend REDI training. Alan agreed this would be helpful for the Council. Hank Saunders and Mark Templeton suggest this could be an opportunity to better understand how to apply a REDI lens to the position papers and the broader work of the Forest Preserves. Arnold Randall added that it is important for the Council to understand where the District is with its REDI work and how the District got there. Emily Harris suggested a survey of Council members be conducted to understand the previous experience of Council members, determine how much time Council member want to commit to this training/workshop, and what Council members have found to be beneficial in past REDI workshops.
- **Site Names Task Force.** Maria Pesquiera is co-chairing a task force which is reviewing 284 site names throughout the preserves using an equity and cultural sensitivity lens. Maria noted that a REDI lens is being used to review how sites have been named across the preserves and make recommended changes as needed going forward. The goal is to align with this effort with REDI principles and to present a transparent process. (Note: Maria had trouble with her audio during this portion of the meeting.)

(The live captioning via the external link went down temporarily and the Council paused until the live captioning was restored.)

- **Land use policy update.** Alan explained that the land use reform task force has identified four key policy questions that need to be addressed; these are included in attachment 3 of the meeting packet. The task force will come back to the Council with recommendations on how to address these questions.
- **Matters for future agendas.** Alan indicated that a list of potential topics for future meetings is included in Attachment 5 of the meeting packet. He invited Council members to review the list and notify him if there are additional topics they would like addressed. He suggests that the Council may want to use the June retreat to discuss the coordination of all position papers.

Discussion with General Superintendent Arnold Randall. General Superintendent Arnold Randall provided the following updates:

- Forest Preserve sites remained open during the recent Covid surge, but due to the current spike, office workers are working from home for now. Operational staff are in the field; sledding hills are very busy.
- The Board again approved the referendum being on the November 2022 ballot. Arnold, Eileen Figel and Benjamin Cox met with the Civic Federation to discuss the proposed allocation of funding if the referendum is successful.
- A Northbrook resident is demanding that the coyote at River Trail Nature Center be relocated to a sanctuary in Colorado. The mammals at the District's nature centers cannot be released due to injuries and/or imprinting. The animal care is delivered by trained staff and is based on science with guidance from an external veterinarian. The District recently retained a consultant to do a strategic plan for the CEP department; the scope has been expanded to include a review of peer agencies and best practices as they relate to our animal ambassador program.
- Terry asked what would be the impact to the animal if the enclosure was to be enlarged? Arnold responded that the District is meeting or exceeding all standards. He explained that the District policy should not be based upon someone yelling. If there is a legitimate point raised, staff need to look at it. Arnold wants to take some time to assess what the right thing is to do and base any changes on science, research, and best practices.
- Dr. Adkesson added that the enclosure does meet requirements and the animal is in a good state of welfare.
- Michelle Parker added that the District's statement on FaceBook was very impressive. She believes that those demanding the relocation of the coyote will not be satisfied with anything else, but the communication will help educate people who are open to gaining a deeper understanding of this. Alan added this is a great opportunity for the public to learn more about wildlife.
- Shelley asked about employees returning to the office and the impact on sustainability. How is this being considered? Arnold explained that the District has already established a hybrid model for its office workers which will allow them to work from home 2 to 3 days per week going forward.

Review of Draft REDI Paper Part II. Emily Harris, Shelley Spencer, and Raquel Garcia-Alvarez provided an overview of the draft position paper. A draft copy of the paper was included in the meeting packet and a copy of the Power Point presentation is included in Attachment 1.1.

The following issues were discussed:

- Terry Guen stated that she previously served on a national historic preservation advisory council. Terry indicated it took 50 years before this council voted in a Native American to sit on the council. Native American colleagues helped Terry and other members understand their long-standing connection to the land. Terry attended a Squamish tribal meeting and learned that meetings start with a prayer and a land acknowledgement. Terry added that it is important to have an Asian American representative on the Council. Likewise, she learned how offensive

the “Indian Boundary” signs are to Native Americans. Terry is excited to see the terrific progress on the DI position paper.

- Alan thanked Terry for her on-going guidance on these issues and agreed that it is important to have broad, diverse representation on the Council. This should be discussed with the nominating committee.
- Hank noted that technological tools could be helpful in developing and managing the community engagement database recommended in the draft position paper. She also noted the recommendations are relevant to scaling up volunteers.
- Alan agreed that the Council needs to apply the REDI lens to all position papers; this will be discussed further at a future meeting.
- Terry asked if, prior to approving the paper, the Council should add a Native American representative to the Council. Alan suggested approving the paper s.t. inclusion of Native Americans on the Council and its committees. Emily added that the ordinance which established the Council calls for diversity, but it does not specifically require a Native American representative.
- The Council will send feedback on the paper to Raquel.Garcia-Alvarez@cookcountyil.gov by February 23. Raquel will use track changes to identify all proposed changes and send a revised, updated paper for review and action at the April meeting.

Referendum Update. Hank Saunders is reaching out to each Council member to discuss what role they would like to play as private citizens related to the referendum. Benjamin Cox added he is very encouraged by the diversity and breadth of the coalition. The League of Women Voters of Cook County joined the coalition yesterday. The coalition hired two campaign managers and has had great success raising funds to support the referendum. The public campaign will begin in the fall.

Aligning PMIs, KPIs, Position Papers, and the Phase 2 Implementation Strategy. At its previous meeting, the Council had asked the NCCP Steering Committee to (a) Update the phase 2 implementation strategy to include mileposts, and (b) Think about how to coordinate the work of the Council and the Steering Cmte and the position paper working groups. Steering Committee co-chairs Benjamin Cox and Eileen Figel provided the following updates:

- Eileen explained that the Phase 2 strategy has been revised and an updated version was shared with the Council the previous week. The report is now 38 pages long and presents more than 100 actions, milestones, and performance measures to be tracked.
- The Steering Committee explored the following: Who is the intended audience and what is the purpose of this report? The committee believes the report should explain to the Board of Commissioners and the general public what progress is (or is not) being made related to implementing key NCCP goals. The current format is too dense and too long and no one is reading it. The committee recommends reformatting the report so that it is a concise and easy-to-understand progress report. The committee will work with the Council to develop a format which achieves this.
- The Steering Committee will also continue to work on recommendations for communication and coordination across the committee, Council, and position paper working groups. Bob Megquier is leading this effort for the committee and will present recommendations at the April meeting.

The following issues were discussed:

- Alan noted that the Council retains the obligation to approve a document which measures progress towards advancing the major principles of the plan.

- Mark agreed there is too much in the paper, and it is hugely problematic if we have a document that no one reads. Mark explained that it is important to include milestones, not just measures. The plan is really ambitious and it is important to tie annual progress to the overall goals.

Updates from Strategic Partners. Alan invited brief updates from partners. The following issues were discussed:

- **Openlands.** Bob Megquier shared that the African American Heritage water trail was recognized by the New York Times as one of 52 places to visit in 2022. The Forest Preserves was a key partner in this project. Bob explained that Openlands believes all communities along the river system should have a voice in how the river is used and how the community has access to and interacts with the river.
- **Friends of the Forest Preserves.** Benjamin highlighted the on-going conversations around land use and how it demonstrates the level of care and concern for the preserves. The Forest Preserves have a lot of friends who have a lot of ideas and the District has to manage this and it is not always easy.
- **Chicago Botanic Garden.** Beth Dunn shared that the Garden is implementing a new pricing structure which includes a per person admission fee and a reduced parking fee. This was approved by the Forest Preserves' Board two years ago. The Garden will offer 52 free days throughout the year; 25% of visitors will receive free access. More information was included in the meeting packet.
- **Brookfield Zoo.** Jennifer Baader shared that the Zoo and the Forest Preserves are partnering to establish a "vet in resident" program.

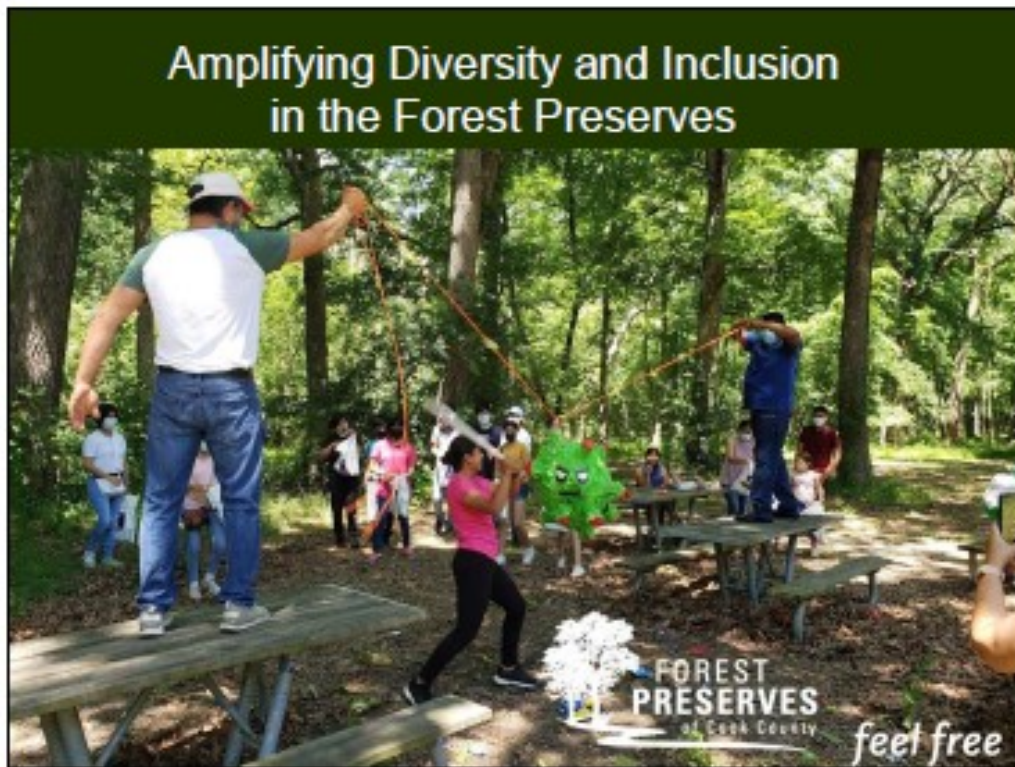
Adjournment. A motion to adjourn was made by Mike DeSantiago and seconded by Terry Guen. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote
Alan Bell	Yes
Mike DeSantiago	Yes
Terry Guen	Absent
Emily Harris	Yes
Sylvia Jenkins	Absent
Commissioner Moore	Absent

Name	Vote
Maria Pesqueira	Absent
Laurel Ross	Absent
Henrietta Saunders	Yes
Shelley Spencer	Absent
Mark Templeton	Yes

The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 12:09 pm.

Attachment 1.1: Presentation of DI Position Paper



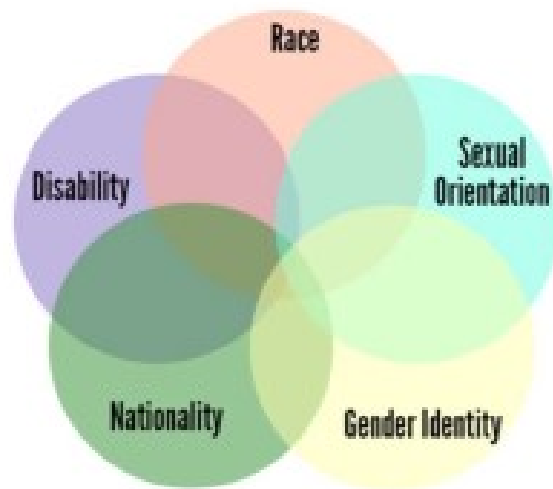
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2

Why Amplify Diversity & Inclusion?

First paper is focused on "Moving Toward Racial Equity"



[What is Intersectionality, and what does it have to do with me? | YW Boston](#)

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Historical & National Context

Systemic Racism



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Position Statement

The Forest Preserves of Cook County will work with the Conservation & Policy Council and other partners to ensure the Forest Preserves are welcoming, inclusive, accessible and culturally relevant for all people—regardless of race, color, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age or gender—so all county residents can reap the benefits of spending time in nature.

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Recommendation #1



Expand the racial equity lens to incorporate diversity and inclusion.

6

Recommendation #2

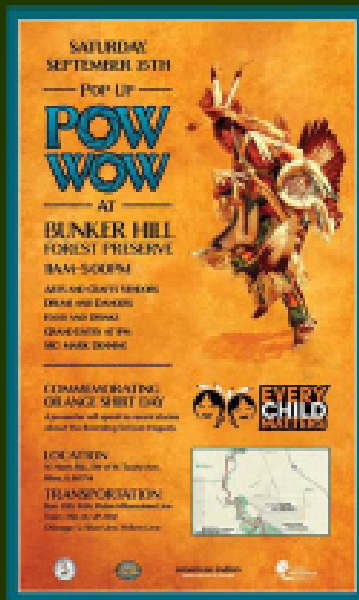


Continue efforts to expand outreach and engage residents.

And extend these strategies to engage more people who have been historically excluded.



Recommendation #3



Recognize the special obligation to Native Americans who have a historic and ongoing relationship with the lands within the Forest Preserves.

Recommendation #4



Learn from the Universal Design, disability rights and disability justice communities to improve access to the preserves for individuals with disabilities and others.

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Recommendation #5



Build a workforce that reflects the diversity of Cook County.

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Recommendation #6

Shape and sustain an inclusive organizational culture and the systems required to accomplish all REDI goals.



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Appendices

1. Stakeholder Interviews and Roundtable participants
2. Expanded REDI Lens
3. Case Studies
4. Work Plan Goals
5. Diversity and Inclusion Resources
6. Instagram Post Inspiration – Colors of Climate



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Work Plan 2022

REDI Strategic Plan

- Establish baselines and miles
- Measure progress for all REDI initiatives
- Visual story of documenting progress



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AWARDS

National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (NACPRO)

Marin Magazine – Eco-warriors of 2021
Raquel García-Álvarez



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Case Studies

Accessibility Amenities

- Accessible campsites at all five campgrounds
- 8 accessible fishing areas
- Songs, Stars, and S'mores

Cultural Programming

- Día de los Muertos
- REDress Project - National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Forest Therapy Audio-guided walk



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Attachment 1.2: Meeting Participants

Aladdin Hussain, FPCC

Alan Bell, Council

Arnold Randall, FPCC

Benjamin Cox, Friends of the Forest Preserves

Beth Dunn, Chicago Botanic Garden

Bob Megquier, Openlands

Carolyn Cosentino, League of Women Voters

Carl Vogel, FPCC

Cathy Geraghty, FPCC

Chris Adas, FPCC

Chris Slattery, FPCC

Damon Howell, FPCC

Delio Calzolari, FPCC

Dr. Mike Adkesson, CZS

Eileen Figel, FPCC

Emily Harris, Council

Henrietta Saunders, Council

Izzy Stroobandt, City Bureau

Jacqui Ulrich, FPCC

Jane Balaban, Key Steward

Jenn Baader, CZS

John McCabe, FPCC

Laura Davis, League of Women Voters

Laura Milkert, Field Museum

Laurel Ross, Council

LeAnn Hibler, Captioner

Lydia Uhlir, FPCC

Maria Pesqueira, Council

Mark Templeton, Council

Michelle Jordan, Office of Commissioner Suffredin

Michelle Parker, Audubon Great Lakes

Mike DeSantiago, Council

Raquel Garcia-Alvarez, FPCC

Sharon Williams, FPCC

Shelley Spencer, Council

Steve Hughes, FPCC

Terry Guen, Council

Tim Hogan, City Bureau

Attachment 1.3: Record of Chat

00:45:41	Eileen Figel:	Live closed captioning is available and may be accessed by clicking on the “Live Transcript” button labeled “CC” at the bottom of the screen. OR use this external link: https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=FPDCC_Conservation
00:56:07	Maria Pesqueira:	Welcome Dr. Mike Adkeeson!
01:00:23	Maria Pesqueira:	I can't seem to get off mute
01:10:17	TGDA:	i agree with Council REDI training
01:12:19	Eileen Figel:	Is it helpful for me to share the agenda, or would people rather I stop sharing my screen?
01:12:35	Laurel Ross:	maybe the training can be part of our retreat so we will also have opportunity for informal conversation
01:12:38	Emily Harris:	I think stop
01:12:41	Izzy Stroobandt:	Yes, it is helpful — City Bureau Documenter
01:13:19	Laurel Ross:	I think stop
01:13:46	Izzy Stroobandt:	I can find it online, you can stop if no one else needs it
01:23:44	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	Eileen and Arnold weren't there to advocate for it, but I am able to do that in my role and I did advocate for it.
01:26:37	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	And most don't make it past 6 months.
01:32:13	Michelle Parker (she/her):	The information put out by FPDCC on this issue has been excellent.
01:33:58	Henrietta Saunders:	Agree with Michelle! Also, best support for most wildlife out there is good care of our natural environment.
01:35:09	Laurel Ross:	my internet is going in and out sorry if I leave suddenly
01:46:37	Michelle Parker (she/her):	Please thank the care staff on our behalf!
01:47:00	Arandall:	Thank you. We will.
01:52:48	Eileen Figel:	The blueprints are from 1939.
02:13:10	Henrietta Saunders:	Congratulations Raquel!
02:14:07	Mark Templeton (he/his):	Inspiring work!
02:14:54	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	Yes, congratulations Raquel!
02:14:55	Laurel Ross:	Thanks! We look forward to the next steps with the council
02:15:46	Michelle Parker (she/her):	I need to run - thank you, everyone!
02:23:03	Raquel Garcia-Alvarez (she, hers):	Thank you everyone.

02:30:35	Mark Templeton (he/his):	I'm happy to move forward now
02:32:59	Laurel Ross:	My motion was intended to move this forward not to slow it down
02:39:47	Raquel Garcia- Alvarez (she, hers):	In case you do not have it, my email is raquel.garcia-alvarez@cookcountyil.gov.
02:43:26	Laurel Ross:	I apologize but I have urgent family business to attend to
02:50:58	Mark Templeton (he/his):	Great update!
03:06:57	John McCabe:	Point I made when we had this discussion in steering committee is that I never thought I'd see the day when people said we have too much information!! Trust.
03:23:47	Arandall:	Great meeting! Nice job Mr. Chairman,