

Forest Preserves of Cook County Conservation & Policy Council Meeting Minutes for April 22, 2022

Note: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the meeting was held via Zoom video conference. A recording of the meeting is available [here](#). Passcode: *2RbT=T?

Welcome and Call to Order. Chairperson Alan Bell called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. The following Council members and others attended:

Advisory Council Members

Alan Bell, Chairperson
 Emily Harris
 Laurel Ross
 Mark Templeton, Vice-chairperson
 Shelley Spencer, Secretary
 Commissioner Stanley Moore
 Sylvia Jenkins
 Terry Guen

Presenters

Arnold Randall, Forest Preserves
 Benjamin Cox, Friends of the Forest Preserves
 Beth Dunn, Chicago Botanical Garden
 Bob Megquier, Openlands
 Cathy Geraghty, Forest Preserves
 Eileen Figel, Forest Preserves
 Jenn Baader, Brookfield Zoo

Hank Saunders, Maria Pesquiera and Commissioner Moore did not attend.

Other meeting participants included representatives from the Chicago Zoological Society, the Chicago Botanic Garden, Audubon Great Lakes, the Field Museum, and the League of Women Voters.

Eileen Figel stated that live closed captioning is available and may be accessed via the link in the chat.

Approval of Minutes. A motion was made by Laurel Ross to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by Shelley Spencer. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote	Name	Vote
Alan Bell	Y	Maria Pesqueira	Absent
Mike DeSantiago	Y	Laurel Ross	Y
Terry Guen	NA	Henrietta Saunders	Absent
Emily Harris	Y	Shelley Spencer	Y
Sylvia Jenkins	Y	Mark Templeton	Y
Commissioner Moore	Absent		

Terry Guen had computer problems and was unable to vote on this item. The minutes were approved.

Chairman’s report. Alan provided the following updates:

Phase 2 implementation strategy. Alan asked Eileen Figel to present an overview of the two format options recommended for the 2022 phase 2 implementation strategy progress report. Eileen presented two options as shown in Attachments 2 and 3 of the agenda packet. The following issues were discussed:

- The information flows better in option B; it is more understandable and supportive of goals. And if staff feels this best supports the efforts, I support this.
- This is a good way to remind us that everything we are doing fits into the plan. I like option B.
- Staffing mileposts on diversity should include all the dimensions of diversity.
- Please provide a timeframe for Council to provide preliminary feedback before the full draft is developed. Alan will work with Eileen to create a timeframe.
- It is important to have specificity on mileposts. For example, restore 30,000 acres to ecological health by _____. We need to set the KPIs for phase 2.
- Every goal may exceed a single page.
- I am not sure that level of granularity needs to be in this document. We need timeframes to achieve our objectives, but I'm not sure what level of specificity we need.
- We need more discussion on this. We can't get into nitty gritty of what every employee is doing, but I do think measures are important in terms of holding people accountable.
- Agree with option B. At the college, our board approves our 5-year strategic plan, but we do annual plans at department levels with specific goals and dates. They do not come to the board. Those are operational plans for the college. I would suggest a similar approach for this.
- Agree with option B.
- May want to include an update/feedback loop in Figure 1.

A motion to recommend the format presented in option B (organized by NCCP goals) was made by Sylvia Jenkins and seconded by Emily Harris. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

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

The motion passed.

Governance. Alan indicated that the Governance Committee will convene next month and will report back to the Council in June.

Earth Day. Alan urged meeting participants to visit FPDCC.com to see all the Earth Day activities and on-going volunteer opportunities.

Media Highlights. Alan also suggested Council members take a moment to read the media highlights which include some wonderful stories. Alan gave kudos to staff for their amazing work and kudos to Carl for leading the Communications Team.

Council Updates. Council members presented the following updates:

REDI Workshop. Emily proposed a REDI workshop which would include 2 case studies illustrating how the preserves is applying a REDI lens to its work. The workshop would also examine how the Council can apply a

REDI lens to its work. Emily suggested that Council members review the position papers prior to the workshop and think about how the Council's work can reflect the REDI lens. Alan agreed it would be helpful to review this information before the workshop.

Trail Improvement Plan. Terry Guen reported that trails are the largest attribute of the preserves. The District used special bikes to assess the condition of all trails and used the results to develop a trail improvement plan. The big question is, "When are we done?" When are there enough trails? Terry added that it is a very thorough report. Mike DeSantiago stated that biking is one of the most nature-compatible activities. Mike is out on the North Branch trail several times per week. As it warms up, traffic increases quite a bit. Are these bike trails or pedestrian trails? The answer is both. But there are a lot of speed racers. Is there a way to slow them down? Eileen explained that the District has installed signs at some of the problem sites, but it is very difficult to police hundreds of miles of trails. We do have a 15 mph speed limit, but some bikers do not comply. Terry added that it is important to apply an equity lens to the trail plan. As land is acquired on the southeast side of the County, those sites will need trails.

Land use policy update. Alan reported that the land use task force has made a lot of progress. A key question is how to define "rare and extreme situations" for land disposition as referenced in the position paper. Attachment 5 presents the language proposed by the task force.

General Superintendent's Update. General Superintendent Arnold Randall provided the following updates:

Arnold thanked Maria Pesqueira for connecting the District to NAMI to assist District staff who encounter suicide victims. NAMI recently conducted a great workshop for staff.

The County is awarding ARPA funds to advance 3 NCCP goals:

- \$3.85M for Conservation Corps
- \$7M for land acquisition in southeast Cook County
- \$3M for restoration

Based on Terry Guen's suggestion at the previous meeting, the FP Naming Committee voted to add a Native American/Indigenous rep to the committee.

The District has launched an urban river otter project.

Staff changes include:

- Jeremy Bergstrom left FPCC; Tony Fioretti is our new Deputy Chief Attorney.
- Ryan Lothian, our web manager, just resigned. Ryan did outstanding work.
- Iza Redlinski is our new Deputy Director of Resource Management.

Arnold thanked Alan for testifying at the recent board meeting.

Mike asked for more info on the urban coyote project. Arnold explained that the main danger is caused by people feeding coyotes; this can cause them to get aggressive. Arnold offered to invite Chris Anchor to give an update at a future meeting. John McCabe added there are no public safety incidents we are aware of. Benjamin added that the Cook County study is the largest in the U.S.; the District has incredible information. These coyotes live everywhere, and this is because of what we have done to their environment and to their predators. Laurel Ross saw a coyote this morning at Montrose Beach. It ran the other way. Laurel suggests Council members tell people the things they are hearing from staff to get people calm about coyotes. We can be goodwill ambassadors for coyotes.

Approval of DI Position Paper. Alan stated that he has seen a lot of DEI papers; this position paper is detailed and robust with action items that will have an impact. Alan thanked the committee for incorporating the Council's input.

Coordination across Council, Steering Committee and Position Papers. Bob Megquier led a discussion about how the work of the Council, Steering Committee and position papers are advancing our goals and how to ensure there is coordination across these efforts. Bob stated that the purpose of the Conservation and Policy Council is to safeguard, expand and bring additional resources to the District by providing public recommendations to the President, District Board, and the Superintendent regarding conservation and other related areas, based on the Council's knowledge, skill, leadership and expertise. Bob explained that the Council does this by making recommendations about the annual budget, conservation policies, and opportunities to maximize resources. Bob asked a series of questions which generated feedback as follows:

Q1: Do you think these responsibilities of the Council are being achieved?

- Terry has been on the Council from the beginning and helped develop the NCCP. Terry indicates this is a work in progress. The Council is generally effective and lends expertise. Succession for Council members is a weak point. We may need more structure behind this.
- Laurel agrees this is a work in progress. The Council's connection to County board members is a weakness; we have done a good job with staff; we know each other. But we have not done the work we need to do with the Board of Commissioners. We made a pledge to go to every meeting.
- Sylvia asked if the Board has similar advisory groups. Arnold answered that there is an economic advisory council, as well as other advisory groups. Arnold added that the briefings Council members did with commissioners had an impact. Sylvia added that the Council has done an excellent job given we are appointed volunteers. The position papers will help us to meet our responsibilities.
- Mark recognized the efforts of Arnold, Eileen, and staff. They have been excellent at listening to issues we think are important, but they are also juggling a lot. I hope we serve a valuable function by reiterating what is important and helping staff to justify putting resources into these things (like REDI, other position papers). For something people feel so passionate about, and in a world of limited resources, there will be some friction.
- Mike is impressed with the horsepower the County has put into issues which sometimes struggle to get attention. We have gotten a lot in front of commissioners; this has been outstanding. We still need to reach out to communities of color. The REDI work is really, really good work. Mike added he feels blessed to work with this group.
- Alan added we have made great progress. We are still refining somethings, such as how you draw the line between the Council and staff.
- Emily agrees the Council has accomplished a lot and appreciates the staff and administration's work. One of the reasons the Council was created is to bridge changes in the administration. How do we make sure we don't get foiled when we may not have complete alignment with a future political body?

Q2: How do you see yourself raising your profile in the public at large? How might you have a more visible public presence?

- Alan believes the Council needs to do more work in this area. How can the Council elevate the plan and messaging? How can we be more publicly engaged?

- Terry suggests looking at alignment with other efforts such as public health, so that if the administration changes, the Forest Preserves is integrated into other public policies, so it is hard to unravel the efforts.
- Sylvia indicated that the referendum will promote the good work being done by the forest preserves staff, volunteers and Council.

Q3: One of the roles of the Council is to provide enduring conservation leadership. We have incredible support from the administration and staff now, but that could change. Do you feel you are well positioned to provide this enduring leadership? If not, how do you get there? Do you believe this is your most important function?

- Alan suggests we need to ensure the work is institutionalized and the public supports the work. This could help withstand future leadership which is not aligned with our objectives.
- Mike stated that, in the past, there was not strong leadership at the District; President Preckwinkle and Arnold have completely changed this. Mike cautioned that it takes nothing more than a change in administration to go back to the old days.
- Mark shares these concerns and indicates it is important to build relationships with commissioners.
- Terry stated that a children's book was written in 1909 to educate people about a bond to implement the 1909 Plan of Chicago. Terry believes the NCCP provides a vision; she asks how we can get it to the next level to keep it going. Bob believes the position papers are so powerful that they can serve as this basis. The question is how do we do it?

Q4: How can the Steering Committee help the Council achieve these goals?

- Alan believes we still need to clarify roles and responsibilities between the groups. The Governance Committee will talk more about this. Alan asks the Steering Committee to work closely with the Governance Committee to provide this clarity.
- Laurel feels this should not be up to staff; there needs to be a structural solution to this. She notes that the Council see the minutes of the Steering Committee and they are always at Council meetings, but Council members are never at their meetings.
- Emily believes it is appropriate for the Steering Committee to be far more in the weeds on implementation. For the Burnham Plan, the Commercial Club, a fully staffed and funded organization, backed implementation. The Council is not this. How do we make sure the organizations we want to support this work stay robust?
- Alan indicated we need a long-term vision for what we want this to look like. It needs to be crystal clear so that our mission is not challenged by future leadership. What organizational or government changes are needed to support that?
- Mark agreed we need to think about roles and responsibilities going forward. Today we get the reports and know things are going well. Maybe it is important to ensure we get these reports so we have the information in the future when things may not be going well. Can we establish the mechanisms and expectations today that we may need to rely upon in the future?

Bob suggested the Council continue this conversation at a future meeting. Bob added that we should not restrain the work of the Council and committee based on current resources. Instead, we should identify what needs to be done and what resources are required.

Mike added that we do need to use the stature of the Garden and Zoo to build this work. Bob added we should also include other powerful institutions and initiatives like Chicago Wilderness, Field Museum, 30 X 30, etc.

Alan added that the Governance Committee should consider all these issues and report back in June.

Referendum Update. Benjamin Cox provided the following updates:

- The website voteyesforestpreserves.org is up.
- The coalition is more than 2/3 of the way to meeting its fundraising goal.
- 82% of funds go to communications. People need to know what this is about. The coalition has hired consultants for print, digital, etc.
- The coalition now has 151 organizations. It is strong; meetings are vibrant and well attended.
- The coalition offers stipends for organizations who want to be at the table but need support.

Alan asked Eileen to share with Council members the factual talking points related to the referendum.

Annual Retreat. Cathy Geraghty presented ideas for the Council's annual retreat in June. The Council agreed that everyone should attend the REDI workshop and a session on enduring conservation leadership. Cathy will send a poll to identify a third core topic. One suggestion is how the Zoo, Garden, FP and partners can work together to ensure nature thrives.

Partner Updates.

Jenn Baader reported that the Zoo, Garden and Forest Preserves are working together to highlight each organization's programs and events. For Earth Day, the Zoo is collecting items for reuse (computers, microwaves, etc.)

Beth Dunn stated that the Garden is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Beth will send Council members an invitation to an outdoor art installation at the Garden.

Attachment 1.1 Record of Chat

00:12:07	Emily Harris:	https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=FPDCC_policycouncil
00:12:26	Izabella Redlinski:	Apologies for joining in late, had to finish a budget meeting with PRI that ran long
00:28:22	Cathy Geraghty:	Maybe this could be a topic for the Retreat?
00:29:55	Emily Harris:	Makes sense
00:46:18	John McCabe:	WE instituted a 15mph speed limit!!
00:46:29	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	I believe that is the second busiest trail in the county.
00:46:45	John McCabe:	Share the Trail events as well.
00:53:26	carolyn:	When someone refers to the south side, is that specifically for Chicago or might the south suburbs be in mind also? I just don't want to assume one or the other.
00:56:14	Cathy Geraghty:	American Rescue Plan Act funds
00:56:31	Michelle Parker (she/her):	sorry so late, everyone - double booked today. Happy Earth Day!
00:57:47	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	Carolyn, I would say that in my experience in forest preserve conversations it generally means south side of Chicago and the south suburbs.
00:59:21	Michelle Parker (she/her):	The creator of the awesome FPDCC poster that so many people have in their homes/offices - good luck, Ryan!
01:02:23	carolyn:	Thank you, Benjamin.
01:03:02	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	I would work hard for it to be yours for \$1! (You just have to move it.)
01:06:48	Emily Harris:	There's a good description here: http://www.landmarks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Pike-House-2022-Most-Endangered-Historic-Places-in-Illinois.pdf
01:07:02	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	https://goo.gl/maps/jUQeoAPAzwRgWHAs9
01:11:00	Iza Redlinski:	just want to add that we (Chris Anchor) has been studying coyotes fr decades - he is the national model
01:11:35	Iza Redlinski:	THANK YOU BENJAMIN
01:12:52	TGDA:	Thought there has was a prior broadcast highlighting Chris and the Coyote study. Is this an opportunity to update a 2022 broadcast as part of connecting people to nature and the value of nature and the Preserves?
01:22:27	Mark Templeton (he/his):	Here's the language of the ordinance:
01:22:29	Mark Templeton (he/his):	C. Purpose. The purpose of the Conservation and Policy Council is to safeguard, expand and bring additional resources to the District by providing public recommendations to the President, District Board, and the Superintendent regarding conservation and other related areas, based on the Council's knowledge, skill, leadership and expertise. The Council shall review and evaluate the implementation of the Plan.

01:22:59	Mark Templeton (he/his):	<i>D. Declaration. The District Board hereby establishes the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Conservation and Policy Council ("Council"). The District Board hereby finds and declares that the Council shall do, but not be limited to, the following:1. Develop and annually update a five-year strategic and financial plan to operationalize the Plan and annually recommend adoption of the updated strategic and financial plan to the President, District Board, and the Superintendent of the District;</i>
01:23:09	Mark Templeton (he/his):	<i>2. Review and make recommendations to the President, District Board, and the Superintendent about the annual budget and its alignment with the strategic and financial plan;3. Review and make recommendations to the President, District Board, and the Superintendent about conservation policies and practices;4. Review and make recommendations to the President, District Board, and the Superintendent about opportunities to maximize public and private financial resources to accomplish conservation goals and initiatives; and 5. Provide public recommendations, as needed, to improve the District's operations and conservation leadership.</i>
01:24:47	Mark Templeton (he/his):	<i>Cut and paste...</i>
01:30:15	Arnold Randall:	<i>I have to leave to join the President for an Earth Day press conference. Thanks for your great work.</i>
01:31:13	Emily Harris:	<i>Thank you Arnold for all you do and your leadership. Happy Earth Day!</i>
01:31:27	Sylvia Jenkins:	<i>Please give her our best!</i>
01:32:45	Emily Harris:	<i>+1 Mark</i>
01:34:36	Mark Templeton (he/his):	<i>+1 Mike</i>
01:35:06	Ross Laurel:	<i>we love Toni!!!</i>
01:39:53	Michelle Parker (she/her):	<i>need to run - have a great weekend!</i>
01:43:58	Cathy Geraghty:	<i>Terri - it's a little hard to hear you. Could you make sure your microphone is close by when you speak.</i>
01:46:20	TGDA:	<i>Hi Cathi,</i>
01:46:37	Emily Harris:	<i>Yes!</i>
01:47:25	TGDA:	<i>Sorry about that- I can email a summary of my comment to you after the meeting</i>
01:47:41	Cathy Geraghty:	<i>Sorry, Terry with a 'y' not an 'i'</i>
01:52:34	Emily Harris:	<i>The Wacker Manual was actually an 8th grade curriculum taught throughout the Chicago Public Schools - at a time when 8th grade was often the top grade completed. It was a brilliant strategy to promote the 1909 Plan of Chicago by Daniel Burnham et al</i>
02:03:45	Ross Laurel:	<i>I used to have a copy o the Wacker Manual It was an amazing piece of curriculum. I gave it to a friend. I will look to see if it is on line.</i>
02:09:03	Emily Harris:	<i>I will be taking a short break be right back!</i>
02:16:54	Mark Templeton (he/his):	<i>Thanks to all for their leadership and support of this incredibly important effort.</i>

02:19:30	Ross Laurel:	<i>I apologize I have to leave early today. Very excited to hear the major progress on the referendum See you all in June in person I hope</i>
02:20:23	Alan Bell:	<i>Thanks Laurel!</i>
02:23:09	Emily Harris:	<i>what is "SUV"?</i>
02:25:35	Emily Harris:	<i>Related - if we are expecting to repeat the breakouts and all attend all of them that's a lot of sessions!</i>
02:27:39	Mark Templeton (he/his):	<i>+1 re: all involved in (1) REDI and (2) council role and responsibilities</i>
02:28:08	TGDA:	<i>agree with REDI and enduring leadership sessions for all members, less focus on other topics</i>
02:28:25	Emily Harris:	<i>Agree with REDI and enduring leadership</i>
02:31:48	Emily Harris:	<i>I like the idea of an update from Wendy Paulson just to bring her back among us!</i>
02:32:40	Iza Redlinski:	<i>I watched it it was great!</i>
02:33:16	Cathy Geraghty:	<i>Partners in Conservation!</i>
02:34:54	TGDA:	<i>in the past we specially encouraged attendance to the council retreat -</i>
02:35:29	Emily Harris:	<i>+1 to thanks to Eileen</i>
02:35:31	TGDA:	<i>by board members</i>