

Journal of Proceedings
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 19, 2026, 6:00 pm,

Museum of the Grand Prairie Education Center, Lake of the Woods, Mahomet, Illinois

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District Board of Commissioners met at a Regular Meeting on Thursday, March 19, 2026, at the Museum of the Grand Prairie Education Center, Lake of the Woods, Mahomet, Illinois. Commissioner Hundley called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Toalson called the roll. The following Commissioners were present: Hundley, Knott, Toalson and Bartlett. Commissioner Goodman was absent with notice.

REMOTE ATTENDANCE – None

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS - None

PRESENTATIONS - None

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes of Regular Meeting on February 19, 2026**
- B. Monthly Staff Reports**
- C. Disbursements for Approval**
- D. February Treasurers Report**

Commissioner Knott made a motion to approve consent agenda items A. through D.
Commissioner Bartlett seconded.

A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Knott, Toalson and Bartlett. Motion carried.

FOREST PRESERVE FRIENDS FOUNDATION

Commissioner Bartlett provided an update on the Foundation’s March 4th meeting where they continued to review the Bylaws and Memorandum of Understanding. The marketing committee met in February to discuss updates regarding publication schedules and production, Tributary content, and potential for surveys at events. The Foundation discussed the recent Nature Center bids, as well as the change in status for Jenna Phillips, Donor Relationship Coordinator. Pearson added that the date for the Three Rivers Society event is scheduled for Wednesday, April 8, 2026.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioners noted positive things about the following items from staff reports and observations:

- The Foundation video spotlighting new President Carter Billingsly was well done and very informative
- Great to see the collaboration with Riggs and the sparkling water promotion
- Adding the egg hunt to the Goosechase App was a great idea and several commissioners have been in the preserves hunting for them

- The South Trail at Middle Fork has some older artifacts back in the woods that are intriguing
- Great to see the collaboration with Cunningham Children's Home – thank you to the staff involved in making that happen
- The honeysuckle removal where 10 out of 14 volunteers were new volunteers was great news
- Seeing 726 golfers in February was surprising, but impressive
- Congratulations to Mike Daab for joining the Champaign County Design and Conservation (CCDC) Foundation
- Great to see Lorrie's leadership training with MLI
- Thanks to staff involved in the tours for the Prairie State Conservation Coalition Conference – happy the Preserves were a sponsor of the event
- Really appreciate all the work done in the Botanical Garden – everything is looking sharp
- Appreciate the work done in the business service area to increase efficiency
- Appreciate all the work done by the volunteers and Sue Gallo
- Great to see the addition of Spanish speaking programs in our field trips
- Appreciate the Lincoln character portrayal at the Museum
- Appreciate the invasive species removal among the Preserves
- Good job to the staff for their efforts in relocating the Interpretive Center to the Activity Center at Middle Fork. The space is adequate and looks great

STAFF REPORTS

A. Executive Director Announcements

Pearson discussed a survey draft that is in process for the Board of Commissioners to provide input on how the Board can help the Forest Preserves move forward with initiatives and goals. Pearson was awarded the scholarship for the Midwest Leadership Institute in April, so she will be traveling to Washington D.C. for one week with Champaign County First, then the training in the Chicago area the next. Pearson commented on the highly popular Sap to Syrup event as she has heard positive feedback about what a great time people have had while participating. The Forest Preserves are getting ready for Spring, and the bathrooms at Buffalo Trace have been installed, which people are very excited about. Daab discussed the "Gratitude Grows" tree planting event coming up on April 24th at Kaufman Lake for the CCDC Foundation and encouraged everyone to attend.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Nature Center Construction Bid Results

Commissioner Toalson moved the Board to reject all bids for the construction of the Nature Center addition at Homer Lake Forest Preserve. Commissioner Knott seconded. A lengthy discussion ensued where Daab explained the financial deficit for the project because of the high bids and by identifying \$534,854 in estimated costs for materials for the Forest Preserve to install that had not been included to the architect's opinion of probable construction cost that was presented in December 2025. Daab provided the commissioners with three alternative options for the project to continue, should the bids be rejected, that included: Issue a bond and award the contract to the lowest bidder, consider a steel building addition to the current structure and consider demolishing the current structure and replacing it with a single, new steel building. All options were discussed in great length, including holding off on rejecting the bids and allowing the Forest Preserve Foundation Board to weigh in to see if additional fundraising would be

possible. At this time, Commissioner Toalson moved to withdraw the motion to reject the bids. Commissioner Knott moved to withdraw the second. Commissioner Knott motioned to postpone this item until the April Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Toalson seconded.

A voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

B. Approval and Execution of Illinois Department of Natural Resources OSLAD Grant 26-2673 for the Nature Center

Commissioner Bartlett moved the Board to authorize the Executive Director to sign and execute Agreement No. 26-2673, from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, for \$600,000, for the development of outdoor amenities and recreation enhancements to support the nature education building at the Homer Lake Forest Preserve. Commissioner Toalson seconded.

A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Knott, Toalson and Bartlett. Motion carried.

C. Approval of Bid for Lake of the Woods Golf Course Irrigation Improvements

Commissioner Toalson moved the Board to approve the Base Bid and Add Alternates 1, 2, and 3 for Irrigation Improvements (Materials and Labor) at Lake of the Woods Golf Course from Commercial Irrigation for **Fifty-Six Thousand Four Hundred Sixty-Six Dollars and 00/100 (\$56,466.00)** and authorize the Executive Director to execute the contract. Commissioner Knott seconded.

A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Knott, Toalson and Bartlett. Motion carried.

D. Approval of Purchase of 2026 Polaris Ranger XP 1000

Commissioner Knott moved the Board to approve the quote from Owen Motorsports for **Twenty-One Thousand Two Hundred Fifteen and 24/100 Cents (\$21,215.24)** for a 2026 Polaris Ranger XP 1000. Commissioner Toalson Seconded.

A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Knott, Toalson and Bartlett. Motion Carried.

E. Approval of Consulting Contract with Jenna Phillips

Commissioner Toalson moved the Board to approve a contract, pending legal review and clerical edits, with Jenna Phillips providing administrative and fundraising support to the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation on a limited-term basis. The Board reviewed the proposed contract between the Forest Preserves and Jenna to confirm the terms, including pay rate, equipment usage, and length of the agreement. Commissioner Knott seconded.

A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Knott, Toalson and Bartlett. Motion Carried.

F. Approval of Video Surveillance Policy

Commissioner Toalson moved the Board to approve a Video Surveillance Policy for the Forest Preserves. Daab explained this is the first Video Surveillance Policy for the Forest Preserves and

discussed the details of the policy, including the length of time the footage would be available and who would have access to it. Commissioner Knott seconded.

A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Knott, Toalson and Bartlett. Motion Carried.

G. Approval of Executive Director Increase in Salary for FY26

Commissioner Knott motioned to approve a new annual salary of \$149,052.80 for Executive Director Lorrie Pearson, and to apply such salary retroactively to January 1, 2026. Commissioner Bartlett seconded.

A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Knott, Toalson and Bartlett. Motion Carried.

DISCUSSION – None

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Toalson made a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 7:09pm. Commissioner Bartlett seconded. A voice vote was taken. Motion carried.



Mark Toalson, Secretary
Board of Commissioners
Champaign County Forest Preserve District