Journal of Proceedings
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
January 15, 2026, 6:00 pm,
Museum of the Grand Prairie Classroom, Lake of the Woods, Mahomet, Illinois

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District Board of Commissioners met at a Regular Meeting on Thursday, January 15, 2026, at the Museum of the Grand Prairie Classroom, 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, Bartlett, and Goodman.

REMOTE ATTENDANCE – None

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS - None

PRESENTATIONS - None

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

A. **Minutes of Regular Meeting on December 18, 2025**
B. **Monthly Staff Reports**
C. **Disbursements for Approval**
D. **December Treasurers Report**

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

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

FOREST PRESERVE FRIENDS FOUNDATION

Commissioner Bartlett shared that the Foundation is in the process of reviewing their Investment Policy, as well as updating their bylaws. Pearson requested the Board's input on updating the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation and the Champaign County Forest Preserves prior to the Foundation voting on the updated bylaws, so both documents are accurately referring to each other. The Board requested that the Foundation delay voting on the bylaws until the MOU has been reviewed and updated. The FPFF also voted on the 2026 Officers for the Executive Committee: Carter Billingsley, President; Will Timmons, Vice President; MaryEllen Wuellner, Treasurer; and Roger Laramie, Secretary. Non-voted appointments are Will Timmons as past President, Tim Bartlett, Foundation Liaison and Lorrie Pearson, Staff Representative.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

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

- Congratulations to the staff on the approval of the OSLAD grant. Congratulations to Sam Ihm on his first grant approval as Planning Director.
- Great to see the facility rental numbers increase for 2025.

- Pleased to see the donor benches and plaques being installed around the preserves. This is important to donors and their families, and they enhance the look of the preserves.
- Appreciation for all the hard work that's gone into moving staff, equipment and animals from the Homer Lake Interpretive Center to the Middle Fork River Activity Center.
- Great job on the successful Night Lights season. Everyone seemed to enjoy the display.
- Thank you to all the volunteers and staff who made it happen.
- Congratulations to the golf staff on their successful season. Their numbers are impressive, especially considering December was a non-golf month.
- Looking forward to Matt Kuntz' Dark Sky presentation at the IAPD Conference at the end of January.
- Enjoyed seeing the special programs coordinated with the Night Lights this year.
- Very impressed with the Homer Lake staff salvaging an old tree that had been cut down at the preserve by making it into beautiful Adirondack chairs.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Executive Director Announcements

Pearson updated the Board on the partnership between several departments for the move from the Homer Lake Interpretive Center to the Middle Fork Activity Center, including the construction team who altered the space to make it available for the staff and animals. The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners will hold their July meeting in the classroom space. Pearson thanked the commissioners who attended the Trail Mixer Holiday Party in December and mentioned the great feedback she received regarding the event. Pearson updated the Board on the successful 2025 Trails Challenge and the comments received from participants.

Deputy Executive Director Mike Daab provided an update regarding the Lake of the Woods Streambank project. The contractor will begin the project once they have finished a current project in another state. Once the project begins, there will be road closures that will affect traffic in that area of the preserve.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Lease Agreement with Norfolk Southern for the KRT

Commissioner Knott moved the Board Commissioner to authorize the Executive Director to execute the lease agreement between the Norfolk Southern Railway Company and Champaign County Forest Preserve District on 1.25 acres of land for use as the Kickapoo Rail Trail at a rate of **Two Thousand Seventy-Two and 00/100 Dollars ($2072.00)** per quarter ($8,288 annually), pending final legal review. Daab addressed concerns from the Board regarding the potential for Norfolk Southern to not renew the lease agreement after CCFPD has finished construction. The Board expressed desire to purchase the property versus leasing, which Daab explained was not an option at this time. Bartlet seconded.

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

B. Approval of Line of Credit to Address Cash Flow

Commissioner Toalson moved the Board to authorize the Executive Director to execute a line of credit agreement with Bank Champaign, unless Busey Bank submits a term sheet on or before January 31, 2026, for an uncollateralized line of credit of $3 million at a calculated interest rate less than 5.35%. In that case, the Board authorizes the Executive Director to execute a line of credit agreement with Busey Bank with those more favorable terms. Brock Martin reported that Busey had submitted their term sheet prior to the meeting, but the terms presented by BankChampaign were more favorable overall. Martin confirmed for the Board that the CCFPD and FPFF have established relationships with both Busey and BankChampaign. Commissioner Knott requested a substitute motion to authorize the Executive Director to execute a line of credit with BankChampaign for an uncollateralized line of credit for $3 million at a calculated interest rate currently at 5.35%. Commissioner Bartlett seconded.

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

C. **Approval of Policy Updates to Policy 2-2: Overtime and Compensatory Time, Policy 3-1.1: Holiday Pay, and Policy 3.13: Paid Family Leave**

Commissioner Knott moved the Board to approve policy revisions regarding Overtime and Compensatory Time, Holiday Pay, and Paid Family Leave, with revisions to Policies 2-2 and 3-1.1 being retroactively effective beginning on November 20, 2025. Jessica Mullins, HR Director, explained that policy revisions were necessary to recognize the effort of staff in emergency response needs, protect the CCFPD investment in staff, increase the ability to be competitive in the job market, and protect and support staff in their most significant family moments. Commissioner Goodman seconded.

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

DISCUSSION

A. **Kickapoo Rail Trail Update and Discussion**

Sam Ihm, Planning Director, provided an update regarding revisions to the Intergovernmental Agreement for the spending of Kickapoo Rail Trail Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity funds. Ihm explained that the developed plan for the KRT addresses the funding deficit, as well as creates a feasible path for future funding of the deferred section. Ihm provided a detailed map of both the proposed scope change versus the allocated scope in the Intergovernmental Agreement. Ihm stated there is no action to be taken at this time but notified the Board to expect draft revisions at the February meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:46pm, Commissioner Knott moved to go into a closed session for "The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body," as authorized by 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

Commissioner Bartlett seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted "yes": Hundley, Knott, Toalson, Bartlett and Goodman. Motion carried.

At 7:17pm, Commissioner Knott moved the Board back into open session. Commissioner Bartlett seconded. A voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Knott made a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 7:17pm. Commissioner Bartlett seconded. A voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

Timothy L. Bartlett

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