

Journal of Proceedings
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
October 16, 2025, 6:00 pm,
Museum of the Grand Prairie Classroom, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 900 N
Lombard, Mahomet, Illinois

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District Board of Commissioners met at a Regular Meeting on Thursday, October 16, 2025, at the Museum of the Grand Prairie Classroom, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 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, Toalson, Bartlett and Goodman. Commissioner Knott was absent with notice.

REMOTE ATTENDANCE – None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bruce Stickers, a resident of St. Joseph, speaking on behalf of the Champaign County Design + Conservation Foundation (CCDC) spoke regarding the completion of the KRT Project. He referenced a letter that was sent to the Champaign County Forest Preserve Board of Commissioners prior to the meeting, requesting that the Board accept the bid and move forward with the project. Stickers requested that the Board work with all groups who have a vested interest in seeing the project completed to obtain money for the shortfall.

Philip Hult, a resident of Mahomet and former Board Commissioner, speaking on behalf of Heartland Pathways and Trails of the Grand Prairie, encouraged the Board to approve the contract to complete the KRT. Hult discussed options for fundraising and encouraged the Board to seek and identify organizations willing to assist with the funds needed to accept the bid and complete the path.

MaryEllen Wuellner, representing the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation (FPFF), returned this month to express her appreciation for the Champaign County Forest Preserve District employees who have helped move the KRT project along. Wuellner updated the Board regarding the monthly KRT meetings that are now being held to further the fundraising efforts. Wuellner stated the FPFF has agreed to put forth \$50,000 for the 2026 budget year to assist in fundraising, as well as allocated money from donors that were restricted for the KRT. Wuellner also updated that the Urbana Park District Foundation offered to match donations, but more time is needed to raise funds.

Jeff Yockey, representing Champaign County Bikes and Trails of the Grand Prairie, echoed the comments from Wuellner regarding the KRT project. Yockey encouraged the board to be bold, trust your partners and go! Yockey offered support from the Trails of the Grand Prairie organization and recommended the Board approve the bid and finish the KRT project.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS – None

PRESENTATIONS – None

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes of Executive Session on January 16, 2025
- B. Minutes of Executive Session on February 20, 2025
- C. Minutes of Executive Session on March 20, 2025
- D. Minutes of Executive Session on April 17, 2025
- E. Minutes of Executive Session on May 15, 2025
- F. Minutes of Executive Session on August 21, 2025
- G. Minutes of Regular Meeting on September 18, 2025
- H. Monthly Staff Reports
- I. Strategic Plan Progress 2025 – Q1-Q3
- J. Disbursements for Approval
- K. September Treasurers Report

Commissioner Toalson made a motion to approve consent agenda items A. through K. Commissioner Goodman seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Toalson, Bartlett and Goodman. Motion carried.

FOREST PRESERVE FRIENDS FOUNDATION

Commissioner Bartlett provided updates regarding the Pollinator Garden that was fully funded by the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation (FPFF). Bartlett thanked Rusty Maulding, Site Superintendent for the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, for the tour he provided to the FPFF as well as explaining the purpose and intent of the type of plants and installation used for planting. Bartlett stated the FPFF approved the financial reports, with additional funds going to the KRT project, as well as the playground at Middle Fork. The Foundation held off on approving the 2026 annual budget to allow for any further discussion regarding fundraising for the KRT or any other projects. Bartlett provided the staff update on the Whiskey Hike, scheduled for October 19, and encouraged everyone to attend. The FPFF is in the process of planning for the Three Rivers donor event, as well as the Homer Lake Nature Center fundraising promotion. Bartlett thanks the Grand Prairie Friends Foundation for hosting their donor event at the Museum of the Grand Prairie.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioners noted the following items from staff reports and observations:

- Congratulations to Sam Ihm on his promotion to Director of Planning
- Welcome to Jessica Mullins in her new position as Human Resources Director
- Pleased to see collaboration with the University of Illinois
- The increase in visitor service numbers across the board is impressive
- Appreciation for the fall decor, including the Spooky Trail, and all the hard work that goes into putting that together
- Congratulations to the golf course on a record-breaking month
- Bats at the Bridge event had impressive attendance and was a great program
- Thank you to the volunteers for what they do for the preserves
- Glad to see the dog treadmill is back after being conserved.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Executive Director Announcements

Pearson updated that the Nature Center planning is going well. The staff and animals from the Interpretive Center will move into the Activity Center at Middle Fork at either the end of 2025 or early 2026. Pearson encouraged everyone to attend the Whiskey Hike and view the progress on the overlook at Buffalo Trace. November 6 is the Illinois Associate of Park Districts (IAPD) Legal Symposium. December 3 is the Holiday Party. Commissioners are invited to participate in both events. January 29-31 is the IAPD Soaring Heights Conference. Two Board members can attend. Matt Kuntz, Site Superintendent at Middle Fork, is presenting on the Dark Sky Park. CCFPD is combining social media accounts in early 2026, to reduce the number of social media posts shared across several accounts and increase efficiency.

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Bid for Kickapoo Rail Trail Construction

Commissioner Goodman moved the Board to authorize the approval of Bid for Kickapoo Rail Trail Construction. Sam Ihm provided an update on the bid process and stated the contractor has given CCFPD a deadline of April 1 to begin construction. Ihm anticipates a donation of \$75,000 from FPFF and \$50,000 from Urbana Park District, but fundraising will need to continue to see the project to completion. If sufficient funds are not raised to complete the project, the worst-case scenario would be to remove sections of the trail, primarily sections of the trail that involve Union Pacific Railroad and Norfolk Southern Railroad that we currently are awaiting permission from to move forward. If construction does not begin by April 1, the price of construction may change and further push the deadline for completion. Ihm confirmed that three parties have reviewed the project, including consultants, engineers and our legal team. All recommend the approach that CCFPD is currently taking, that also has the least risk for the organization. Commissioner Toalson seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted "yes": Hundley, Goodman, Bartlett and Toalson. Motion carried.

B. Authorization and Execution of ILDCEO Grant 24-203436 for the KRT

Commissioner Toalson moved the Board to approve the Authorization and Execution of ILDCEO Grant 24-203436 for the KRT. Pearson asked to have direct approval for the Executive Director to be able to make amendments or negotiate the grant to be used for other purposes for the KRT. Toalson amended the motion. Brock Martin, Business and Finance Director, stated the grant was part of the 2024 Appropriations Bill and it allocates \$50,000 for amenities and signage along the KRT. Martin stated that the DCEO has confirmed it cannot guarantee that any of the funds can be used for other KRT projects. Commissioner Bartlett seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted "yes": Hundley, Toalson, Bartlett and Goodman. Motion carried.

C. Resolution 2025-13 Authorizing Application of a DCEO Tourism Attraction Grant for the Kickapoo Rail Trail

Commissioner Toalson moved to approve Resolution 2025-13 Authorizing Application of a DCEO Tourism Attraction Grant for the Kickapoo Rail Trail. Sam Ihm noted that the resolution for the grant was not included in the original board packet but was provided at the meeting. The program offers grants of up to \$200,000 for development and enhancement of tourism and attractions. Pearson confirmed that there is a 50% match required, which would be met anyway. Commissioner Goodman seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Goodman, Toalson and Bartlett. Motion carried.

D. Resolution 2025-14, 2026 Golf Fees

Commissioner Goodman moved to approve Resolution 2025-14, 2026 Golf Fees. This Resolution increases the golf spectator fees. Commissioner Hundley inquired when the last fee increase took place. Pearson responded that she believes the last fee increase was within the last few years. Pearson discussed the potential need for additional fee increases for golf in the coming months. Commissioner Toalson inquired about the additional fees to which Pearson replied that the golf clubhouse rental facility fees could change. Currently, the clubhouse fees do not align with other Champaign County Forest Preserve facility rentals. The new fee structure would open the opportunity for an increase in rental availability and rental revenue consistent with all other facilities. Commissioner Toalson seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Toalson, Bartlett and Goodman. Motion carried.

E. Ordinance 2025-02: Annual Tentative Tax Levy Ordinance for 2025 Taxes Due in 2026

Commissioner Toalson moved to approve the Ordinance 2025-02: Annual Tentative Tax Levy Ordinance for 2025 Taxes Due in 2026. Commissioner Toalson asks if everything captured in the Ordinance will capture all potential growth. Martin confirmed that the fee structure will far exceed any potential growth. Commissioner Goodman seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Hundley, Toalson, Goodman and Bartlett.

DISCUSSION

A. Draft FY26 Management Plan and Budget (Working Budget)

Martin explained that there have been no changes made to the 2026 budget since the last board update. Martin confirms the 3% salary increase for employees, the 2% job grade increase and discussed the challenge of increasing insurance premiums. CCFPD revenue will heavily rely on property taxes that are budgeted at a 3% tax increase. Pearson inquired as to whether the Board feels a study session in December is necessary or if the Board can approve the budget in November to have an active working budget, beginning January 1, 2026. Commissioner Goodman stated that the budget that Martin has provided is very comprehensive, detailed and is sufficient to approve in November without a study session. The following commissioners agreed to cancel any study session scheduled for December: Hundley, Toalson, Bartlett and Goodman.

NEW BUSINESS, CONTINUED - None

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Hundley declared Regular Meeting adjourned at 6:44pm.



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