

FOREST PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD  
REPORT TO COUNCIL

Report No. 2013-02

SUBJECT: Ancestral Knowledge request to conduct classes within the  
Greenbelt Forest Preserve

DATE: November 27, 2013

BACKGROUND: Late in 2012 it became known to the City of Greenbelt and the Forest Preserve Advisory Board that fee based classes were being conducted by the company Ancestral Knowledge, in part, within the Greenbelt Forest Preserve. The appropriateness of this activity was questioned since it was a fee based activity.

The City Code, at Sec. 12-156 states that “no commercial enterprise” shall be permitted within an area designated as a forest preserve. The City Solicitor has opined that the activities of Ancestral Knowledge are considered commercial since its classes are a fee based activity. Accordingly, utilization of the forest preserve in the conduct of Ancestral Knowledge classes is prohibited.

DISCUSSION: The intent of the City Code is clearly stated in Section 12-156 and further stated on page 46 of the Forest Preserve Management and Maintenance Guidelines stating that certain activities are inconsistent and prohibited in the forest preserve, such as “activities of a principally commercial nature”. Representatives have argued that because Ancestral Knowledge is a non-profit business, it is therefore not considered commercial in nature. However, the designation of a business as for profit, not for profit, or non-profit, are tax status designations. It is the exchange of monetary compensation for services, such as Ancestral Knowledge’s tuition based courses, which cause the use to be considered commercial in nature. Consequently, Ancestral Knowledge is not permitted to conduct such classes in the forest preserve.

RECOMMENDATION: The Forest Preserve Advisory Board adopted the following motion: “... *Ancestral Knowledge and any other activities of a commercial nature will not be permitted in the forest preserve as referenced by the Forest Preserve Management and Maintenance Guidelines under Activities and Special Events (p. 46) where it states: “Certain activities are clearly inconsistent and prohibited, and have been so identified in the ordinance: “Such prohibited activities would include ...activities of a principally commercial nature,” Greenbelt Code clearly states under Sec. 12-156. Prohibited activities: “no commercial enterprise ... shall be permitted within an area designated under this article as a forest preserve area. Under Sec. 12-160. Special events it further states: “Special events that are principally commercial in nature ... shall be considered inconsistent with the intent of this article”.*

It is the recommendation of the Forest Preserve Advisory Board that Ancestral Knowledge not be permitted to conduct fee for service courses, in full or part, within the Greenbelt Forest Preserve.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Robert Snyder, Chairman

The report was approved by a vote of 5-3-1.

APPROVED