

MINUTES OF THE FOREST PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2013 IN THE GREENBELT COMMUNITY CENTER

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Robert Snyder called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

PRESENT were members Donna Almquist, Valerie Elliott, Susan Gregersen, Donna Hoffmeister, Damien Ossi, Robert Snyder, Yoni Siegel and Joseph Murray. Mr. Witter arrived at 7:10 p.m.

ALSO PRESENT were City Council liaison Rodney Roberts and Celia Craze, Director, Department of Planning and Community Development.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The agenda was approved by a vote of 8-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: On a motion by Ms. Gregersen and seconded by Ms. Hoffmeister, the minutes of the meeting of May 23, 2013 were approved. Action on the minutes of September 26, 2013 was postponed until the next meeting.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST BY ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE FOR APPROVAL TO UTILIZE FOREST PRESERVE LANDS IN ITS INSTRUCTIONAL CLASSES: Chair Robert Snyder stated that this issue had lingered and action by the Board would be appropriate. Ms. Almquist made the following motion: *I move that 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 und 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".* The motion was seconded by Ms. Gregersen/

Mr. Witter stated that calling a non-profit commercial is slippery ground, and that the City could get sued for discrimination, for not applying the same standard to other groups. He reiterated his opinion that Ancestral Knowledge should not be considered a commercial operation. Ms. Almquist responded that Ancestral Knowledge would be welcomed into the preserve if a fee were not being charged for the class, and that it is the exchange of money for the class that precludes Ancestral Knowledge from using the forest preserve.

Mr. Witter asked what Ancestral Knowledge would be allowed to do in the forest preserve, to which Chairman stated that these issues had previously been discussed by the Board. Ms. Elliott voiced her agreement with Ms. Almquist, and reminded the Board that City Solicitor Robert Manzi had already offered his opinion that Ancestral Knowledge would be considered commercial as it currently offered classes. Ms. Gregersen expressed concern that if an exception was allowed for Ancestral

Knowledge, that other similar groups would seek similar allowances for use of the forest preserve.

There was a question from the audience if Greenbelt Nursery School and Kindergarten (GNSK) would be considered a commercial use and therefore would not be able to take groups of children into the preserve. Mr. Roberts responded that he believed that GNSK would not be precluded from taking children into the preserve because there is not a few charged for the specific purpose of taking participants into the preserve. There was another question if the City would be precluded from using the preserve in its recreational programming. Ms. Craze responded that as a City sponsored activity there would not be a problem.

Chairman Snyder called the question. The motion passed on a vote of 5-3-1 with the vote recorded as follows:

AYE – Almquist, Gregersen, Snyder, Siegel, Elliott

NAY – Ossi, Hoffmeister, Witter

ABSTAIN – Murray

Mr. Ossi moved that the Board suggest to Ancestral Knowledge that they revise their fee structure so that Ancestral Knowledge would be able to use forest preserve lands in their curriculum. Mr. Witter seconded.

Ms. Gregersen stated that she did not believe that the Board should be commenting on how a business is operated. Mr. Witter responded that the purpose of the forest preserve is to protect these wooded lands, and that teaching others to appreciate the forest preserve is consistent with the preserve's purpose. Chairman and Ms. Almquist stated that they did not believe it was the place of the Board to make such a suggestion. At this point Ms. Craze reminded that Board and Mr. Murray that Mr. Murray had a conflict of interest, and he should not be participating in discussion about Ancestral Knowledge.

Mr. Witter made a motion that the Board ask that the City Council work with Ancestral Knowledge to explore ways that Ancestral Knowledge's activities could be made to comply with the forest preserve guidelines and regulations. Ms. Hoffmeister seconded. Mr. Roberts stated that he would be willing to work with Ancestral Knowledge in that effort. Chairman Snyder expressed his opinion that the discussion and motions to help Ancestral Knowledge devise an approach which would allow it to use the preserve is an effort of those voting with the minority on Ms. Almquist's main motion to change the Board's vote on that motion.

Ms. Gregersen moved that discussion on Mr. Witter's motion be tabled. Ms. Siegel seconded. This motion passed by a vote of 6-2-1 with Mr. Murray abstaining. Ms. Gregersen moved that discussion of Mr. Ossi's motion be tabled. Ms. Elliott seconded. This motion passed by a vote of 6-2-1 with Mr. Murray abstaining.

GREEN ACES SUSTAINABILITY PLAN: Chairman Snyder stated that he was impressed with the introduction to the plan, but he had flagged several references related to the forest preserve and/or the community gardens. He specifically mentioned references on pages 20, 24, 25, 27, and 28. He suggested that the Board review these sections, and any other references to the forest preserve or community gardens.

Bill Phelan suggested that the Board and the City consider reviewing standards for pesticide use contained in the Pesticide Action Network, and not just NOLCS as referenced in the Green ACES plan.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF DRAFT REVISIONS TO MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES FOR THE FOREST PRESERVE RE. COMMUNITY GARDENS: Chairman Snyder discussed staking of the proposed 8 foot cleared area around the gardens recommended as the area of routine maintenance. He questioned why city staff was recommending an 8 foot buffer strip, versus a strip that is 6 or 4 feet wide. Ms. Craze responded that the 8 foot width was favored by staff because of the size of the equipment that will be used for most of the clearing and cutting in the buffer strip. She also stated that the ultimate decision on the width of the buffer strip would be determined by the City Council. Ms. Gregersen stated that trees should only be removed as necessary. Ed James asked if vehicular access and parking would be retained for use by gardeners.

There was extensive discussion about trees shading gardens, how much sunlight is needed for gardening, and how one compares the relative value of trees versus gardens. Ms. Almquist suggested that several common garden plots could be made available for gardeners with heavily shaded plots, so these gardens would have an alternate location to grow sun loving crops.

A member of the audience stated that the gardens should take precedence over the forest preserve since the gardens existed before the forest preserve was created. Mr. James stated that placing pressure the gardens could result in pressure being placed on GHI to create gardens on GHI property which is wooded. Chairman Snyder responded that he lived in GHI, and it was his belief that GHI cannot just decide to clear GHI wooded land for gardens.

Mr. Brian Almquist read a letter which was submitted to the Board.

Further action on this item was deferred to the next meeting.

DISCUSSION OF GREENBELT COMMUNITY GARDEN CLUB LETTER ON SHADE AND TREE REMOVAL: Chairman Snyder summarized a letter submitted by Lauren Whitaker which discussed shading of the gardens and recommended that a 40 foot buffer be established to create a transition zone between the gardens and the forested areas. He asked if the transition/buffer zone was so important that garden plots should be repurposed for such use. Ms. Whitaker asked why the Board thought that trees are more important vegetation than shrubs, or other vegetation which would live in a transition zone.

There was additional discussion of the precedence of the forest preserve versus the garden. Mr. Roberts stated he thought that the effort should be to protect the gardens as gardens, but that expansion of gardening could occur elsewhere in the City.

DISCUSSION OF USE OF PESTICIDES, HERBICIDES AND OTHER CHEMICALS IN THE COMMUNITY GARDENS AND FOREST PRESERVE, AND IN RELATION TO THE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES: Discussion of this item was postponed to a later meeting.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting was scheduled for November 21, 2013 at 7 p.m. in room 114 of the Community Center.

Chairman Snyder reminded the Board about the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the forest preserve, to be held 10/27/2013 at the New Deal Café.

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Mr. Murray and seconded by Mr. Witter, the meeting was adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Celia W. Craze

Director

These minutes were approved by a vote of .