



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES

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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

DATE: August 31, 2015

TO: Craig Taylor, Chair
Education, Cultural Resources and Public Affairs Committee

S. Michael Rummel, Chair
Finance and Administrative Committee

FROM: Nan Buckardt, Director
Education

SUBJECT: Policy Direction Regarding Renewal of the License Agreement for Green Youth Farm in Lake County

RECOMMENDATION: Policy Direction Regarding the Renewal of the License Agreement with the Chicago Botanic Garden for the Green Youth Farm in Lake County at Greenbelt Forest Preserve

BACKGROUND: Lake County Forest Preserves initially entered into a license agreement in 2003 with the Chicago Botanic Garden for the use of approximately one acre of land for the Green Youth Farm in Lake County, in the Greenbelt Forest Preserve. The agreement has been renewed twice since that time; the current license expires November 30, 2015.

Since its inception, the Green Youth Farm has become an important part of the North Chicago and Waukegan communities. Each summer high school youth from those communities are hired to work at the farm. Chicago Botanic Garden staff works closely with the local high schools to find these students. Students are involved in all aspects of the production from planting, weeding and pest management to developing a market plan for the sale of the produce. Many of the students have returned for consecutive summers of employment and several have gone on to study in environmental or horticultural programs.

In addition, the community has welcomed the fresh, sustainably-grown produce available at the Greenbelt Forest Preserve. The Green Youth Farm staff has worked with the Lake County Health Department to allow eligible county residents to use WIC program coupons to purchase the healthful foods produced at the Green Youth Farm.

In 2012, partway through the current license agreement period, the Chicago Botanic Garden approached the Preservation Foundation with a request to help fund the Green Youth Farm Program. Pursuant to a funding agreement between the Preservation Foundation and the Chicago Botanic Garden, Foundation staff was directed to attempt raising 25% of the direct program cost in 2014 and 50% in 2015. The goal for 2015 is \$78,000. To date, the Preservation Foundation has raised \$63,000 for this year's program. The funding agreement is between the Preservation Foundation and the Chicago Botanic Garden and not tied directly to the license agreement.

Since the District started contributing funds to the operation of the Green Youth Farm, site improvements have been made by District staff including brush clearing on the west side of the garden and installation of a new entrance gate and patio. The cost for materials and staff time contributed in the past two seasons exceeds \$17,000.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: Policy direction is requested regarding the renewal of the license agreement, which expires November 30, 2015.

FINANCIAL DATA: Potential investment of District development staff time if the funding agreement continues. In addition, a new license agreement for the use of the land will require the placement of a gravel pad working surface to meet the strict food safety standards set by the US Department of Agriculture's Good Agricultural Practices. An information panel about the Green Youth Farm in Lake County and our partnership with the Chicago Botanic Garden is recommended at the entrance of the garden.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Executive Director, Chief Operations Officer, Finance Director, Public Affairs and Development Director, Chief Development Officer

PRESENTER: Nan Buckardt