



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES
www.LCFPD.org

Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

DATE: September 13, 2016

MEMO TO: Honorable Board of Commissioners

FROM: Alex Ty Kovach
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Discussion and Possible Motion on OSLAD Grant at Spring Bluff Forest Preserve

Agenda Item# 11.1

In January 2015 the District was notified that it was awarded an Open Space, Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) Grant in the amount of \$263,700 to support development of 0.75 miles of trail and a wildlife observation platform at Spring Bluff Forest Preserve near Winthrop Harbor. The District signed the grant agreement committing to matching funds of no less than the grant amount (\$263,700) on January 22, 2015 and returned it to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to be countersigned. Before the grant could be fully executed, the new administration suspended the grant. We have had no new information from IDNR on the status of the grant until late last month.

Subsequently, on March 8, 2016, the Board of Commissioners approved the 2016/17 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Budget and 10-year plan. This plan removed thirteen preserve improvement projects, including the Spring Bluff trail and platform, from the funded project list. Removing these projects allowed the District to free up \$5,170,600. This enabled us to stretch the available CIP funds out 10 years and to continue critical preserve maintenance, habitat restoration, and infrastructure replacement projects over that 10-year period.

On August 23, 2016, we received from IDNR the fully executed agreement, as well as notification that the State has authorized an advance payment of 50% of the grant award. Per the agreement, the project must be completed by August 19, 2018. We immediately contacted IDNR and informed them that this project was no longer in the District's CIP budget. After some conversation the District appears to have three options:

Option 1: Accept the Grant

The District can choose to accept the grant. No formal Board action is required. The Spring Bluff Trail and Observation Platform Project will need to be placed on the funded list when the Board adopts the 2017/18 CIP Budget early next year. The \$263,700 matching funds will have to be offset with reductions to another project or projects, the contingency fund, or a combination thereof.

Option 2: Reject the Grant Immediately

Under normal circumstances rejecting an OSLAD Grant Award would result in the District being debarred from receiving any future IDNR grants for a period of 2-years. However, due to the unusual situation of having the grant suspended, and having no information provided for almost 19 months, IDNR will allow the District to reject the grant without penalty, providing that the District does so immediately. If the Board chooses this option it will need to take the action of entertaining a motion and a second to authorize the Executive Director to send a letter to IDNR rejecting the OSLAD Grant. A majority vote of the Board of Commissioners would then be required.

Option 3: Delay Decision

The third option is to delay any decision on the OSLAD Grant until early next year when, as part of our normal budget process, the CIP Budget will be discussed, revised and approved. If at that time the Spring Bluff project is funded, no further action would be required. However, if the decision is made at that time to reject the grant, the District will be barred from receiving any IDNR grants for a period of 2-years.