



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES
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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

DATE: April 1, 2019

MEMO TO: John Wasik, Chair
Planning Committee

FROM: Randall L. Seebach
Director of Planning and Land Preservation

REQUEST: Provide policy direction regarding a request from the Village of Lake Villa to allow annexation of a portion of District property at Bluebird Meadow Forest Preserve.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED: None

FINANCIAL DATA: At this time there is no financial impact.

BACKGROUND: The Village of Lake Villa (Village) has requested that the District consider allowing the annexation of two parcels of District property at Bluebird Meadow Forest Preserve, PINs 02-30-200-005 and 02-30-200-012s, which would create contiguity between the Village's boundaries and the Heffernan property, the owners of which have requested annexation into the Village.

The property is currently zoned for Agriculture under the Lake County Unified Development Ordinance. In conjunction with annexation into the Village, the owners of the Heffernan property would seek zoning and other permissions they desire for their planned uses of the property, which include:

- agricultural uses and related events;
- equestrian assisted activities, including therapeutic horseback riding, general riding lessons, and trail rides accessing Bluebird Meadow Forest Preserve;
- event-based activities, such as seasonal family and craft food and beverage festivals, weddings, corporate, family and private events, as well as an incubator kitchen to create partnerships with other local farmers to produce locally-made food products and to host farm-to-table events which may grow into seasonal restaurant use; and
- use of the existing houses for short-term rental and as rental space in conjunction with special events, with the possible creation of camping sites to expand access to the public for events and exploring the Forest Preserves and Lake County.

The District received a letter, dated October 25, 2018, from the Village requesting annexation of District property, which was presented to the Committee during the January 7 Planning Committee meeting. During the meeting, Executive Director Kovach referenced a 1991 Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) which, in part, requires the District to obtain prior approval from the Village to discuss, with potential sellers, the acquisition of property in the Village. This limitation is inconsistent with the District's authority under the Downstate Forest Preserve District Act, which does not require

the District to seek such permission. In addition, it was noted that the District has rarely allowed annexation of its property, and only in situations in which there is significant benefit to the District.

The Committee directed staff to meet with Village representatives to discuss its annexation request and the terms of the IGA. On February 20, 2019, Ken Jones and I met with the Mayor and the Village Administrator. During the meeting, the Village representatives refused to consider a termination of the IGA, and specifically the requirement that the District receive prior approval from the Village before attempting to purchase property within its municipal boundaries.

Since the Village will not terminate the 1991 IGA, there is no apparent benefit to the District for allowing its property to be annexed. Staff recommends that the Village's annexation request be denied.

Staff is seeking direction/concurrence from the Planning Committee to prepare a letter to the Village denying its annexation request .

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Executive Director, Chief Operations Officer, Director of Finance, Corporate Counsel.