



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES
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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

DATE: November 4, 2019

TO: Jessica Vealitzek, Chair
Operations Committee

FROM: Nan Buckardt
Director of Education

REQUEST: Provide Policy Direction Regarding District Involvement with Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods' Smith Nature Symposium Benefit.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION SUPPORTED: Organizational Sustainability

FINANCIAL DATA: The District provided nearly \$4,500 in staff time and fee waivers for this event in 2019.

BACKGROUND: Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods ("Brushwood Center") is a 501(c)(3) which was originally formed as the Friends of Ryerson Woods ("Friends") in 1984. The Friends group was formed to promote and support Ryerson Woods and the Lake County Forest Preserves. Annual financial donations were made to the District as part of this support in the early years.

Currently, Brushwood Center has a license agreement with the District allowing them to operate from the former estate home located at Ryerson Woods. Brushwood Center's mission is to promote the importance of nature for nurturing personal and community wellbeing, cultivating creativity, and inspiring learning. Brushwood Center does pay a monthly license fee. The organization no longer makes financial donations to the District.

The Smith Nature Symposium was first offered in 1984 as a joint project between the District and the newly formed Friends group. The goal was to increase environmental awareness and knowledge by bringing world renowned scientists to Ryerson Woods and offering affordable workshops and lectures about nature.

Over the years, the event changed in scale and focus from a four-weekend educational event to a one evening fundraising dinner, still with a renowned speaker, but with the primary goal to raise operating funds for Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods. In the past, there was an opportunity for the general public to attend the lecture portion of the event in an economical manner. This opportunity was not offered at the 2019 event.

Over the years, the District's direct involvement with the Smith Nature Symposium has decreased. In 2019, the District provided about 40 hours of staff time and permit waivers to Brushwood Center for the event at a value of approximately \$4,500.

The District has been asked to participate in the planning and hosting of the 2020 Smith Nature Symposium event.

Staff is seeking policy direction whether to continue supporting the fundraising event for Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods.

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