



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES
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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

DATE: January 6, 2020

MEMO TO: John Wasik, Chair
Planning Committee

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

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend approval of a Resolution approving the Master Plan for Public Access Improvements and Habitat Restoration at Lakewood Forest Preserve.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED: Public Access and Connections; Conservation.

FINANCIAL DATA: The attached resolution would not authorize the expenditure of any funds. At a later date, the Board of Commissioners would approve the expenditure of specific design and construction contracts to implement the Master Plan. This project was approved as part of the adopted FY2020 Capital Improvement Plan for Lakewood Forest Preserve in the amount of \$4,257,423.00. Additional funding will be provided through the Lakewood Tree Plantings project and the Annual Tree Plantings project that were approved as part of the adopted FY2020 Capital Improvement Plan in the amount of \$314,620.00 and \$100,000.00 respectively. It is anticipated that additional funding in the amount of \$400,000.00 will be provided through an IDNR OSLAD grant. The cost estimate for the phase I public access improvements, as shown on the Master Plan, is \$5,100,000.00.

BACKGROUND: Lakewood Forest Preserve is located in the southwest portion of Lake County near Wauconda and is bisected by two major roads, Route 176 and Fairfield Road, dividing the preserve into four quadrants. The District acquired the land comprising Lakewood through more than 50 separate transactions over the past 50 years and Lakewood is now the District's largest forest preserve with over 2,835-acres. The site includes dedicated equestrian trails, and additional trails for hiking, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. The landscape is a mixture of oak woods, wetlands, and fields.

In 1968, the District acquired the first of the parcels that now comprise Lakewood. Prior to these initial acquisitions, the main portion of the preserve functioned as a gentleman's farm from 1937 to 1965 and was named Lakewood Farms. The original Lakewood Farms included 16 major buildings including a dairy barn, cow barn, milking barn, granary, chicken house, and the main residence. The former farm buildings were converted to various District facilities, but were not efficient or ideal for those purposes and proved to be very costly to maintain because of their age and the age and condition of their associated infrastructure. Today, many of those buildings are approaching 80-years old and stand unoccupied because of facility relocations and the costs to address their structural integrity, building code, and accessibility issues. Roads and parking lots were constructed over time, including in the early 1970's, without an overall plan or determination on the appropriate parking capacity and are in very poor condition. Many of the existing trails are not routed properly to manage stormwater and flooding during heavy rain periods, causing erosion and requiring periodic trail closures. Redundant trail segments are complicated to sign and difficult to navigate.

The Master Plan process began in 2017 with a team of District staff from six different departments, assembled to provide input throughout the master planning process. The team developed four main goals that have guided the preparation of the Master Plan including: (i) provide an improved public access and recreation experience that is ADA-compliant, properly-sized, accommodates future needs, and reduces short-term and long-term operating costs, (ii) provide a new and more efficient design which consolidates uses within a smaller footprint, supports the District's educational programs and community events, and satisfies current and future public access needs, (iii) replace and/or renovate critical operational infrastructure and (iv) dedicate new areas for restoration consistent with the District's natural resource goals. Commissioners, staff and the public participated in the planning process. Public input was achieved through several methods including: an on-line survey, a public open house, and an on-line comment period. The District ultimately received more than 350 written comments during the planning process.

The Master Plan is consistent with the four main goals identified above, by providing a more compact and efficient design with infrastructure that (i) is rightsized, offering a significant reduction in annual operating costs, (ii) is ADA compliant, (iii) is respectful of the site's sensitive natural resources, and (iv) provides the appropriate balance between competing interests. The Master Plan includes the removal of the former Museum complex, the former Archives building, the grounds maintenance facility, shelters A, B and C and the group camping area. The Master Plan also calls for several new public access improvements including but not limited to: (i) two new shelters, one of which will be a three-season shelter, (ii) accessibility improvements to the existing shelter E area, (iii) a net zero grounds maintenance facility, (iv) a nature based children's play area, (v) trail improvements including a 1.6-mile fully accessible asphalt loop trail, a 1-mile gravel trail connecting the proposed Village of Wauconda Bike Path to Lakewood and the Millennium Trail, a 1.6-mile separate dedicated trail allowing biking, hiking and dog walking from Milton Road to Lakewood's core area, and improvements to the existing equestrian trails south of Ivanhoe Road to address flooding and erosion issues, and (vi) a more efficient and properly-sized road and parking lot system.

The Master Plan also identifies significant habitat restoration improvements including: (i) removal of the existing dam and water control structure at Beaver and Acorn ponds along with the restoration of the natural hydrology feeding into Lakewood Marsh, (ii) ravine restoration in seven areas, (iii) restoration of the rare calcareous floating mat on Taylor Lake, (iv) additional invasive tree and shrub management, (v) drain tile disablement and wetland restoration, (vi) native seed installation, and (vii) additional reforestation. In total, there are over 1000 acres of additional habitat restoration planned and, when complete, 80% of the land at Lakewood will be fully restored.

Staff anticipates that engineering to implement the Master Plan will start in 2020 and construction of Master Plan infrastructure will start in 2021.

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

STATE OF ILLINOIS)
) SS
COUNTY OF LAKE)

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
REGULAR JANUARY MEETING
JANUARY 14, 2020**

MISTER PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

Your **PLANNING COMMITTEE** presents herewith “A Resolution Approving the Master Plan for Public Access Improvements and Habitat Restoration at Lakewood Forest Preserve,” and requests its approval.

PLANNING COMMITTEE:

Date: _____ Roll Call Vote: Ayes:____ Nays:____
 Voice Vote Majority Ayes; Nays:____

**LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

**A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE MASTER PLAN FOR
PUBLIC ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS AND HABITAT RESTORATION AT
LAKEWOOD FOREST PRESERVE**

WHEREAS, the Lake County Forest Preserve District (the “District”) owns the 2,835-acre Lakewood Forest Preserve (the “Preserve”); and

WHEREAS, on December 2, 2019, the Planning Committee reviewed a preliminary master plan for the Preserve (the “Preliminary Plan”); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the District’s Rules of Order and Operational Procedures, the Planning Committee sent the Preliminary Plan to the other District Standing Committees for their review and on December 5, 2019, and January 6, 2020, the Finance Committee and Operations Committee, respectively, reviewed and recommended approval of the Preliminary Plan for the Preserve, and

WHEREAS, on September 23, 2019, the District held a public open house for public input regarding uses of the Preserve, including uses depicted within two concept plans for the Preserve; and

WHEREAS, the District staff has revised the Preliminary Plan, based on comments from the District’s Standing Committees, and converted such revised Preliminary Plan to the “Master Plan” for the Preserve; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan includes (i) the removal of the former Lake County Discovery Museum complex, the former Archives building, the grounds maintenance facility, shelters A, B and C and the group camping area, and (ii) construction of new public access improvements including but not limited to: (a) two new shelters, one of which will be a three season shelter, (b) accessibility improvements to the existing shelter E area, (c) a net zero grounds maintenance facility, (d) a nature based children’s play area, (e) trail improvements including a 1.6-mile fully accessible asphalt loop trail, a 1-mile gravel trail connecting the proposed Village of Wauconda Bike Path to the Preserve and the Millennium Trail, a 1.6-mile separate dedicated biking and dog walking trail connecting Milton Road to Lakewood’s core area, and improvements to the existing equestrian trails south of Ivanhoe Road to address flooding and erosion issues and (f) a more efficient and properly-sized road and parking lot system; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan provides for the restoration of over 1,000 acres so that, when such restoration is complete, approximately 80% of the land at Lakewood will be fully restored, and such restoration projects include: (i) removal of the existing dam and water control structure at Beaver and Acorn ponds along with the restoration of the natural hydrology feeding into Lakewood Marsh, (ii) ravine restoration in seven areas, (iii) restoration of the rare calcareous floating mat on Taylor Lake, (iv) additional invasive tree and shrub management, (v) drain tile disablement and wetland restoration, (vi) native seed installation, and (vii) additional reforestation; and

WHEREAS, implementation of a portion of the Master Plan was approved and funding was included as part of the District's FY2020 Capital Improvement Plan, and implementation of the remaining portions of the Master Plan will commence when funding is approved as part of future updates of the Capital Improvement Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Lake County Forest Preserve District, Lake County, Illinois **THAT:**

Section 1: Recitals. The recitals set forth above are incorporated as a part of this Resolution by this reference.

Section 2: Approval of Master Plan. The Master Plan is hereby approved in the form attached hereto. The Master Plan is a planning tool for the future uses, improvements, and projects within the Preserve. Nothing in this Resolution limits the District's Board of Commissioners' ability to allow uses, improvements, and projects different from those depicted in the Master Plan.

Section 3: Effective Date. This Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval in the manner provided by law.

PASSED this _____ day of _____, 2020

AYES:

NAYS:

APPROVED this _____ day of _____, 2020

Angelo D. Kyle, President
Lake County Forest Preserve District

ATTEST:

Julie Gragnani, Secretary
Lake County Forest Preserve District

Exhibit No. _____