



DATE: February 1, 2021

MEMO TO: Terry Wilke, Chair
Planning Committee

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

REQUEST: Provide policy direction regarding a request from Openlands to install a sign at Independence Grove identifying the Liberty Prairie Reserve.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION SUPPORTED: Communication, Education and Outreach

FINANCIAL DATA: There is no financial impact at this time.

BACKGROUND: Located in the heart of Lake County between Libertyville, Grayslake, Gurnee and Waukegan, and named after a rare native prairie and fen discovered in 1990, the Liberty Prairie Reserve (LPR) was established in 1991 through a comprehensive plan adopted by the Lake County Forest Preserve District, Libertyville Township and a group of civic-minded private landowners. Initially called the Oak Prairie Reserve, its purpose was to provide a distinctive open space sanctuary under public and private ownership to preserve and restore the area's natural and historic landscape of agricultural fields, woodlands, wetlands, prairies and farmsteads.

Today, thirty years later, many of the recommendations from the 1991 plan have been accomplished including: over 3,400 acres of natural areas and farmland on public and private land have been permanently protected, over 32 miles of trails are open to the public (15 miles located on District property), water quality has improved, hundreds of acres of natural areas are actively managed, farm operations on private lands have expanded and diversified to include over 100 acres of sustainable production, and three Illinois State Nature Preserves have been established on both public and private lands.

Last fall, District staff was approached by Openlands with the idea of placing interpretive signage in various locations throughout the LPR that raise awareness about the LPR including what it is, why it was created and how it differs from a forest preserve or nature preserve. Openlands will cover the cost for design, fabrication and installation of the signs. The District would own the sign installed on District property. Staff is seeking concurrence from the Committee to allow Openlands to place one 28" x 44" sign at Independence Grove near the North Bay Pavilion. The sign's location, design, appearance, and text would be subject to approval of District staff. Openlands (or its contractor) would install the sign in accordance with an installation contract that requires Openlands (or its contractor) to provide appropriate insurance and indemnification protections and to comply with the Prevailing Wage Act. If approved, it is anticipated that the sign will be installed in May 2021.

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