



**DATE:** January 9, 2023

**MEMO TO:** John Wasik, Chair  
Planning Committee

**FROM:** Rebekah Snyder  
Director of Community Engagement & Partnerships

**REQUEST:** Provide policy direction on potential change in licensee at the Green Youth Farm in Lake County.

**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED:** Public Access and Connections; Organizational Sustainability; Communication, Education and Outreach

**FINANCIAL DATA:** There is no immediate financial impact.

**BACKGROUND:** The Lake County Forest Preserve District initially entered into a license agreement in 2003 with the Chicago Horticultural Society, which is also known as “Chicago Botanic Garden” (CBG), for the use of approximately one acre of Greenbelt Forest Preserve for the Green Youth Farm in Lake County. The license agreement has been extended several times, with the most recent extension scheduled to expire in 2025.

Over nearly 20 years, the Green Youth Farm in Lake County has become an integral part of the North Chicago and Waukegan communities. Each summer, high school youth from those communities are hired to work at the farm, gaining job skills; learning how to plant, tend, and harvest a variety of foods; learning about healthy eating and meal preparation; and practicing team-building, problem solving, public speaking, and other professional skills.

CBG staff manage all aspects of this educational program, including recruiting and directing the students; overseeing farm operations, such as planting, tending, and harvesting; managing earned revenues from the sale of produce; developing and delivering the program curriculum; and evaluating progress toward program goals. The District provides the land, water, and other infrastructure, such as parking and access to the nearby picnic shelter, as needed, and, the Preservation Foundation provides charitable support, working to raise funds each year to support direct program costs.

Earlier this year, staff from the College of Lake County’s (CLC) new Center for Urban Agriculture and Community Development (Center) reached out to both CBG and District staff to gauge their interest in terminating the current license agreement and having the District enter into a new license agreement, under which CLC (not CBG) would operate the Green Youth Farm in Lake County program. The new Center is envisioned by CLC to be a year-round sustainable agriculture facility featuring programs such as:

- Locally sourced food to address food desert/scarcity.
- Veggie RX (community health).
- Healthy cooking classes.
- Job training, internships, apprenticeships, academic credentials and entrepreneurship for formerly incarcerated individuals, youth, and college students.

CLC is interested in exploring a license agreement and/or intergovernmental relationship to continue the Green Youth Farm in Lake County in 2023 and beyond, which fits within their larger goals for their Waukegan campus development. CBG has sent the District a letter terminating its current license agreement, effective February 3, 2023 and understands that the District and CLC may pursue negotiations of a new license agreement.

Policy direction is requested to pursue termination of the license agreement with CBG and explore a new license agreement or other relationship with CLC.

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