

DATE: November 6, 2023

MEMO TO: Jessica Vealitzek, Chair
Operations Committee

FROM: Pati Vitt
Director of Natural Resources

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the award of four farm licenses at Brae Loch, Lake Marie, Oak Hickory and Pine Dunes Forest Preserves to the highest qualified bidders.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED: Conservation; Organizational Sustainability

FINANCIAL DATA: Awarding the licenses will generate \$68,415.68 annually and will be credited to the Farmland Management Fund (28642500-403000). In 2023, these lands generated farm revenue of \$54,255.46. One parcel, Oak-Hickory – Hay, did not receive any bids and will be permanently retired.

These bids, added with existing farm licenses will generate \$304,221.93 in Farmland Management Program revenue for 2024. In 2023, total program revenue was \$353,499.52. The reduced revenue for 2024 is due in part to the lack of bids for the Oak-Hickory – Hay parcel as well as the retirement of the Ray Lake and Ray Lake – Hay licenses. Farm parcels within Ray Lake Forest Preserve were not re-bid and will expire at the conclusion of the existing 2023 license agreements. Retirement of these licenses was necessary to meet grantor requirements placed on the parcels when funding was received for acquisition.

BACKGROUND: The farming program is conducted with local farmers to provide cost-effective, interim land use and management until the District is ready to convert farmland to other forest preserve purposes. The current license agreements will expire on December 31, 2023. The farm licenses were advertised in the News-Sun and bid packages were available on the District's website. The licenses were advertised for a 4-year term starting January 1, 2024. Seven potential Licensees submitted bids. The highest qualified bidders for the parcels are noted below:

SITE	TERM	ACREAGE	HIGHEST BIDDER	PRICE PER ACRE
Brae Loch	4 Years	36.9	Jeff Bohmann	\$ 122.25
Lake Marie	4 Years	152.1	Terry Bros. Grain Farm	\$ 202.50
Oak-Hickory	4 Years	116.8	Terry Bros. Grain Farm	\$ 165.50
Oak-Hickory – Hay	4 Years	9.35	NO BID	\$ 0.00
Pine Dunes – Southeast	4 Years	97.0	Elfering Farms	\$ 142.00

Two potential Licensees bid the same amount per acre for Pine Dunes-Southeast. One of these bidders (Mike Richards) asked to withdraw his bid on October 13, 2023. Staff recommends that the Board award the license for Pine Dunes-Southeast to the other highest bidder (Elfering Farms).

All of the highest qualified bidders have farmed District land in the past. To date, they have complied with District requirements/procedures.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Chief Operations Officer, Director of Finance, Manager of Board Operations and Corporate Counsel.

MOTION: Motion to approve license agreements for 4-year farming licenses in forms approved by the Executive Director or his designee with (1) Jeff Bohmann at Brae Loch Golf Club; (2) Terry Bros. Grain Farm at Lake Marie Forest Preserve; (3) Terry Bros. Grain Farm at Oak-Hickory Forest Preserve; and (4) Elfering Farms at Pine Dunes Forest Preserve.

APPROVAL:

Date: _____ Roll Call Vote: Ayes: ____ Nays: _____

Voice Vote Majority Ayes; Nays: _____