

DATE: August 5, 2024

MEMO TO: Jessica Vealitzek, Chair
Operations Committee

FROM: John E. Nelson
Chief Operations Officer

REQUEST: Provide policy direction to remove the Youth Camp at Fox River Forest Preserve.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED: Public Access and Connections; Organizational Sustainability

FINANCIAL DATA: The FY2024 budget for Youth Camp Permit fee revenue is \$2,000.00 (account code 13562200-420200). Approximately 25-50% of that revenue typically comes from permit sales for the Fox River Youth Camp.

Major repairs to the handpump at Fox River Youth Camp are estimated to cost \$3,000-\$5,000 from the budget for Repair and Maintenance – Equipment, Well Water Systems (account code 15574000-705200-50017).

BACKGROUND: The District has historically provided as many as three locations for youth group camping. Currently, two primitive campgrounds are maintained for youth group camping at Fox River and Van Patten Woods. As part of the Lakewood master plan improvements process, the youth camping area at Lakewood was approved for removal, and subsequently removed.

At the Fox River youth camp, major repairs are needed to the handpump that provides the required potable water for the camp to operate under a permit from the Illinois Department of Public Health. It is estimated that the repair will cost approximately \$3,000 - \$5,000. Long-term, there are several elements of the youth camp area that do not meet ADA accessibility standards and would require significant investment to improve to meet the required standards.

For the eight most recent “normal” operating years (excluding trail construction in 2014, COVID in 2020, and COVID recovery in 2021), the camp has averaged approximately seventeen (17) uses per year, serving approximately 440 people per year, and generating approximately \$1,350 in revenue per year.

Staff recommends closing the youth camp at Fox River at this point, because the expected operating and capital improvement costs are not warranted by the limited use of the designated special use area.

The special use area for youth group camping at Van Patten Woods would continue to operate.

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