

**Lake County Forest Preserve District
Operations Committee Meeting Minutes - Monday, May 4, 2026**

The Operations Committee of the Lake County Forest Preserve District met on Monday, May 4, 2026 at the District's General Offices, 1899 West Winchester Road, Libertyville, Illinois.

1.0 Call to Order – With a quorum physically present, Chair Knizhnik called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

2.0 Roll Call – Secretary Shelton called the roll and four committee members responded: Chair Sara Knizhnik, Vice Chair Adam Schlick, Member Esiah Campos and Member Carissa Casbon. Member Paras Parekh arrived after roll call at 11:01 a.m. Absent: Member Mary Ross Cunningham and Member Kevin Hunter.

Also Present:

Jessica Vealitzek, *President*

Paul Frank, *Commissioner*

Alex Ty Kovach

John Nelson

Ron Davis

Alex Eichman

Alyssa Firkus

Mary Kann

Steve Neaman

Rebekah Snyder

Dan Stearns

Pati Vitt

Mike Bonn

Jeanna Martinucci

Kelly Burdick

Mike Zahalka

Maureen Shelton

Nataly Lara

Jessica Chong

Matt Norton, *Corporate Counsel*

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance – Member Campos led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4.0 Addenda to the Agenda – None

5.0 Approval of Minutes - Motion by Member Casbon second by Member Campos to approve the minutes from April 6, 2026. Voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously.

6.0 Public Comment – None

7.0 Executive Director's Report

- A deceased person discovered at Fort Sheridan remains unidentified. Police Chief Ron Davis provided additional information.
- Waukegan Port District (WPD) sent the District a letter requesting that the District concur with the findings of de minimis impact to Waukegan Savanna in their environmental analysis for the Airport runway project. The District has questions that still need to be answered. WPD is meeting on May 20, 2026 and will have a presentation on the airport runway safety project with a question and answer period.

8.0 Correspondence – None

9.0 Unfinished Business – None

10.0 New Business

- 10.1 Recommend approval of a Resolution Approving a Traveling Exhibition Agreement with the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh for rental of a special exhibition (I Am Wild: A Charley Harper Exhibit). Motion by Vice Chair Schlick, second by Member Campos to approve the recommendation. Director of Education, Alyssa Firkus using a presentation explained the features of this exhibit and responded to questions. Voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously, and the recommendation was forwarded to the Finance Committee for approval.

- 10.2 Recommend Approval of a Resolution Approving Change Order No. 2 to the Contract with Dreamworks Graphic Communications, LLC for the Printing and Distribution of Eight Additional Issues of Horizons Quarterly Newsletter in the Amount of \$226,320.00. Motion by Member Campos, second by Member Casbon to approve the recommendation. Director of Community Engagement & Partnerships Rebekah Snyder summarized the content of the change order, noting that the last three times the publication went out for bids Dreamworks has been the successful bidder. Change orders have been done with past contracts. Dreamworks will hold their labor costs for these additional issues, with a 12% increase in commodities costs for paper, ink, and printing plates. Director Snyder responded to questions and noted that it is the intent to go out for bid again at the end of these eight additional issues and we would likely add a contract extension within the bid package. Voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously, and the recommendation was forwarded to the Finance Committee for approval
- 10.3 Recommend Approval of a Resolution Awarding Contracts for Native Seed Purchases for Multiple Preserves to Agrecol LLC in the Contract Price of \$103,818.22; to Genesis Nursery, Inc. in the Contract Price of \$551,728.35; to Prairie Moon Nursery in the Contract Price of \$1,133,828.89; to RES Great Lakes in the Contract Price of \$208,252.88; to Shooting Star Native Seeds in the Contract Price of \$161,380.52; and to Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. in the Contract Price of \$400,170.73. - Motion by Vice Chair Schlick, second by Member Casbon to approve the recommendation. Natural Resources Director Pati Vitt gave an overview of the decision to solicit five-year contracts, noting that the multiple year approach attracted more bidders by allowing a longer lead time for vendors to be able to develop a plan to provide certain species that were not bid on before with only a one-year window. Director Vitt responded to questions on the district's seed nursery and the specialty and rare seeds produced there. Using a Seed Provenance Tier map Dr. Vitt explained the seed specifications two-tiered process and that the District prefers seeds sourced from Tier one. Voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously, and the recommendation was forwarded to the Finance Committee for approval
- 10.4 Provide policy direction regarding vendor requests to retain established plants as founder stock for native seed production after contract completion. Using a presentation, Dr. Vitt explained that Native seed diversity in Lake County is essential to successful ecological restoration and land management. There are 1,321 native species in our two ecoregions and District staff have documented 1,029 plant species in our preserves. Our seed mixes have a total of 274 species (83 graminoids and 191 forbs). Currently the demand for native seed significantly exceeds available supply. In response to this shortage, a coalition of Midwest restoration and land management organizations established the Midwest Native Seed Network, which the District has joined.

The District's recent seed procurement process directly illustrates this shortage. Despite \$2.7 million in pending contracts, the process identified that 39 species are entirely unavailable in the commercial market, and 64 species were bid in excess of \$500 per pound. Among species that were both available and competitively priced, 17 could not be supplied in the quantities requested, resulting in a shortfall. This shortage of native seed impedes the District's habitat restoration efforts and limits its capacity to improve ecosystem services.

To cover the current shortfall, District staff has explored contracting with vendors to establish production fields using plant materials provided by the District, from which the vendors would cultivate plants, harvest seed from the founder stock to meet specified quantity and species requirements, and deliver that harvested seed to the District for its restoration projects. In conversations regarding this process, prospective vendors have asked whether, under such contracts, they would be allowed to maintain founder stock in established production fields for continued seed production beyond the term of the District's contract. In that circumstance, seed produced by the founder stock after the District's contract term could be used or sold by the vendor for other, non-District purposes. In similar context in the past the District has not allowed vendors to continue production from District plant materials for other purposes.

Dr. Vitt responded to questions and a discussion ensued. Following the discussion, consensus was given by the committee to staff to allow vendors to retain established plants as founder stock for native seed production after contract completion.

- 11.0 Miscellaneous Business** – Member Parekh asked about a potential larger presence and expansion of the district’s museum. Chief Operations Officer John Nelson responded that the museum is identified to be a Lake County destination and the vision and specifics of this will be discussed at upcoming meetings.
- 12.0 Closed Session** – None
- 13.0 Potential Action Following Closed Session** – None
- 14.0 Adjourn** –Chair Knizhnik noted that the next committee meeting will be a Joint Committee meeting on Monday, June 1, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. and then adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen E. Shelton

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Date Approved: 6-1-2026