

**Lake County Forest Preserve District
Operations Committee Meeting Minutes - Monday, August 31, 2026**

The Operations Committee of the Lake County Forest Preserve District met on Monday, August 31, 2026, at the District's General Offices, 1899 West Winchester Road, Libertyville, Illinois.

1.0 Call to Order – With a quorum physically present, Vice Chair Schlick called the meeting to order at 11:08 a.m.

2.0 Roll Call – Secretary Shelton called the roll and four committee members responded: Vice Chair Adam Schlick, Member Esiah Campos, Member Brandon Ewing and Member Paras Parekh. Member Carissa Casbon arrived after roll call at 11:15 a.m. Absent: Chair Sara Knizhnik and Member Kevin Hunter.

Also Present:

Alex Ty Kovach

John Nelson

Ron Davis

Alyssa Firkus

Kevin Kleinjan

Mary Kann

Rebekah Snyder

Dan Stearns (Zoom)

Pati Vitt

Debbie Boness

Mike Bonn

Diana Dretske

Kim Mikus

Maureen Shelton

Nataly Lara

Matt Norton, *Corporate Counsel*

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

4.0 Addenda to the Agenda – None

5.0 Approval of Minutes - Motion by Member Campos second by Member Parekh to approve the minutes from August 3, 2026. Voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously.

6.0 Public Comment – None

7.0 Executive Directors Report – Executive Director Ty Kovach noted that he will present the report at the September Board meeting.

8.0 Correspondence – None

9.0 Unfinished Business – None

10.0 New Business

10.1 Recommend approval of an Ordinance Approving a new Building Use and Management License Agreement with Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods for the occupation and use of the Brushwood building and grounds at Edward L. Ryerson Conservation Area. Motion by Member Campos, second by Member Ewing to approve the recommendation. Chief Operations Officer John Nelson introduced Catherine Game, executive director of the Brushwood Center. Mr. Nelson noted that the recommendation stems from a policy direction discussed at a prior meeting, at which the committee reached consensus to proceed with negotiations. He then provided background on the Brushwood Center, formerly known as Friends of Ryerson Woods, and discussed its long-standing relationship with the District.

Mr. Nelson explained that the District is proposing a new/restated license agreement that expands the licensed area beyond the building itself and adjusts responsibilities and license-fee conditions. He then reviewed the scope of \$5 million in renovations and improvements planned by Brushwood, including accessibility improvements and maintenance responsibilities of each party. He went over the details of the agreement, noting that the term is 20 years with an optional 2-year renewal. Over the 20-year term, Brushwood will pay \$2,083 per month, \$500,000 in total license fees to the District. These funds will go into the endowment for natural

resource management at Ryerson Conservation Area. Brushwood will provide a \$50,000 refundable security deposit during the construction phase. Brushwood will pay \$5,000 towards the District's legal fees for development of the agreement.

Mr. Nelson then responded to questions from the committee and a general discussion ensued. Voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously, and the recommendation was forwarded to the Finance Committee for approval.

- 10.2 Approve and Accept New Acquisitions and Donations to the Bess Bower Dunn Museum of Lake County's Collections. - Motion by Member Campos, second by Member Parekh to approve the recommendation. Education Director, Alyssa Firkus introduced Curator Diana Dretske. Director Firkus gave a presentation showing the items being recommended for acceptance. Throughout the presentation Director Firkus and Ms. Dretske responded to questions. Member Casbon requested that the acquisition of the native American baskets be featured in a newsletter. Director Firkus noted that it would be added to the upcoming Executive Directors report. With a voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously.
- 10.3 Recommend approval of a Resolution approving a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Northern Illinois Native Seed Exchange. - Motion by Member Casbon, second by Member Ewing to approve the recommendation. Director of Natural Resources, Dr. Pati Vitt summarized the recommendation. Noting that native seed availability is becoming a regional concern, particularly obtaining sufficient quantities while maintaining species diversity and that this MOU would formalize cooperation among numerous restoration organizations, forest preserve districts, NGOs, and organizations such as The Nature Conservancy. There is no financial obligation. The District would neither be required to provide seed nor to accept seed. The agreement primarily provides an opportunity to network and exchange seeds and other resources when appropriate. Voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously, and the recommendation was forwarded to the full Board for approval.
- 10.4 Recommend approval of an Ordinance approving a Restoration Project and License Agreement with Openlands for restoration activities at Almond Marsh Forest Preserve. Motion by Member Casbon, second by Member Campos to approve the recommendation. Director Vitt summarized the recommendation. Using a map, Director Vitt identified the proposed project location and explained that Openlands had contacted District staff regarding a potential collaborative volunteer effort for restoration work at portions of Almond Marsh Forest Preserve. Director Vitt noted that the primary purpose of the project is to control invasive species, particularly buckthorn. She emphasized that, under the agreement, Openlands volunteers participating in invasive species management activities must comply with the District's stringent volunteer training and certification requirements. Voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously, and the recommendation was forwarded to the full Board for approval.

10.0 Miscellaneous Business – None

11.0 Closed Session – None

12.0 Potential Action Following Closed Session – None

13.0 Adjourn – Vice Chair Schlick noted that the next committee meeting will be a Joint Committee Meeting (Planning, Operations & Finance) on Monday, October 5, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. to review and approve the 2027 Budget. He then adjourned the meeting at 11:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen E. Shelton

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Date Approved: 10-5-2026