Lake County Forest Preserves
Finance Committee Minutes – September 3, 2026

On Thursday, September 3, 2026, the Lake County Forest Preserve District's Finance Committee met at the District's General Offices in Libertyville, Illinois.

1.0 Call to Order – With a quorum physically present, Chair Gina Roberts called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2.0 Roll Call –Committee Secretary Gragnani called the roll and four members responded. Present: Chair Gina Roberts, Marah Altenberg, Diane Hewitt, Linda Pedersen. Vice chair Ann Maine arrived after the roll call. Absent: Sandy Hart, Angelo Kyle.

Also Present:

Alex Kovach, Executive	Alyssa Firkus	Sandy Meyers
Matt Norton, Corporate	Dan Stearns	Mike Bonn
John Nelson	Pati Vitt	Laurel Diver
Mary Kann	Ron Davis	Matthew Mulligan
Rebekah Snyder	Ryan Brandt	Catherine Game,
Kevin Kleinjan	Julie Gragnani	

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

4.0 Addenda to the Agenda – None

5.0 Approval of Minutes – Motion by Altenberg, second by Hewitt to approve the minutes of August 6, 2026 open and closed session. Voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously.

6.0 Public Comment for items not on agenda – None

7.0 Executive Director Comments – Executive Director Kovach gave a brief overview of the 2027 budget timeline.

8.0 Correspondence – None

9.0 Unfinished Business - None

10.0 New Business:

10.1 Invoices and Requisitions - Motion by Hewitt, seconded by Altenberg to approve the legal bill for June 2026. With a voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously and the invoice was passed for signatures.

Member Maine joined the meeting at 1:04 p.m.

10.2 Approve position reclassifications, FTE changes and position title deletions – Motion by Hewitt, second by Altenberg to approve the position reclassification, FTE change and position title deletion in the Education Department as outlined in staff's memo dated September 3, 2026. Administration Director Mary Kann summarized the recommendation to reorganize positions following a retirement. Education Director Alyssa Firkus responded to questions and with a voice vote being had, the motion to approve passed unanimously.

10.3 Recommend approval of an Ordinance approving a Building Use and Management License Agreement with the Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods ("Brushwood") for the occupation and use of the Brushwood building and grounds at Edward L. Ryerson Conservation Area - Motion by Hewitt, second by Pedersen to recommend approval. Executive Director Kovach made opening remarks and introduced Catherine Game, Executive Director of Brushwood. He noted that Brushwood is investing a significant amount of money in the Brushwood home. This new agreement is in the best interest of the District, particularly for the long-term care of the building. Chief Operations Officer John Nelson gave an overview of the new license agreement that has been negotiated with Brushwood. He reviewed the scope of $5 million in renovations and improvements planned by Brushwood, including accessibility improvements; and he reviewed the 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 maintenance at Ryerson Conservation Area. Also, Brushwood will pay a $50,000 security deposit during the construction phase, and $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. Member Maine felt there should be better signage at the parking lot for when big events are held there and the lot is full. She stated that she could not support $2,083 per month for 20 years without a CIP. She felt that much of those funds would be used up for road and parking lot maintenance over 20 years. Director Kovach noted that $1,060,000 needs to be in the endowment in order to maintain the Preserve and $500,000 is a major injection, along with the significant investment Brushwood is making in the improvements to the building. The funds will be leveraged with the endowment earnings. Following discussion, on the motion to recommend approval, with a voice vote being had, the motion passed with member Maine voting No. The recommendation was forwarded to the full Board for approval.

10.4 Recommend approval of a Resolution awarding a Contract for Development of an Educational Program Strategic Plan to Partners In Capacity, LLC in the Contract Price of $75,000.00 - Motion by Hewitt, second by Altenberg to recommend approval. Director Kovach gave an overview, noting that there is a need to take a deep look at the Education Programs to ensure that they continue to support the District's mission. Funding for this contract will come from the Preservation Foundation. Education Director Alyssa Firkus gave a presentation on the need to expand educational opportunities to meet the needs of the communities and maximize impact. Partners In Capacity has educators on staff with the expertise needed for this project. Director Firkus summarized the scope of the project and the timeline. Following discussion, on the motion to recommend approval, with a voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously and the recommendation was forwarded to the full Board for approval.

10.5 Recommend approval of a Resolution authorizing the submission of a grant proposal to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency requesting $500,000 to support hydrologic restoration at Lakewood Forest Preserve - Motion by Pedersen, second by Altenberg to recommend approval. Director Kovach noted that the District was not successful applying for this grant previously, but was encouraged to re-apply and request a lower amount. Community Engagement & Partnerships Director Rebekah Snyder summarized the grant proposal and showed the project area on a map. Because the matching amount of the grant is over $700,000, Board permission is required. Director Snyder responded to questions and Natural Resource Director Pati Vitt provided additional details regarding which line items in the CIP the funds will come from. On the motion to recommend approval, with a voice vote being had, the motion passed unanimously and the recommendation was forwarded to the full Board for approval.

11.0 Miscellaneous Business – None

12.0 Closed Session –Motion by Maine, second by Altenberg to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing 1) review of approved closed session minutes for release or retention and deletion of verbatim recordings; and 2) the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees. Roll call vote being had, the motion passed by a vote of: AYES: 5 (Altenberg, Hewitt, Maine, Pedersen, Roberts); NAY: 0. The committee went into closed session at 1:41 p.m. and returned to open session at 1:47 p.m.

13.0 Potential Action Following Closed Session – None

14.0 Adjournment - Chair Roberts declared the meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Gragnani
Julie Gragnani, Committee Secretary

10-5-2026
Date approved