



CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Thursday, February 16, 2023, 5:30 pm
Education Classroom, Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods
Forest Preserve, Mahomet, IL

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
 - A. Roll Call
 - B. Remote Attendance
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT – *Meeting attendees are encouraged to participate during the Public Comment portion of the agenda. For further details on how to participate in the Public Comment section of the meeting, please refer to CCFPD Resolution number R-2013-04.*
- III. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS
- IV. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. aQity Needs Assessment Survey Presentation
 - B. Direction for Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
- V. EXECUTIVE SESSION
- VI. OTHER
- VII. ADJOURNMENT

February 10, 2023

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Commissioners
From: Sam Ihm, Planning Assistant
Re: Needs Assessment Survey Update

Background

In July 2022, the Board of Commissioners authorized the hire of aQity Research & Insights, Inc. to conduct a Needs Assessment Survey to inform CCFPD's forthcoming Comprehensive Plan. Staff favored aQity for their experience working with forest preserve districts in Illinois and their ability to tailor survey questions to the District's specific interests. Needs assessments are standard practice in comprehensive planning; CCFPD's most recent survey was completed in 2014. The survey covers topics such as residents' desires for services and their attitudes toward a new nature center. Responses were solicited through the mail, where residents had the option to complete the survey online or by mail. Due to postal traffic with elections and the holidays, responses took longer to collect than expected, but aQity was able to achieve a valid and representative sample of Champaign County residents.

aQity will present a summary of the results of the Needs Assessment Survey to the Board of Commissioners at the February 16 Special Meeting via Zoom. The survey results will inform the recommendations in CCFPD's forthcoming Comprehensive Plan and ensure the District incorporates the needs of its residents in ongoing planning efforts.

Action Requested

No action is requested at this time. Staff will follow up this spring to solicit feedback on the recommendations being developed from the results of this survey and other feedback gathered for the Comprehensive Plan.

February 10, 2023

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Commissioners
From: Lisa Sprinkle, Marketing Manager
Lorrie Pearson, Executive Director
Re: Direction for Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

Action Requested

No official action is requested. Please provide direction on the following:

1. Desired CAC charge in the short-term (2023-2024)
2. Proposed name change from CAC to the Community Engagement Committee and an update to the listed types of activities the Board would like to the committee to conduct, and
3. Operational guidelines which would be included in the committee's bylaws

The intent is to share this direction with the CAC at a joint meeting (or with CAC representatives present) at the Board's March 16, 2023, meeting.

Background

The committee was established in 1989, with its purpose and responsibilities outlined in its bylaws, last amended in 2022 (Attachment 1). The Board authorized the establishment of the committee "...whose activities will be of an advisory and informative nature to the FPD [Forest Preserve District] and to the citizens of the district..." with the following purposes:

1. To promote citizen awareness of the benefits of a good forest preserve system with adequate financial support from Champaign County funds, donations and grants.
2. To facilitate citizen understanding of the challenges and needs of the Forest Preserve District.
3. To establish communication between the public and the BOC [Board of Commissioners].
4. To study the needs of the FPD and the effects of the current and future programs of the FPD.
5. To identify concerns and requests independently or at the suggestion of the public or the BOC; to study and evaluate them; and to present such information, together with suitable recommendations, to the BOC.
6. To accept policy study assignments from the BOC for early report and recommendations and to make independent policy studies resulting in recommendations to the BOC
7. To work with the BOC, the staff, and the public to implement programs.

While the bylaws do not explicitly reference the District's strategic plan or other policies, it seems reasonable to assume that the CAC would be expected to carry out these duties in alignment with the District's plans and policies. As staff is responsible for implementing these policies, it stands to reason that the CAC's work should be done in collaboration with staff. It seems that at times, projects may have been undertaken by the CAC because staff was trying to provide the group with tasks to keep them busy, rather than staff identifying a true need for help in their work to achieve strategic plan outcomes and then asking the CAC to be a partner in accomplishing that work. More intentionality in the CAC's work would be of greatest service to achieving the District's plan and policy goals.

February 2022 Board Study Session Discussion

Staff brought essentially the same question to the District Board in February 2022 to define what the CAC should focus on. (See Attachment 2 for the excerpt of the minutes.) At that time, the Board agreed that the CAC should continue providing outreach, with one member suggesting that the name be changed to Citizens Outreach Group. Commissioners recommended broader involvement of the committee, to potentially encompass activities such as preserve ambassadors, data collection, and being tasked with up to three projects a year.

Below is an update on CAC activities since that direction given by the Board approximately a year ago.

Staff advised the CAC that the subcommittee interested in inventorying the gravestones at Tomlinson Cemetery should get ready to do their work as staff would be conducting a prescribed burn to facilitate that work at the subcommittee's request since the gravestones are not visible except for after a burn. Despite this notice and staff's attempts at coordinating the subcommittee's work while the stones were visible, no further work was conducted prior to prairie regrowth. While inventorying the gravestones is important work that would contribute to our restoring the cemetery, it is not our highest priority at the site. Staff must first resolve the difficult access to the site before the site can easily be accessed by the public. Inventorying and restoration should therefore be put on hold until the access issue is resolved.

Similarly, staff assisted the subcommittee interested in the Hazen Bridge by developing a list of steps that would be needed to be taken to identify options for repair or restoration of the bridge. Staff provided that list to the subcommittee and facilitated setting up a meeting of subcommittee members. One member of the subcommittee attended that meeting, and to staff's knowledge, no further work has been done on the project. Repair and restoration of the bridge has not been identified as a District priority, and therefore this project can also easily be put on hold.

In both instances, staff resources were expended to assist the members of the committee in their work, but progress was not made on either of the projects. Staff time would have been better spent working on other priority projects. While at times help from the committee on projects would be welcome, staff would ask that the Board support the shelving of CAC's involvement in these two projects in particular, and asking the CAC not to work on other projects unless those projects rise to the level of a District priority and members of the committee are able to commit to making tangible progress on them.

CAC's Charge for 2023-2024

One of the greatest staff needs for CAC help is in the area of outreach, or to use a term that implies more of a two-way and in-depth communication: engagement. Engagement is an area that much of the committee appears to enjoy and at which it excels. Staff would ask for the Board's support in asking the CAC continue to focus their efforts on leading engagement efforts, including continued involvement in the Sustainability Committee.

Staff strongly feels that the committee should focus on engaging with the community for the next two years. In 2023, the focus of that engagement would be to celebrate our 75th anniversary. In 2024, we will be due to develop a new strategic plan, and community engagement would aid that

effort. And throughout the next two years, reaching the public to talk about the importance of environmental education would be helpful in raising awareness of the need for a replacement to the Homer Lake Interpretive Center. A new strategic plan in 2025 may then identify new direction for the committee.

Also in response to Board discussion in 2022, staff has discussed an ambassador program and has begun planning how to implement one. We intend to start small, and to start with providing the service to potential patrons that have expressed they do not always feel safe at our preserves: people of color. As the CAC is not currently racially diverse, they may not be the ones best suited to be the face of the ambassador program, but they could potentially help with training of the ambassadors. As the committee is in need of three new members, it is possible that the group could grow more diverse with a concerted effort, making it a more natural fit to have some members also be ambassadors.

Proposed Name Change to Community Engagement Committee

The group's name could be changed to be consistent with its charge to engage with the community, and their listed duties to focus in that regard. One suggestion: Community Engagement Committee. Activities could include a number of activities, such as:

- Tabling
- Data-collection at preserves
- Sharing our messages on social media
- Door-knocking, letters to the editor, etc. for a future referendum or other campaign
- Leading interactive activities at community or District events
- Spearheading District participation in parades
- Serving as ambassadors (in the future)
- A general catch-all statement in the event it would be helpful for the committee to help with a particular project.

Operational Guidelines

Providing more focus to the committee also gives us the opportunity to fine-tune the group's processes and procedures. Staff would recommend the bylaws be revised to reflect the following:

- Make diversifying the committee's composition a priority. In the beginning, focus should be on racial diversity to help with the District's commitment to be more welcoming to people of color. Geographic and ability diversity should also be considered. Perhaps certain seats are reserved for certain affinity groups until there is more diversity on the committee.
- Allow for more staff involvement with the selection of new members. Currently CAC members form a nominating committee and interview prospective new members, which are then voted on by the CAC. Staff has not been an active part of that process. It is not considered best practice for a homogeneous group to select its own members if the objective is to provide a more diverse set of voices for the group. The previous committee chair was open to additional staff involvement; we would like the potential for staff involvement reflected in the bylaws.
- As members are seen as an extension of us as an organization, at least a basic level of training in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility should be required to ensure we are putting our most welcoming face forward.

- Refine the meeting schedule to remove the expectation that the group meets every two months regardless if there are action items or timely items to discuss. Other boards that meet when needed typically require an annual meeting at which officers are elected and then allow for other meetings to be held as needed. Set days and times can be reserved on members' calendars, but meetings would only be held if there was business to be conducted, for instance to plan for the year, organize engagement efforts, learn about District needs for their assistance, and celebrate their successes.
- Other updates to help make meetings more efficient, such as providing an agenda template.

Once the CAC is given their charge for the next two years, new members who are driven to help meet that need can be recruited to fill the openings. These new members will better understand their role: that we are in need of a concerted effort in connecting with the community. That infusion of new energy, with a very focused purpose, can amplify the engagement efforts of staff and help us make an even stronger name for ourselves.

Attachments:

1. CAC Bylaws
2. Excerpt of minutes from February 10, 2022 Special Meeting

Attachment 2: Excerpt of February 10, 2022 Minutes

Journal of Proceedings

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS – PUBLIC HEARING
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT**

Thursday, February 10, 2022

Headquarters,

Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, Mahomet, Illinois

Via Zoom meetings (www.zoom.us)

Meeting ID: 810 1068 4858

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District Board of Commissioners met at a Special Meeting on Thursday, February 10, 2022 via Zoom due to the Illinois Governor’s Executive Order 2020-10. Commissioner Goodman called the Special Meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. Commissioner Kerins called the roll. The following Commissioners were in attendance by both audio and video: Goodman, Hays, Herakovich, Kerins, and Livesay.

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BOARD DISCUSSION

A. Affiliate Groups

Pearson reviewed information that had been sent out earlier, noting she would like Board direction for future planning, MOU updates if so needed, and committee focus for 3 District Affiliate groups including; FPF, Freedom Fest, and CAC.

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During the discussion of the CAC, Pearson noted the group is not currently an advisory board, but more of an information gathering committee. Thus, Pearson would like feedback from the Board for best use of the group, noting their value in conducting outreach. Commissioners suggestions included; meaningful and useful activities that are fulfilling for them, naturalist survey at sites, work with the group to develop 3 pillars of activities, annual analysis with possibly a board member on their activities, and possibly assigning members to be ambassadors of preserves. Again, have the group work with the Board liaison and staff on directions, but allow staff less time directly working with the group. Consider a name change to reflect their outreach focus and investigate if the group is required to comply with the Open Meetings Act. Hays noted thanks for the ideas of how to better use the group, and also noted, some of the outreach currently being done could be done by District volunteers.

Pearson thanked the Board for their direction on committees and their use.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Kerins moved to adjourn at 8:19 p.m. Commissioner Hays seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The following commissioners voted “yes”: Goodman, Hays, Herakovich, Kerins and Livesay. Motion carried. Motion carried.

Andrew Kerins, Secretary
Board of Commissioners
Champaign County Forest Preserve District

**BY-LAWS OF THE
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

A. AUTHORIZATION

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District (FPD) Board of Commissioners (BOC), being the legally constituted body responsible for the affairs of the FPD as authorized by the Illinois State Legislature and by the people within the County, does herewith authorize the establishment and support of a committee of citizens to be known as the Champaign County Forest Preserve District Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) whose activities will be of an advisory and informative nature to the FPD and to the citizens of the district.

B. PURPOSE

The purposes of the CAC shall be:

1. To promote citizen awareness of the benefits of a good forest preserve system with adequate financial support from Champaign County funds, donations and grants.
2. To facilitate citizen understanding of the challenges and needs of the Forest Preserve District.
3. To establish communication between the public and the BOC.
4. To study the needs of the FPD and the effects of the current and future programs of the FPD.
5. To identify concerns and requests independently or at the suggestion of the public or the BOC; to study and evaluate them; and to present such information, together with suitable recommendations, to the BOC.
6. To accept policy study assignments from the BOC for early report and recommendations and to make independent policy studies resulting in recommendations to the BOC
7. To work with the BOC, the staff, and the public to implement programs and policies which have the mutual support of both the BOC and the CAC.

The CAC shall take no action recommending or supporting nominees for membership on the BOC or regarding the employment, dismissal, promotion or transfer of an individual FPD employee, or encroach upon the professional prerogative of the staff.

C. ORGANIZATION

1. Membership

- a. The CAC shall consist of no more than twelve members and no fewer than nine members, approved by a majority of the CAC and appointed by the BOC.
- b. The term of membership is three years. Terms begin on January 1 and end on December 31. Full terms may be renewed once.
- c. Terms of CAC members shall be staggered, so that no more than four positions are vacated at the end of each year.
- d. Positions vacated mid-term shall be filled as resignations occur. When a vacancy occurs midterm, an applicant is selected and approved by the same procedure as full-term members, shall serve during the unexpired term of the replaced member and for up to two full terms at the end of the partial term.
- e. Members may be asked to resign from the CAC for non-attendance of three CAC meetings per year or failure to fulfill service obligations that they have accepted.
- f. A representative of the BOC and staff members of FPD shall serve *ex officio*, without vote.
- g. No person is to be recommended for membership or be barred from membership to the CAC because he/she is affiliated with any particular organization or institution.
- h. Appointment to membership on the BOC, accepting employment with the FPD, or profiting from selling their own products at FPD venues automatically terminates a member's tenure on the CAC.
- i. Members shall not serve on the CAC as official representatives of organizations.
- j. Employees of the FPD shall not be voting members of the CAC.
- k. Membership on the CAC and participation in its activities is open to qualifying individuals regardless of race, age, sex or sexual orientation, religion, disability or national origin.

CI. Meetings

- a. As provided for by BOC bylaws, CAC members shall elect a chair, a vice-chair and a secretary for one year terms. The chair shall call and conduct meetings of the CAC and, in collaboration with FPD staff, prepare the agendas for meetings. The vice-chair shall assist the chair, perform the duties of the chair in his/her absence and take minutes of meetings in the secretary's absence. The secretary shall prepare minutes of CAC meetings and submit them to the chair for approval at a subsequent CAC meeting.
- b. Meetings will normally be held bi-monthly, but special meetings may be held if needed.

CII. Committees

- a. Nominating Committee
The chair of the CAC shall select a Nominating Committee of three CAC members. The Nominating Committee shall publicize open positions on the CAC and

conduct a search for applicants. The Nominating Committee shall submit applications to the CAC, who will discuss the selected applicants and vote on which applications will be forwarded to the BOC for approval. The BOC retains the right to disapprove individual nominations and may thereupon request substitute nominations. Applications from qualified persons that are not selected for membership on the CAC should be retained for future openings, if the applicant agrees.

Persons nominated by the CAC shall be:

- Legal residents of the FPD.
- Clear and careful thinkers about the mission and challenges of the FPD.
- Willing to work cooperatively and constructively with others.

b. Ad hoc committees

The CAC chair may appoint other committees, as needed. These shall consist of one or more members of the CAC plus lay citizens, FPD staff, and others, as the committee's responsibility may necessitate. All deliberations, findings and recommendations of an ad hoc committee shall be governed by the same procedures and agreements as apply to the CAC. The CAC shall accept or modify any sub-committee recommendations before forwarding them to the BOC.

D. OPERATION

1. The CAC shall organize itself, appoint its Nominating Committee, make its rules, select its officers, formulate its programs, determine its meeting times and formulate its agenda.
2. As needed, the BOC may make known to the CAC relevant information about the FPD. The CAC, as a committee and its members severally, will be fully sensitive to the confidentiality which some of these referrals demand.
3. It shall be the policy of the CAC to seek one joint annual meeting with the BOC. Additional joint meetings will be held when they are mutually desired. Agenda of such meetings shall be proposed by the initiating body. The agenda of every CAC meeting shall provide for reports, suggestions and requests from the BOC. Likewise, the BOC shall request reciprocal agenda arrangements at BOC meetings.
4. The CAC or any of its subcommittees may seek information and counsel, through appropriate administrative channels, from any employee of the FPD on matters clearly related to the formally stated objective on which it is working.
5. Minutes of the meetings of the CAC shall be sent to all regular and *ex officio* CAC members.
7. The BOC may provide the CAC and its subcommittees with those consulting and clerical services, which, in the judgement of the President of the BOC are desirable and feasible within the budgetary limits of the BOC.

8. The CAC may enlist the help of professionals to serve as consultants *pro tem* with the understanding that no remuneration is involved.
9. The CAC recognizes that it is subject to the Open Meetings Laws of the State of Illinois, including required annual training.
10. Neither the CAC nor any individual member may incur financial obligations on behalf of the FPD unless specifically authorized by the BOC

E. REVIEW OF CAC ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS

1. These by-laws are subject to periodic review by the CAC and the BOC. Recommendations concerning proposed changes may be initiated by the CAC or any of its ex officio members. Within a 14 day notification period, changes in the CAC by-laws shall be approved by a majority of the voting CAC members and sent to the BOC for final approval.
2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the CAC will be conducted jointly by the BOC and the CAC from time to time.

Approved: September 21, 1989
 Revised and Approved: June 20, 2013
 Revised and Approved: May 17, 2018
 Revised and Approved: December 20, 2018
 Revised and Approved: October 20, 2022

Citizens Advisory Committee

Board of Commissioners

Signed: _____
 President

Signed: _____
 President

Attest: _____
 Secretary

Attest: _____
 Secretary