

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

MARCH 2024

## ADMINISTRATION

With great sadness, I am sharing Ken Blackburn's letter of resignation effective March 8, 2024. Since purchasing his home in the Square, he has served his community in leadership positions with the Frankfort Square Baseball League and then the FSPD for 35 years. Ken is the FSPD's longest serving Board Member.

Many thanks to the Frankfort Township Road District for helping us honor Ken with signage for "Ken Blackburn Drive" located at the intersections of both Kingston Court and Kingston Drive as well as Laurel and Kingston Drive.

Staff have been working on the 2024 – 2025 budget and project list for the upcoming year. Included for your consideration is the list of prioritized capital projects to begin the season. The largest being the OSLAD grant project for the redevelopment of Hunter Prairie Park.

On the agenda for Board consideration is the agreement with Planning Resources Inc. for the two-year OSLAD grant project as detailed in the grant project budget and resolutions passed last year.

Staff are anxiously awaiting the agreement from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for the grant project. It is not yet in our hands but is optimistically placed on the Board Meeting agenda for Board consideration. Once a fully executed copy is received, the work at Hunter Prairie Park will begin.

The pickleball rules signs are ready to be installed at Champions and Community Parks before the courts open for the season. Also, they were given to a local Pickleball Ambassador who agreed to share them within the southwest suburban pickleball community to help spread awareness and understanding.

Two United Way Born Learning Trail kits will debut this spring to incorporate interactive play and learning opportunities. The large kit will be installed along the Island Prairie Park path and a smaller, portable kit will be used by the preschool, summer camps, and BAS programs.

The Park District received nineteen college scholarship applications for this year's 2024 program. The judging committee, consisting of two staff members and three Board Members, gave thoughtful consideration to each of the applications based on a set criterion where all identifying factors were removed to eliminate any chance of bias. Park staff will forward names of successful candidates to the Lincoln-Way East High School PPS office, and FSPD representatives will attend the May 8, 2024, Community Scholarship Night to present the awards.

Work continues on the Comprehensive Plan. March meetings are focusing on prioritizing goals and performance measures, as well as assigning values to them.

March is the annual review of full-time personnel. Packets will be delivered for Board review in advance of the meeting. I will request an Executive Session at the conclusion of the regular meeting for discussion.

## **MAINTENANCE**

Staff attended virtual sessions offered through the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Land and found it to be a beneficial experience. Topics included management of flood plains and native plant areas. Staff also learned best practices from agencies that achieved Audubon and Tree City USA accreditation.

The FSPD is beginning a three-year tree inventory project which will include a GIS-based inventory of trees in areas maintained by the FSPD. Data will be collected via handheld mobile devices, analyzed in a GIS environment, and utilized to prepare a comprehensive Tree Inventory Report. The report will include detailed data for each tree inventoried, statistical analysis of the overall tree population, recommendations for management, and all GIS inventory data for the District's use.

The mowing contractors will begin work in early April for the 2024 season.

## **RECREATION**

The summer 2024 brochure introducing the FSPD's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is in production and is scheduled to be in residents' mailboxes in late April. Staff are adding a new section to the brochure highlighting FSPD parks and available amenities. This brochure will highlight the original five parks.

On March 25, we have a group of active adults heading to Starved Rock to enjoy a concert by the Ukelele Moonshiners. Trips to Holland, Michigan and Chattanooga, Tennessee are also planned for this year.

## **FINANCE AND PLANNING**

The proposed 2024 – 2025 budget includes the increase in the Equalized Assessed Valuation by the 3.4% CPI in the property tax line items. Staff just received the Will County Tax Rate Calculation report and will incorporate the numbers into the budget.

The Fund Balance Policy was established to provide financial stability, sufficient cash flow for operations, support of long-term infrastructure plans, and to assure that the Park District will be able to respond to emergencies with fiscal strength. All Policy goals have been met and the Park District is in a strong financial position.

We have completed five audits with Lauterbach and Amen and as planned, will stay with the same firm, but work with a new team to have a fresh set of eyes reviewing FSPD financials and all areas of its operation. The introductory meeting is scheduled for March 19. Also, staff confirmed that our existing process used for tracking grant expenses is still the best practice and will be used for the Hunter Prairie Park project.

## **SPECIAL RECREATION**

The next LWSRA Board Meeting is scheduled for March 19. The agenda features a review of the closed session minutes and recordings along with the procedure used.

## **GOLF COURSE**

Spring cleanup and prep work continues in anticipation of reopening the golf course for the 2024 season. Staff are anxiously awaiting a string of consistently good weather. Reliable Property Services staff are in-place and FSPD staff are ready to welcome golfers for another great season.

The first of a three-year plan to replace the course's 250 sprinkler heads is complete. This year's priority was those located around the greens.

Matt Major has been hired as the new golf professional. He is a 15-year resident of the FSPD, provides lessons at White Mountain and Cog Hill Golf Courses, and has coached the Lockport High School girls team for the past 8 years. We welcome Matt to the FSPD team!

Golfers can share in the FSPD's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a 1970s-themed golf cart available for rent and golfers that find a special anniversary golf ball will win a free bucket.

## **OFFICE**

Staff are receiving an increasing number of rental requests for FSPD facilities, such as the Community Room and picnic shelters, as well as outdoor field usage at Lincoln-Way North.

Letters have been distributed to community garden plot users with guidance and expectations for plot usage and job security in advance of the season.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

On March 28, staff will meet with our PDRMA representative, Lindsey Robertson, to begin this year's risk management review. At the kickoff meeting we will determine new goals for the upcoming year and discuss progress made with current goals which focus on our transition to Productive Parks.

Respectfully submitted:

Audrey Marcquenski  
Executive Director