

The City of Lake Forest
Plan Commission
Proceedings of the August 8, 2018 Meeting

A meeting of the Lake Forest Plan Commission was held on Wednesday, August 8, 2018, at 6:30 p.m., at City Hall, 220 E. Deerpath, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Commission members present: Chairman Kehr and Commissioners Michael Freeman, Monica Ruggles, Guy Berg and Remo Picchietti

Commissioners absent: Susan Athenson (one position vacant)

Staff present: Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

1. Introduction of Commissioners and staff and review of meeting procedures.

Chairman Kehr asked the members of the Commission and staff to introduce themselves and reviewed the meeting procedures followed by the Commission.

2. Consideration of the minutes of the July 11, 2018.

The minutes of the July 11, 2018 Plan Commission meeting were approved as submitted.

3. Public Hearing and Action: Consideration of the tentative and final plat of subdivision for the McCormick Nature Preserve. A six-lot subdivision is proposed to facilitate restoration, maintenance and protection of the Nature Preserve as preserved open space in perpetuity through a partnership between the City of Lake Forest and Lake Forest Open Lands Association. No development is proposed.

Owner: The City of Lake Forest

Presented by: City staff

Chairman Kehr asked the Commission for any conflicts of interest or Ex Parte contacts. Hearing none, she asked staff to introduce the agenda item.

Ms. Czerniak stated that the City and Lake Forest Open Lands Association have been in discussions about the McCormick Nature Preserve for several years. She noted that the availability of a grant, as part of a larger project being undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers along the Lake shore, spurred the discussions. She explained that the significant local dollars secured by Open Lands from a donor, made the award of the grant possible and which together funded the extensive ravine and shoreline restoration work that was recently completed in the McCormick Nature Preserve. She explained that the grant required a commitment that the Nature Preserve, including the ravine, would be preserved in perpetuity. She stated that the City and Open Lands agreed that placing a large portion of the

Nature Preserve in the ownership of Open Lands would be appropriate. She stated that no development or infrastructure improvements are proposed and explained that the subdivision will allow certain properties in McCormick Nature Preserve to be retained by the City. She stated that as proposed, six separate parcels will be created through the subdivision. She reviewed each lot noting that Lot 1; adjacent to Sheridan Road, will be transferred to Open Lands, Lots 2, 3, 4 and 6 will be retained by the City; and Lot 5, the largest and easternmost parcel, will be transferred to Open Lands. She explained that Lot 2 is the site of the former Army landfill which was recently excavated by the Army. She stated that Lot 3 follows the boundary of the former City household waste landfill, and Lot 4 provides for a buffer around the former landfill area. She stated that Lot 6 is a small parcel, along the property line and the site of a City sanitary sewer pump station. She stated that the intent is that the City will always retain ownership of Lots 3 and 6 but in the future, Open Lands will have the opportunity to acquire Lots 2 and 4 if both parties agree. She explained that the City is retaining the parcels that extend across the former landfill to assure that there is no disturbance of those areas in the future. She noted that the staff report provides findings in support of the tentative and final plat of subdivision. She noted that the attorneys for the City and Open Lands are preparing a Master Land Transfer Agreement as directed by the City Council adding that the Agreement will need to be signed before any of the parcels are transferred to Open Lands.

Chairman Kehr invited questions or comments from the Commission.

In response to questions from Commissioner Freeman, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that the current zoning, OA, Open Area will remain in place after the property is transferred to Lake Forest Open Lands Association (LFOLA). She added that as a requirement of the grant received to restore the McCormick Ravine, an open space covenant will also be placed on the property assuring its preservation as open space in perpetuity.

Commissioner Berg recognized the significant contribution of Open Lands' donors which made the restoration of the ravine possible and allowed the community to take advantage of the grant opportunity. He noted that this site will be the first Lake front property owned by Open Lands.

In response to questions from Commissioner Ruggles, Ms. Czerniak stated that there will not be a negative financial impact to the City as a result of the transfer of a significant portion of the McCormick Nature Preserve to Open Lands. She confirmed that the entire Nature Preserve is tax exempt currently and will remain so. She confirmed that the City will coordinate with Open Lands on the ongoing maintenance of the parcels that will remain in City's ownership. She added that the City will continue to be responsible for ongoing maintenance and repair of the storm and sanitary sewers that traverse the property and stated that the City's McCormick Day Camp will continue to operate on the property. She stated that if in the future there are any issues resulting from the decades old landfill, the City will

be responsible for properly addressing them assuming the issues are not caused by the actions of others in which case, the Agreement provides for shared responsibility.

In response to questions from Commissioner Berg, Ms. Czerniak explained that the transfer of a portion of the City owned McCormick Nature Preserve was part of a larger “land swap” involving a small parcel at Elawa Farm and Open Lands Park located at the southeast corner of Green Bay Road and Deerpath.

Hearing no further questions from the Commission, Chairman Kehr invited public comments.

Mr. Sentell, 545 Circle Lane, President of Open Lands, stated that over the years, partnerships between the City and Open Lands have resulted in the preservation of significant open spaces throughout the community. He noted that this partnership is important because of the high quality of the McCormick Nature Preserve and the restoration that was recently completed in the ravine. He stated that McCormick Nature Preserve is the crown jewel of open spaces in the community. He confirmed that this property will be the first preserved open space on the east side of the community and on the Lake front. He noted that 2.5 million dollars in Federal funds was received with a local match of \$800,000. He stated that Open Lands was able to secure the local match from a donor. He stated that further investments into the property are planned, including trails and foot bridges, before the preserve is opened to the public. He reiterated that the subdivision will allow the transfer of some of the parcels to Open Lands and will support the goal of preserving the significant area for the community in perpetuity.

In response to questions from Chairman Kehr, Ryan London, Lake Forest Open Lands, stated that during the restoration work he spent almost every date on the site. He stated that the grant was from the Army Corps Great Lakes Fisheries Restoration Program. He described the unique habitat and rare species found in the area and noted that since the restoration, fish are not traveling up the stream, into the ravine from the Lake. He noted that prior to the restoration, that bottom of the ravine was filled with massive concrete dams and old clay and sewer pipes from the former estate located in the area. He noted that there was significant erosion in the ravine as well. He stated that there are eight State listed threatened or endangered species in McCormick Nature Preserve. He noted the rare micro climate and topography of the site.

In response to questions from the Commission, Mr. Sentell noted that the trails planned for McCormick Nature Preserve will provide the opportunity for different vistas. He stated that Open Lands plans to offer tours and make the area accessible to the public to the extent possible while still preserving and protecting the sensitive area.

Hearing no further public comments, Chairman Kehr invited final comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Picchietti stated that up until a year ago he was a resident of the Villa Turicum Subdivision and his property backed up to the McCormick ravine. He applauded the restoration that was recently completed in the Nature Preserve and the partnership between Open Lands and the City that made the restoration possible. He agreed that the site is a jewel and noted that the community is fortunate that the delicate eco system will be protected. He stated appreciation to all parties who worked to make the restoration and preservation possible.

Commissioner Berg stated support for the proposed subdivision.

Commissioner Freeman made a motion to recommend tentative and final approval of the subdivision to the City Council subject to review by the City Attorney to assure that the property transfer documents include limitations on future use and safeguards to prevent the disruption of Lot 3. He suggested that the City Council consider providing for the reversion of the parcels to the City in the event that Open Lands ceases to exist or fails to meet its obligations under the Agreement.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ruggles.

Chairman Kehr stated appreciation for all Lake Forest Open Lands has done for the community.

The motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

4. Additional public comment on non-agenda items

There was no testimony presented on non-agenda items.

5. Additional information from staff.

There was no additional information presented by staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Czerniak
Director of Community Development