I. Call to Order

Vice-chair Cullick called the meeting to order at 6:45 pm in the Kendall County Board Room.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Davidson, Gryder, Koukol, Prochaska, and Cullick all were present.

III. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Koukol made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Prochaska. All, aye. Opposed, none.

IV. Citizens to be Heard

No public comments offered.

V. Review of Claims in an Amount Not-to-Exceed $44,771.20.

Commissioner Davidson made a motion to forward claims in the amount of $44,771.20 for Commission approval. Seconded by Commissioner Prochaska.

The Finance Committee reviewed the claim for Illinois State Police background checks. Director Guritz stated that an account balance is maintained by the Illinois State Police, and the balance has been replenished. Commissioner Koukol confirmed that this is the practice.

Commissioner Prochaska wished to convey appreciation to staff for the improved claims listing descriptions.

The Finance Committee inquired into claim #277 for Albertson’s grocery supplies. Director Guritz stated this was likely for snacks for Natural Beginnings, but would check with Laura McCoy on the specific purchases.

Director Guritz reported that no claims will be brought forward for Jody Strohm retirement event supplies.

The Finance Committee inquired into claim #244 from Menards for Kubota floor parts. Director Guritz stated that a Kubota is being rebuilt at Hoover, with purchases needed to complete the rebuild, and that he would check on the specific purchases.
The Finance Committee inquired into claim #282 from the Illinois Dept. of Agriculture for herbicide licensing. Director Guritz reported that several of the grounds and maintenance staff annually renew their herbicide certificates.

The Finance Committee inquired into claim #299 Big R Stores for the purchase of horseshoes. Committee Chair Cullick stated that she had expressed concerns previously about these purchases, and would like this discussed at a future Committee of the Whole meeting. Director Guritz stated that the purchases were made for birthday party supplies.

Committee Chair Cullick called the question on the motion. Commissioner Koukol made a motion to forward the claims list to Commission for approval. Seconded by Commissioner Prochaska. Aye, all. Opposed, none. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Review of Allocations and Budget Recoding for FY 2015 Appropriations.

Latreeese Caldwell presented the budget reallocation spreadsheets, and provided an overview of the reallocations to the Finance Committee.

The spreadsheet provides a column for the approved budget, a column for the revised allocations for the working budget, and spread of the allocated budgets over the District’s new and proposed cost centers (Administration, Ellis, Hoover, and Environmental Education).

For the working budget, revenues have been adjusted and restated for Farm License revenues, reduced by approximately $47,000 from the appropriated $220,000, and for Ellis Rental Events, reduced by $25,975 from the appropriated $69,500 representing a reduction in the number of events scheduled from 21 to 13 for the year.

Personnel costs have been reduced by approximately $30,000 representing a net headcount and position reduction of 1.5 full time equivalents from the retirement of Jody Strohm and Craig Johnson, and promotion of Rebecca Antrim to a full time position.

The cumulative results from revenue and expense adjustments within the working budget, as provided on page five of the spreadsheet report, indicates that the ending projected balance for the current fiscal year is ($23,798).

Latreeese Caldwell provided an overview of the summary page for cost allocations on page six of the spreadsheet report. Based on the allocations, cost to maintain the Ellis House and Grounds is $44,445. Collectively, Ellis programs run a deficit of ($4,493), with Public Programs run at a deficit of ($45,742). Cost to maintain Hoover Forest Preserves is $74,190, with Bunkhouse, Campsite and Meadowhawk Lodge rentals offsetting roughly $2,547 of this cost. Environmental Education Programs operate at a collective deficit of ($86,478). Of this total deficit, ($36,174) is contributed to school programs, ($9,727) is contributed to camps, ($10,405) is contributed to Natural Beginnings, ($14,679) is contributed to other programs,
and ($15,493) is associated with costs for operating and maintaining the Laws of Nature museum. The Natural Areas Volunteer Program incurred expenses totals ($19,147), the majority of which is the salary and benefits expenses incurred during the fiscal year for a position that will not be included as part of the FY15-16 headcount. Grounds and Natural Resources operates at a cost of $293,775, but is made whole by apportioning tax and farm license revenues.

The Finance Committee discussed the breakdown, and complimented Latreese Caldwell for her assistance in pulling this together.

Director Guritz stated that he was working with Laura McCoy and Ellis staff members first to examine strategies for closing the deficit gaps for Environmental Education and Ellis programming.

Latreese Caldwell reported that the next steps will be to work with the Treasurer’s Office to recode the District’s budget and allocations to the new cost centers.

Commissioner Prochaska expressed concern that the revised allocations shows school program costs exceed revenues, and was under the impression that school programs were generating revenues from previous reports.

Director Guritz indicated that this is a result of full-costing the programs. Environmental Education school programs likely cover the direct costs of instruction, but not the full cost of running the program and department. Director Guritz stated that efforts are underway to look at our school program price structure, and differentiated pricing structures for use of District facilities at Ellis and Hoover.

Director Guritz also stated that close examination is needed of the District’s public program offerings within the Ellis and Environmental Education cost centers, which are both operating at collective deficits of over ($14,000) within both areas.

Commissioner Koukol inquired into the cost for Ellis maintenance, and what portion of the $44,445 figure was for opening and closing the preserve and mowing costs. Latreese Caldwell stated that approximately $14,500 is for the assigned grounds and maintenance staff member, with the majority of remaining costs allocated to maintenance supplies, services, and utilities for the main house and barn.

Commissioner Koukol thanked Latreese Caldwell for providing an easy-to-understand overview of the cost centers, and expressed interest in having Latreese present to the Committee of the Whole so that all Commissioners are familiar with and understand the final spreadsheet.

Commissioner Gryder inquired into whether the deficit figure for the working budget included the beginning year deficit. Latreese Caldwell stated that the working budget
deficit did not include the ($34,000) deficit posted for the beginning of the year at the conclusion of the last fiscal year audit.

Director Guritz requested that Latreese Caldwell provide an overview of the spreadsheet at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

Commissioner Prochaska inquired into whether the costs for the Natural Area Volunteer program were justified by the volunteer contributions leveraged. Director Guritz reported that this cost will be minimal in the coming year, and that the benefit of having volunteers support restoration, monitor trails, and support District programming is extremely valuable. Keeping up with areas restored, or that will be restored by the District is also a significant commitment supported by the District’s NAV volunteers.

Commissioner Davidson suggested that each cost center area should be reviewed by the Finance Committee over the coming months to address the District’s budget deficit and support preparation of the FY 15-16 budget. Director Guritz stated this was a good approach, and the new spreadsheets will provide a good start for development of next year’s programmatic budgets.

Director Guritz stated that beyond the operating budget, the District is carrying additional costs in the capital fund that will need to be reabsorbed into the operating fund in the not-too-distant future.

Director Guritz inquired into whether the direction outlined complimented the pending Rules of Order for the District’s working committees. Commissioner Prochaska stated that the Rules of Order will define committee functions, and that these definitions can change to outline committee scope of work as needed. Also, it is not unusual for other working committees to refer items to the Finance committee for formal review and recommendation.

The Finance Committee provided direction to present the spreadsheet to the Committee of the Whole, and begin the process for reviewing each of the cost center areas over the coming months to prepare recommendations for Commission consideration.

**VII. Review of a Request for Return of a Facility Rental Deposit for Ellis House and Equestrian Center.**

Director Guritz presented a request received from Madeline Kress asking for the return of a $1,000 deposit for an upcoming wedding event at Ellis. The event was cancelled, with no future date scheduled. In accordance with District policy, the family members were informed that District staff members did not have the authority to issue a refund without approval from the Board of Commissioners.
Director Guritz reported that because the wedding event was cancelled, the District was able to schedule the ACTHA trail horse challenge event.

The Finance Committee discussed the request, with a suggestion made to forward a motion to Commission to consider return of 50% of the deposit amount.

Commissioner Davidson made a motion to forward consideration of a refund of 50% of the Kress family’s security deposit for an Ellis House wedding rental event. Seconded by Commissioner Koukol.

Roll call: Commissioners Koukol, Davidson, and Cullick, aye. Opposed, Commissioners Gryder and Prochaska. Motion carried by a vote of three to two.

VIII. Review of Contract Terms for a Grant Funded Restoration Project at Ellis House and Equestrian Center.

Director Guritz reported that The Conservation Foundation notified the District of a grant received from the Lyondell Bassell Corporation to establish a low-grow prairie demonstration area within the Aux Sable Creek watershed. The Conservation Foundation approached the District to identify locations at Ellis House and Equestrian Center where the demonstration area could be established. The site selected is a 0.6 acre area along the gravel entry drive to the center. As part of this project, the District will be reimbursed for the full cost of restoration of the 0.6 acres, plus first-year herbicide treatments for weed control.

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to forward consideration of approval of the contract with Pizzo and Associates to Commission for approval. Seconded by Commissioner Gryder.

Roll Call: Commissioners Gryder, Koukol, Prochaska and Cullick, aye. Opposed, Commissioner Davidson. Motion carried.

IX. Executive Session

None.

X. Other Items of Business

Commissioner Koukol inquired into the closing date and updates for the purchase of the Fox River Bluffs Forest Preserve.

Director Guritz reported that the closing is scheduled for May 14, 2015. The Phase I environmental survey has been completed, with no identified issues. A grant disbursement
request in the amount of $600,000 has been forwarded to the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, and the District will receive the check for deposit prior to closing. Director Guritz reported that there would be a reduction in cost on the final survey work for reducing the scope of work for staking the Eldamain Road corridor.

Commissioner Gryder inquired into the status of the Millbrook Bridge inspection.

Director Guritz reported that the inspection had been completed, and that HR Green would be providing a summary report at the upcoming Commission meeting. Meetings have taken place to discuss possible sources of funding for completion of needed repairs. Grant funds may be available, but only if a trail connection can be made from the bridge to Millbrook North Forest Preserve. The Dobson Lane / Old Whitfield public road easement does extend from the eastern abutment to Millbrook North Forest Preserve. This road easement has not been vacated by Fox Township, and could provide the access corridor needed to make the trail connection that could qualify the District to receive grant funding for improvements. There are remaining questions on how the road corridor is described and carried on the titles of adjacent property owners. Attorney Dan Kramer will be contacted to discuss the title questions, as he is familiar with the property, and assisted Fox Township with the conveyance of ownership of the bridge and adjacent property to the District several years ago.

XII. Adjournment

Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Gryder. Commissioners Gryder, Koukol, Prochaska and Cullick, aye. Opposed, Commissioner Davidson. Meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Guritz
Director, Kendall County Forest Preserve District