I. Call to Order

Commissioner Flowers called the meeting to order at 6:29 p.m. in the Kendall County Board Room.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Gilmour, Flowers, and Wehrli all were present. Commissioners Purcell and Shaw were absent. KCFPD staff members Tina Villarreal, Event Coordinator and Amy Clever, Ellis Equestrian Center Barn Manager also were present.

III. Citizens to be Heard

No public comments offered.

IV. 2015 Fees – Rentals and Programs

Director Guritz presented a report detailing all approved fees and charges for the year. The report also included the 2015-2016 tuition fees for Natural Beginnings. Amy Clever reported that increased charges for horseback riding lessons, birthday party programs, and three-day camps were correctly stated in the report.

Commissioner Flowers inquired into whether participants had expressed any concerns with the fee increases. Amy Clever reported that there has not been any negative feedback.

Commissioner Flowers asked whether the wedding event fees for Ellis had been increased. Tina Villarreal reported that the current charge is $3,300, which is consistent or above market cost for similar venues. Danada House, for example, is $3,200 for 8-hours and includes set-up and take-down support. The Committee discussed whether additional charges were warranted for set-up and take-down. Tina Villarreal suggested that increasing the overall rental rates would be a more sound approach, suggesting that an increase in fees for Saturday rentals, keeping the current rates for Friday and Sunday. Separately, scheduling of staff to assist with set-up and clean-up is a more viable and cost-effective approach for securing the support needed rather than contracting with an outside firm.
Director Guritz inquired into the role of the caterers with supporting event set-up and clean-up. Tina Villarreal reported that catering fees had been increased this past year, but there has been a challenge with communications of expectations with catering staff. Often, catering staff present are not the same individuals with whom expectations have been discussed. Director Guritz stated he would send a sample preferred catering program packet for review, which includes an opportunity for charging a per-plate fee paid to the District by the caterer.

The Committee discussed current bookings, with approximately 15 events currently scheduled for the year, with 2 bookings scheduled for 2016.

Tina Villarreal reported that one event scheduled for June had cancelled, and the participant had requested a refund. Per terms of our rental agreement, the district does not refund deposits, but will apply the deposit to a rescheduled date.

Tina Villarreal reported on the outcome from the Murder Mystery fundraiser. The event attracted 62 participants.

V. Special Event Permits

The Programming and Events Committee reviewed the Special Event permit from Yorkville High School (Cross Country meet) and the Special Event and waived-fee requests for Kendall County Juvenile Justice Council (5K Run/Walk Fundraiser) for events scheduled to take place at Hoover Forest Preserve.

Director Guritz stated that while these events do raise good will with the community, there are opportunity cost impacts to Forest Preserve district revenues. Separately, depending on the venue, there are impacts to other campground rentals, activities, and traffic flow due to the scope of larger events that needs to be communicated to those making campground reservations on days these events are taking place.

Commissioner Gilmour suggested that the Forest Preserve district take advantage of these high attendance events by marketing district programs and services. District staff will be working to create banners and other promotional materials for display in preserves to market available services.

Commissioner Gilmour reported that the group does not have a budget for these events, but funds raised will support drug prevention and intervention programs including Kendall County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates).

Director Guritz stated that for these events, the Kendall County Forest Preserve District should be acknowledged for the in-kind support extended for these events.
Committee direction was to waive the standard event permit and rental fees. Additionally, for the Juvenile Justice Council, the Forest Preserve district will incur costs for portable washroom rentals, but will request a donation of this service from the company that provides this service in exchange for sponsorship acknowledgement for the event.

VI. General Discussions and Updates

Director Guritz reported that he would be recommending approval of a subscription to Constant Contact to Commission to publish the District’s newsletter. In the interim, Forest Preserve district staff will be taking advantage of a free 60-day trial offer to publish the newsletter by the end of the first week of March. The solution is low-cost based on numbers of subscribers, provides user-friendly templates which will improve brand consistency, and automates the process for subscribing and unsubscribing from the newsletter in accordance with anti-SPAM laws and regulations.

Commissioner Wehrli inquired about the monthly costs when the District publishes newsletters on a quarterly basis. Director Guritz stated that the program will allow us to distribute other program announcements and events to our subscribers on a more regular basis. Cost for the service for up to 5,000 subscribers is $55 per month. Budget for the newsletter is $2,800. The promotion and publicity budget is $4,000.

Director Guritz reported that as far as a website for the District, our first focus will be to update the storefront on the existing website hosted by the Kendall County. Work will begin on this effort in February with an initial assessment of staff time available to update the content.

Director Guritz provided insights into the proposed RecPro registration software based on the proposal received. $6,000 is available in the 2007 bond series budget in anticipation of approval of the RecPro software solution. The current proposal does not include on-line registration capability. One of the issues is the lack of direct network connectivity for Ellis and Hoover. Additional information is needed in order to determine whether computers at Ellis and Hoover will be able to tap into the program in order to manage registrations, or if information will need to be submitted to the main office for entry. That said, the proposed registration program will provide a platform for entering all participation data, generate program rosters, participation reports, invoices and receipts, and expand e-marketing capabilities for the Forest Preserve district.

Director Guritz provided insights into the District’s current internet access capabilities at Hoover and Ellis. Both sites have wireless internet access from AT&T. In reviewing the Comcast high-speed internet proposal for Hoover, there may be an opportunity to establish
a hot-zone at Hoover which would allow the District to cancel its AT&T subscriptions currently providing wireless service at the campground supervisor’s residence and Rookery that would potentially reduce costs for internet connectivity while expanding public and staff access to high-speed internet services.

President Wehrli directed staff to discuss this opportunity with Kendall County IT and Facilities Management staff to determine possible solutions for connecting Hoover and Ellis to the network to allow for access to the RecPro registration program, if needed.

Commissioner Gilmour inquired into whether the Comcast high-speed internet connection at Meadowhawk would eliminate or replace current wireless service at Hoover. Director Guritz stated that this was a possibility if a hot-zone could be established.

Commissioner Flowers inquired into whether the RecPro system will allow for Ellis to enter registrations into the software. Director Guritz reported that because the system is server based, and Ellis is not directly connected to the Kendall County servers, registrations at Ellis may have to be entered into the system at the main office. Additional research is needed to determine whether the wireless service at Ellis will provide access to the RecPro software system.

Commissioner Flowers inquired into whether RecPro will provide opportunities for on-line registrations. Director Guritz reported that the software can provide that capability, but this module and capability is not included in the initial RecPro proposal.

The committee directed staff to bring this discussion forward for presentation to the full board at the upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting.

The committee discussed recent events, including instituting a formal process for event evaluation in order to formalize the process for review of event outcomes, discuss how events and programs can be improved, and enhance target marketing efforts. The committee also discussed local festivals where Forest Preserve district participation should be considered including Hometown Days, the Kendall County Fair, Prairie Fest, Montgomery Fest, Corn Fest, and extension of invitations to local chambers of commerce to host a meeting at forest preserve district facilities.

**VII. American Competitive Trail Horse Challenge**

Amy Clever presented an overview of a proposed ACTHCA events at Ellis. The proposed events would take place over two weekends. The event features both a 6-mile trail challenge, and arena challenge events. Riders are judged based on ability to navigate through a series of obstacles along the trail, or within the arena. As part of the event, the
Forest Preserve district could generate additional revenue through overnight horse-trailer camping at Ellis. Projected revenues would include $5,200 for each weekend hosted, and additional income from overnight camping, concessions, and photography sales. Expenses would include approximately $2,100 for challenge course set-up, event staffing, and maintenance.

The Programming and Events Committee supported the event concept, and directed staff to consult with the State’s Attorney’s office for review of the proposed agreement and insurance requirements, and the Kendall County Health Department to discuss any requirements for permitting of overnight camping if any regulations need to be met. The Committee also directed staff to present the event concept to the Committee of the Whole scheduled for the following week.

VIII. Adjournment

Commissioner Gilmour made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by President Wehrli. All, aye. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Guritz
Director, Kendall County Forest Preserve District