I. Call to Order
Commissioner Flowers called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm in the Kendall County Board Room.

II. Roll Call
Commissioners Gilmour, Prochaska, and Flowers all were present.

III. Approval of Agenda
Commissioner Prochaska made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Gilmour. All, aye. Opposed, none.

IV. Citizens to be Heard
No public comments were offered.

V. Natural Beginnings 16-17 School Year Program Expansion Proposal
The Committee discussed the proposed program expansion proposal for Natural Beginnings for the 16-17 School Year.

Director Guritz reported that this item was presented to the Finance Committee at the October 29, 2015 meeting. The District has received letters of support from parents of students currently enrolled requesting consideration of expansion of the program to include additional afternoon sessions for mixed-age students for an additional cost of $300 for each afternoon session. Megan Gessler produced a spreadsheet showing that the costs could be covered for the additional afternoon session(s), with consideration of the amendment of the preliminary budget to include salary and benefit increases for the program’s Lead Instructors, and an additional cost for two to attend an upcoming regional conference.

Direction was received to present the proposed expansion to the Programming and Events Committee for discussion.

Commissioner Purcell joined the meeting at 6:05 pm.

The Programming and Events Committee reviewed the program budget spreadsheets presented.
Commissioner Gilmour asked that Megan Gessler interpret the information regarding the spreadsheet showing the revenue and cost projections for student enrollment ratios within the 3-day versus 4-day programs.

Megan explained that the top portion of the spreadsheet shows the first and second quarter revenues currently scheduled for the 3-day afternoon program with 7 students currently projected for the FY 15-16 budget. Based on parent requests, the spreadsheet shows how the revenue and cost projections may change based on student enrollment in a 3-day or 4-day program for the upcoming fiscal year, showing that revenues would exceed cost projections for the first and second quarter payments, with additional revenues projected for three student registrations at $150.00.

Parents of older students that will be homeschooled, or enrolled in morning public school programs have requested the opportunity for enrolling their students in afternoon sessions offered on Tuesday and/or Thursday afternoons. Currently, afternoon sessions run on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The expanded afternoon session(s) would likely enroll students that are also participating in the 3-day afternoon session in the coming year.

Director Guritz stated that the spreadsheet calculations will need to be reviewed further to determine the overall budget impacts for the full school year, noting that first and second quarter payments that would be received in the upcoming fiscal year would only cover the first 14 weeks of program costs. The remaining costs for the 23 remaining weeks would be incurred in the subsequent fiscal year.

The Programming and Events Committee calculated and discussed the additional costs for instruction.

In review of the spreadsheets, Commissioner Purcell noted that the proposed increase in tuition costs of $300 per afternoon session are insufficient to cover the additional $3,450 of direct costs the District will incur for 37 weeks of instruction, representing roughly $111 per week for salary and benefit costs. Essentially, the District would be losing money or subsidizing the additional afternoon sessions proposed with the expansion.

Director Guritz stated that the tuition costs for the additional day will need to be examined to determine whether expansion of the program is viable. This will need to include whether parents expressing interest would be willing to offset the full costs for the program expansion.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to carefully examine the tuition costs and expenses that would be incurred over the full school year in order to determine whether the proposed expansion is financially feasible.
VI. Marketing Plan Discussion – Review of Proposed Elements and Costs for Media and Social Media Promotions for FY 15-16

The Programming and Events Committee reviewed the proposed elements and costs for media and social media promotions received from Shaw media, as well as the marketing study and report completed by Benedictine University students in the prior year.

Environmental Education Coordinator Emily Dombrowski informed the committee that the Environmental Education department has established a Twitter and Instagram account, and has increased the number of followers on Facebook from 300 to 500 within the calendar year.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed the District’s social media presence.

Director Guritz stated that one of our challenges is that our marketing footprint currently does not reach enough people, and as a result, the District frequently cancels the seasonal public program offerings due to low enrollment.

The proposal from Shaw Media provides concrete actions and support needed to expand our marketing presence in the coming year at a reasonable cost.

The Committee discussed the marketing budget for the upcoming year. Director Guritz stated that $8,500 is included for marketing in the preliminary budget for the year.

The Committee discussed the Shaw Media website proposal. Director Guritz stated that this is a cost effective opportunity to improve our program storefront, with eventual connection to online marketing and registration opportunities through the RecPro online module scheduled for purchase in the coming year.

The Committee discussed the E-mail blast opportunity, providing direction to request information from Shaw Media regarding analytics results from blasts purchased by other agencies purchasing this service, as well as a list of websites produced by the company for review.

Director Guritz stated that other opportunities need to be explored to market District opportunities to communities west and south of Kendall County where the types of services offered by the District are not available, stating that many of the District’s clients travel into Kendall County to take advantage of our program services.

Commissioner Purcell suggested that as part of the E-mail blast, the District offer a promotional discount for wedding rentals for ad respondents.
The Programming and Events Committee discussed other opportunities for promotion of weddings at Ellis and use of Meadowhawk Lodge. Events Coordinator Tina Villarreal stated that Meadowhawk Lodge is not an ideal facility for hosting weddings, but is a good venue for hosting receptions, wedding showers, church services, and retreats, and should be marketed accordingly.

The Programming and Events Committee discussed the proposal, and provided direction to forward approval of the website design and single E-mail blast to Commission for approval.

VII. Review of Environmental Education Winter Public Programs
The Programming and Events Committee discussed the proposed winter public program offerings.

Environmental Education Coordinator Dombrowski stated that the program fees are set to cover costs for each of the offerings, with the exception of Pictures with Santa which has traditionally been offered free to the public.

The Committee discussed the cancellation policy for the District. Generally, classes are cancelled 72 hours prior to the event.

Emily also provided an overview of school programs completed in October, noting that school program bookings were higher this fall over the previous calendar year.

Commissioner Purcell questioned whether the District had received any complaints over the increase in per student fees. Emily reported that she had received one or two complaints, but this did not result in schools cancelling reservations.

The Programming and Events Committee provided direction to present the proposed winter public programs to Commission for approval as presented.

VIII. FY 15-16 Budget Discussions – Ellis Programs
The Committee discussed program impacts that would result from anticipated reductions in staffing levels projected within the preliminary budget.

Director Guritz informed the Committee that there is a budget impact at Ellis due to limits in the number of programs that can be scheduled with the three remaining lesson horses.

Commissioner Gilmour stated that when this issue was last presented, the District was going to pursue securing horses owed to the District.

Director Guritz stated he had reached out to those contacts, but nothing has been received at this point, and one additional horse is needed to support current reservations.
Based on the preliminary budget staffing resources for Ellis, the District will not be able to continue to support the Family Fun Night schedule, or the Murder Mystery.

Director Guritz stated that based on the preliminary budget, Ellis operations will not be the same in the upcoming year. Communications, registrations, volunteer coordination, and fiscal management will need to be reengineered at the start of the fiscal year in order to properly support program reservations and financial management of the facility.

While paring down to core services will reduce the program and financial management workload, there will be impacts to District administrative staff to begin to handle the work currently performed by the Ellis Events Coordinator and Office Assistant.

Efforts of the Ellis Events Coordinator will focus exclusively on supporting the bridal expos, weddings and other event rentals.

Events Coordinator Tina Villarreal stated that there are 14 weddings currently on the 2016 calendar. Tina reported that the wagon banners on Route 52 appear to be generating interest, with individuals stopping in for a tour of the site. Tina expressed concerns that with less of a staff presence, visiting public may not be engaged to generate business.

The Committee discussed placement of promotional materials with contact information for public visiting the site when staffing is not available to discuss program interests.

IX. **General Discussions and Updates**
Director Guritz reported that interviews for the Equestrian Program Manager should be completed by the end of the week.

X. **Executive Session**
None.

XI. **Adjournment**
Commissioner Gilmour made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Prochaska. Aye, all. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David Guritz
Director, Kendall County Forest Preserve District