

**MILL CREEK SPECIAL SERVICE AREA ADVISORY BODY**  
Kane County/Mill Creek SSA Office  
39W250 Herrington Boulevard, Suite R1, Geneva, IL 60134

The special meeting of the Kane County Mill Creek SSA Advisory Body was held on Monday, March 13, 2017 at 6:30 pm at the Kane County Mill Creek SSA office at the Mill Creek Village Center, Suite R1, Geneva, IL.

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**

Biggs called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Roll call was taken. Members present were: Michael Barth, Jeff Danklefsen, Carol Frey, Mark Neville, Katherine Parr and Barry Stuedemann.

Absent: Clare Fitzgerald

**ANNOUNCEMENT:**

Biggs announced that William Earle officially resigned his Advisory Body member post and is now a full time staff member of Kane County Government and is the new Mill Creek Coordinator.

**A. NATIVE PRAIRIE MAINTENANCE BURNS:**

ILM Environments who was awarded the Mill Creek Native Prairie Burn contract was in attendance to make a special presentation to the Advisory Body concerning the scheduled maintenance burns that will be performed sometime in March/April. Making the presentation was Ms. Debbie Budyak, ILM Environment Manager.

Ms. Budyak started the segment by referencing the two handouts the Body members had received:

1. Burn Plan:
  - Contains the logistics of how ILM will approach the burn
2. Handout:
  - An overview of the process of a prescribed burn.

A prescribed burn (the second document):

- Is used as a land management technique.
- It allows the contractor to safely recreate what nature would be doing to restore the land if human intervention did not exist.
- Used very commonly by both private and public entities throughout different types of land environments such as woodlands, wetlands, prairies, etc.
- Primarily, burning is important because:
  - It is really critical to the promotion of native plants.
  - It “wakes up” the seed pods that have gone dormant over the winter.

- It also helps replenish important nutrients into the soil that are vital to the growth of those plants
- Secondarily, it helps to eliminate the invasive species or the undesirable plants that can typically crowd out the native and desirable plants, by hitting them when they first pop up.
  - Invasive plants are usually the first ones to pop up on the spring and the last ones to fade away in the Winter.
  - Doing a Spring burn allows eradication of the undesirable growth and create a suitable environment for the native plants to flourish.
  - Prescribed burns are way to prevent unintended burns.
  - A prescribed burn clears out the “unwanted junk”, the type of material that would carry a fire. This helps prevent natural fires that might otherwise start up.
- Where & When to Burn:
  - Any natural area that has native plants such as pond buffers, forests, etc.
  - Typically recommend that the best practice is to burn every 3-5 years.
  - This seems to be the appropriate amount of time to let the native plants regenerate to get to that spot before it’s time to hit the “reset” button again.
- Execute burns in Spring & Fall for a couple of reasons:
  - Coincides with the growing seasons.
  - Seems to be the right time from a weather perspective in order to safely perform the burns.
- Preparations for the burn process:
  - First:
    - Have to apply for a permit from the IL Environmental Protection Agency.
    - Anyone who performs prescribed burns has to have this permit.
    - It’s a sign off/approval by the EPA that it is okay to burn the area and the material within that area (trees, prairie, etc.)
    - Also is a stamp of approval that the contractor has considered the major hazards, i.e. structures. Is the contractor planning on burning an appropriate distance from homes, sheds, retails spaces, etc.?
    - Have power lines been considered or any other major hazards in the immediate area?
  - Second:
    - After that is secured, most villages, localities such as fire districts have additional permits that are required.
    - Mill Creek is part of the Elburn and Countryside fire districts.
    - When these permits are secured the secondary entities can appropriately respond to calls they receive concerning areas that are on fire.
- Next the burn plan is created (the first document that was distributed):
  - A summary of the approach ILM takes, laying out all the conditions specific to the Mill Creek site that have been considered and how ILM is going to execute the burn on the day of.
  - It is created by the “burn boss” and on the day of, he will be the one who is controlling and managing the process of the burn along with the rest of the team members who are all certified and have gone through the appropriate burn training. ILM definitely has skilled personnel on site.
- Weather:
  - Vital to the execution of a proper burn
  - There are two major factors:

- Humidity
    - Wind (speed and direction)
  - Both humidity and wind factors have to be just right for a safe burn to make sure a fire doesn't go astray.
  - ILM personnel are monitoring the weather conditions on a daily basis.
  - Usually give a 24 – 72 hr notice, but conditions can always change at the last minute.
- Notifications:
  - Mailings just so that from a safety perspective, as well as from a health concerns (i.e., if someone has asthma, they can take appropriate precautions such as being away from the area).
- Morning of the burn:
  - Notify the client and the fire districts.
  - Checking weather conditions up until the final moment of the burn.
  - Equipment is tested, burn personnel suit up in safety gear and make sure that an appropriate water supply is on hand.
  - Signage is posted, "Prescribed burning in process"
  - Create fire lines/burn breaks. Basically a buffer/barrier between the areas to be burned and those that will not be burned.
  - Burn is started
- Burn Expectations:
  - Land turns black.
  - However, just because something is not completely black, does not indicate that it was not a successful burn.
  - Spotty burns are still ecologically successful and in fact they mimic what a natural burn would look like if someone wasn't walking along with a drip torch lighting the land on fire.
  - Weather conditions can always defer Spring burning to a Fall burn.
  - Budyak wrapped up the presentation by showing various "before & after" pictures so that Advisory Body members would know what to expect.

#### QUESTIONS/CONCERNS/ANSWERS:

- Earle inquired as to who gives the final go ahead on a burn
  - Budyak responded that it is the burn boss based on the weather conditions and making sure that they are adhered to.
- Earle asked what times are burns typically started.
  - Budyak responded between 8:00 am – 10:00 am, again weather dependent. Normally not lighting until 10:00 am.
- Earle wanted to know how late a burn would go.
  - Budyak said normally 3:00 pm is the latest a burn can go.
- Earle inquired what happens to the debris that is left over after a burn, i.e., cans, etc. He did point out that Wednesdays are garbage day and a lot of material tends to get blown around and the prairie areas are where it seems to get caught up in. He said that is a big concern in the area.
  - Budyak replied that the team walks through and removes anything that could create a safety hazard, i.e., a plastic bag. They would manage it as they go and pick up "hot spots". It's not something they run into frequently. However, they don't have a policy where they do a trash patrol service.

- To that point, Neville asked how soon a burn area could be walked in, in case someone wanted to go through the area to clean up leftover debris.
  - Keith Grey said it could be 10 minutes. It all depends on what the fuel for the fire was. Some areas have woody material – this would hold heat longer and take longer to put out. Thistles or grasses will flame out right away. Lannert interjected that ILM does not leave a sight until they determine it is secure.
- Stuedemann asked when the last time was that the areas were burned.
  - Biggs said he estimated five years ago, going by records. Earle thought at least six years.
- Neville asked if conditions are textbook perfect, how long does ILM estimate that the entire burn will take?
  - Budyak said ILM is estimating around three days for the approximate 36 acres total.
- Neville asked if the walking paths would be blocked.
  - Budyak said they are not blocked and that the paths actually act as burn breaks. There is enough staff present to direct residents not to get too close. Neville interjected that he thought it was a matter of people exercising common sense. Although Budyak did say that fire naturally drew spectators with people being interested in observing the process.
- Neville asked if the golf courses would have any issues.
  - Earle showed him that on the North side, the SSA was only burning three small pieces, which would not interfere with any golf activity.
- Barth was reassured that all residents were being informed of any burning the SSA was doing via the postcard.
- Earle asked where the burn would begin.
  - Budyak replied that that would be weather condition dependent, which Keith Craig backed up.
- Biggs asked whether the burn around the school could be scheduled for a Saturday.
  - Budyak said that they could certainly make note of that, but if the weather didn't cooperate on any Saturday, she would hate for Mill Creek to miss out on having the Spring burn not completed because of that. Craig said that it is not unheard of for ILM to be burning even on a Sunday – they have to take advantage of every day available since their season is so short. Parr interjected that Spring Break (last week of March) might be factored in. Craig said that rarely have they been able to get through all of the burns they have scheduled because the window of opportunity is so small. They have to accomplish as much as they can, when they can when the weather conditions permit.
- Danklefsen asked how the burn break is created and maintained.
  - Budyak said that it is literally a walking burn. One person burns with a drip torch and another is walking behind and putting it out literally creating a burn line. The burn boss would determine if a burn break has to be created via mowing. Lannert interjected that it was also dependent on the amount of fuel available for burning – an overabundance of grasses might dictate mowing beforehand. But he reassured the board members that ILM was well versed in what they do.
- It was confirmed that Shodeen has a contract with ILM. So Parr asked if there was a way to find out what Shodeen's burn plan is.
  - Biggs said he could inquire with Patzelt.
  - Parr's concern is the disparity between what is being burned on the South side (approximately 34 acres) and what is being burned on the North side (approximately 2.7 acres). She said that on the North side there are so many bike path areas surrounded by prairie that have been neglected. If residents knew this, the Advisory

Body would be questioned as to why the significant difference exists and that this would also affect property values.

- Lannert replied that this is simply because the SSA did not own many of the parcels on the North side and the SSA can only legally maintain what is theirs. But he reassured her that the other entities were also going to be burning, so that everyone should be satisfied with the work that will be done on the North side between SSA maintenance and Shodeen & golf course maintenance.
- Parr initiated a discussion on how to get the park districts to maintain their prairie areas.
  - Biggs said he had spoken to someone about that already.
  - Neville said maybe both park districts. They both had large areas that could use some burn maintenance.
  - Lannert commented that park districts generally didn't have budgets that allowed for the inclusion of prairie burn maintenance.
  - Parr suggested that they mow it then.
- Stuedemann asked about Forest Preserve District property.
  - Biggs said that he has spoken to Monica Meyers and that the FPD had already burned twice the amount it had in past years due to the good weather breaks. She told Don that they anticipated getting to some of the areas in Mill Creek.
- There was some discussion about the invasive species.
  - These are the plants that pop up before the native species.
  - Lannert's staff member said that once you burn, that's immediately when you want to start with the management of your invasive species.
  - When you see green in the prairie areas now, those are the invasives. So after the burn when they pop up that would be a good time to manage with herbicides. You could hit them before the native species crop up.
  - It's a good precursor to the start-up of the large Spring maintenance plan.
- Earle asked what Budyak thought the timeline was with regards to notifications.
  - Budyak confirmed that the SSA was already getting out its postcard notifications.
  - She said that March 15<sup>th</sup> ILM could start monitoring the weather for specific conditions for Mill Creek and try to get it into the schedule as soon as weather conditions allowed.
  - Biggs said that the signs that Feece had created for us could be put out now because they are good for a month long period.
  - Craig said we were probably looking a couple weeks out

#### **B. BID 30-017 SPRING 2017 PLANTING ENHANCEMENTS:**

- Biggs shared that quite a few number of bids were received in response to the bid invite.
- One for sure was way at the high end, with the average being at about \$50K.
- The low bidder, after doing a reference check with Naperville school district, is not recommended. They do mainly hardscapes and not a lot of landscaping.
- References indicated that they are hard to talk to, they don't communicate well over the phone and they don't get insurances within the time frames that are required. The County doesn't allow anybody to work without insurance.
- The decision has been made to award the contract to Cornerstone, who is already our local vendor that does our property maintenance. So that will work in well with our two-year warranty program.

- \$180,000 - \$200,000 was originally budgeted for this project, so this good price will leave enough funding available to allow the SSA to do additional projects and accomplish more this season if everyone chooses to do so.
- The goal is to get started on this as soon as the County Board approves it, which will be at next month's meeting on the second Tuesday of the month.
- Earle asked if there was any doubt that the COB would approve this and Biggs reassured him that they would.
- Parr asked for a clarification of unit prices for #9A-9D.
- Lannert said that these were the designations of the bridge crossings per the overall sheet (entry areas, bridge areas and others).
- It was acknowledged that the landscape designs were reviewed at the last meeting.
- Biggs thought that this probably would not take an overly long time to install perhaps by mid-June.
- Some of the other projects that Biggs and Earle will start reviewing will be bridges and gazebos, now that there are additional funds available.
- The goal is to spend the money and get projects completed.

- **C. ASPHALT BID/PROJECT:**

- Biggs thought that Feece would be here tonight as an issue has developed with the asphalt project.
- Biggs is understanding, although he hasn't received anything in writing as of yet, that if any main, public roads are being worked on that all sidewalks have to be made ADA compliant. Right now in Mill Creek there are many that are not.
- Armstrong is not too bad. Geneva was going to do the Oakmont section, however, there are 59 handicap pads that would have to be changed to meet ADA requirements. Most of them are not compliant because they don't have the rubber pad with the nobs. That's a 2% slope – some of those slopes are over 30%. This rule will be enforced.
- So we are now applying for a variance from the state.
- It is required that the rubber pad with nobs has to be utilized. Stamps can no longer be used.
- The rule for a 2% slope has been in place for many years.
- Neville asked who is checking these sites for ADA compliance.
- Biggs said this is just based on his driving through the area. The checking/cofirming hasn't yet begun.
- Neville said to his knowledge, the slope requirement was 8.3%. He said that the State requirements supersede the Federal requirements.
- Barth asked for clarification that this did not apply to areas that had already been paved, but rather to areas that will be paved in the future. The answer was in the affirmative.
- Earle said his understanding is that if the walkway goes out into the road, that has to be paved properly. A lot of the pads on Armstrong go out to the side streets. He asked Neville if he thought those would have to be done.
- Neville answered no, unless it was connected in some way, but otherwise no.
- Earle said the circle has five spokes and this is part of the area that is going to be paved.
- Neville offered to go out with Earle and share with him what he knows.
- The issue itself is not the paving, but to follow what the State of Illinois dictates. KDOT will not process the bid unless the SSA agrees to do that.

- They will provide Biggs with the documentation of what is required and the SSA will have to determine what it is going to do.
- Geneva is helping Biggs to see if we can get a variance so that we don't have to spend that kind of money.
- Neville asked whether we can get the concrete work done so we can still pave this year?
- Biggs said that the County Board had already approved the one year contract extension for Copenhaver to do concrete sidewalk work and we'll encumber Armstrong in that project.
- If we decide to do more, such as Oakmont, that will be additional and he would have to ask for a change order through the County Board.
- Earle asked about areas that come to the road that are asphalt? Do we have to put the pads in those sites? He said there are about 25 such segments on Armstrong.
- Biggs said he cannot answer to that as he has not seen the documents yet.
- Lannert interjected that he thought that sidewalks are what are governed. That didn't apply to asphalt pathways.
- Neville added that if the walkway was made of asphalt, 95% of the time you can get a variance.

#### **ADVISORY BOARD COMMENTS:**

- Parr asked if we were having to rebid the existing landscape maintenance contract yet.
- Biggs replied that this year was the last remaining extension.
- Lannert said he thought that that was one of the reasons Cornerstone was able to provide us with such a reasonable bid. That the two year warranty on plant materials was going to be problematic for some of the other vendors.
- Parr asked about the leaky pond issue and if anything further was found out.
- Lannert said that apparently the pond has always leaked and it was never fixed. He is trying to a quote from Aquascape to seal the bottom and get a fountain/bubbler in, but there will be no waterfall. He's hoping to get that quote in the next week or so.

#### **ADJOURN:**

Motion to adjourn **was approved on motion by Danklefsen, seconded by Barth. Motion was carried unanimously by voice vote, by those present. Meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.**