

**Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Jan. 20, 2026 • 5:30 p.m.  
Forest Preserve District of DuPage County Headquarters, Board Room**

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The Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County board of directors will conduct its meeting in person at the Danada headquarters building, located at 35580 Naperville Road in Wheaton. For more information or if you plan to attend, please call 630-871-6400.

**Call to Order and Welcome** — Jeanette Wells, Chair

**Roll Call and Meeting Minutes Approval** — Joe Suchecki, Secretary

Motion for Approving and Placing on file Board Meeting Minutes for Board Meeting held Nov. 18, 2025

**Public Comment**

**Mission Moment**

Jessica Ortega, Manager of Strategic Initiatives, Forst Preserve District of DuPage County, presenting an update on the District's Strategic Planning

**Reports**

**Treasurer's Report** — Tom Murphy, Treasurer

Action — Motion to Accept Financial Dashboard Summary through Dec. 31, 2025

Action — Motion to Approve 2026 Friends' Budget

Action — Motion to Approve Engagement Letter for 990 and Audit Services

Inform — Investment Activities

**Ex-Officios** — Jeff Gahr, District Commissioner and Jeannine Kannegiesser, Friends Executive Director

**Old Business** — Jeanette Wells, Chair

Action — Motion to Approve Financial Policies and Procedures

**New Business** — Jeanette Wells, Chair

Friends board engagement opportunities in 2026

Action — Motion to nominate Mike Dyer, Ashley Guest, Joe Suchecki, and Dave Stang for an additional three-year term on the Friends board.

**Adjournment** — Jeanette Wells, Chair

**Next Board of Directors Meeting** — March 17, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. at District HQ

## **Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County**

### **Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County Board of Directors Meeting Minutes January 20, 2026**

The Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County met at the District Headquarters at 35580 Naperville Road, Wheaton, on January 20, 2026

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Jeanette Wells called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

#### **Roll Call:**

Secretary Joe Suchecki called the roll. In attendance were Chair Jeanette Wells, Ashley Guest, Denise Krohn, Larry Larson, Tom Murphy, Carl Shultz, Dave Stang, Joe Suchecki, and Tom Williams. Mike Dyer was absent. Staff present were Jeannine Kannegiesser and Brian Kuszewski. Commissioner Jeff Gahrns also was present.

A quorum of the Board was present.

#### **Chair's Welcome**

Chair Wells welcomed board members, staff and the public to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending as well as for their time and efforts on behalf of the Friends. She wished everyone a happy 2026.

#### **Public Comment**

Chair Wells asked if there were any public comments. There were no public comments.

#### **Mission Moment**

Chair Wells recognized Ms. Jessica Ortega, Manager of Strategic Initiatives for The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County who made a presentation on the current status of the District's strategic planning initiative. Ms. Ortega explained that the last strategic plan was completed in 2014, and the District has begun a process to revisit and revise the strategic plan in 2026. The strategic plan provides the District with a broad vision and overall direction for the organization.

Ms. Ortega explained that the strategic planning process has begun with the drafting of new Vision and Purpose statements. The Vision Statement is intended to identify what the District aspires to achieve and to serve as an inspiration and motivation to work towards an ideal future. The Purpose Statement identifies who the District serves and what the District does. The statements are currently being reviewed by staff and volunteers to obtain feedback and recommendations.

## **Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County**

Ms. Ortega then presented the draft versions of the statements to the Board and solicited feedback and comments from the Friends. Board members provided some feedback on the statements. Ms. Ortega thanked the Board for their comments and indicated that they will be included with the comments from other stakeholder groups. The strategic plan is expected to be finalized in late spring or early summer.

Chair Wells thanked Ms. Ortega for her presentation and the Board for their input.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Chair Wells called on Treasurer Tom Murphy to provide a report on the status of Friends finances. Treasurer Murphy presented the Financial Dashboard Summary through November 30, 2025. The Friends total assets at the end of the November were \$893,347 including \$670,137 in unrestricted funds and \$222,920 in restricted funds. Net revenue for the first 11 months of 2025 was \$7,391. The net revenue number reflects the fact that the Friends distributed \$375,691 to the District in 2025.

Mr. Stang made a motion to accept the Financial Dashboard as presented. Second by Mr. Williams. Chair Wells asked if there were any questions or discussion. There were none. Upon vote, the motion to accept the Financial Dashboard was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Treasurer Murphy then presented the proposed annual Friends budget for 2026. The budget information was included in the Board packet for review. Mr. Murphy entertained a motion to approve the 2026 budget. Mr. Stang made a motion to approve the Friends 2026 budget as proposed. Second by Mr. Larson. Mr. Murphy asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. Chair Wells asked for a vote on the budget. The motion to approve the Friends 2026 budget passed by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Murphy indicated that the Friends needs to retain an accounting firm to conduct the annual financial audit and to prepare the foundation's tax forms for 2025. The auditing firm Lauterbach and Amen has submitted a letter of engagement to complete the auditing and tax preparation tasks for the next three years. A copy of the engagement letter was included in the Board packet for review. Mr. Murphy entertained a motion to approve the letter of engagement from Lauterbach and Amen. Mr. Suchecki made a motion to approve the engagement letter. Second by Ms. Guest. Mr. Murphy asked for any discussion. There was a clarifying question regarding the three-year term of the letter as well as whether the firm also completed the District audit. Mr. Kuszewski indicated that Lauterbach and Amen also conducts the District audit and tax forms and that a multi-year term is a normal practice for such contracts. There being no further comments, Chair Wells called for a vote on the motion to approve the engagement letter. The motion to approve the Lauterbach and Amen engagement letter was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Treasurer Murphy indicated that he had no more items to bring before the Board. Chair Wells thanked Mr. Murphy for his presentation. The Chair also thanked Ms. Guest for all of her work on behalf of the Friends as Treasurer over the last few years.

## **Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County**

### **Ex-Officio Reports**

Chair Wells recognized Commissioner Gahrts to provide a report on recent activity by the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Gahrts indicated that the District continues to be busy with many initiatives well underway. He reported that the DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center is essentially complete and open for business. He commented that the facility and exhibits are beautiful and that the District will host several events at the Center including a Friends event on February 12<sup>th</sup> and a formal opening ceremony later this spring. He also indicated that the new Master Plan for Herrick Lake is available for public comment.

Ms. Kannegiesser then updated the Board on various staff activities and provided a summary of donor activity in 2025. Ms. Kannegiesser reported that 1093 donors supported the Friends in 2025 with 611 ambassador circle donors, 25 community partners and 21 individual partners. The level of giving in 2025 remained steady compared to 2024. She also reported that the Friends have implemented a new donor software system that will improve the process of tracking and managing donor donations

Chair Wells thanked Commissions Gahrts and Ms. Kannegiesser for their reports.

### **Old Business**

Chair Wells recognized Ms. Kannegiesser to talk about a revised Financial Policy and Procedures document. A draft of the revised policy was previously discussed, and a final draft was included in the Board packet. Ms. Kannegiesser provided background on the document and stated that the revised document has been reviewed by the district finance and legal staff and is now ready for Board approval. The new Financial Policy and Procedures document was revised to incorporate requirements specified in the Friends governing documents and to reflect current practices in managing the Friends financial controls. Ms. Wells entertained a motion to approve the revised Financial Policy and Procedures. Motion to approve the revised policy was made by Mr. Murphy. Second by Mr. Schultz. There was some discussion regarding the revisions that were essentially positive. Upon voting, the motion to approve the new Financial Policy and Procedures was passed by unanimous voice vote.

### **New Business**

Chair Wells recognized Ms. Kannegiesser. Ms. Kannegiesser indicated that Board members need to complete the annual conflict of interest statement and the Board Member commitment letter for 2026. The completed forms should be submitted to Ms. Kannegiesser as soon as possible.

Ms. Kannegiesser reminded Board members that there are numerous Board member engagement opportunities in the coming year and asked for Board members to review them and sign up to participate. She also mentioned that the Development Committee should hold a meeting in February to organize and start work on activities aimed at increasing donations to

## **Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County**

the Friends. In that regard Ms. Kannegiesser asked for a volunteer or two from the Board to head up the Development Committee. Those interested should contact Ms. Kannegiesser.

Chair Wells then indicated that there was one more item of new business for the Board. Mr. Dyer, Ms. Guest, Mr. Stang and Mr. Suchecki have come to the end of their three-year term on the Friends Board. Those members have indicated that they are interested in remaining on the Board for another term. Consequently, the Board needs to nominate them for an additional term and submit the nominations to the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County Commissioners for approval.

Mr. Larson made a motion to nominate Mr. Dyer, Ms. Guest, Mr. Stang and Mr. Suchecki for an additional three-year term on the Friends Board. Second by Mr. Schultz. There being no discussion, Chair Wells called for vote on the motion. Upon vote, the motion to nominate the four Board members for another term passed by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Wells asked if there was any other new business before the Board. There was none.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Wells called for adjournment of the meeting. The call for Adjournment was approved by unanimous voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:37 pm.