

# Memo

To: Trustee Konicek  
From: Robert Kosin, Director of Administration  
CC: Village President, Board of Trustees  
Date: April 23, 2014  
Re: FPDCC Spring Creek Trail

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The Village of Barrington Hills is in receipt of the comments in the attached correspondence from the Barrington Hills Park District to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

By way of background, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County staff has met with representatives of the Park District regarding the Forest Preserve's interest to have a crush lime stone surface trail in Spring Creek and a shelter in the area of State Rt. 72 and Wichman Road.

The District believes that their trail system requires a travel surface for a main link and way signs for "to and from" mowed or grass surface trails.

No request of the Village has been made by Forest Preserve District regarding these improvements and all would be occurring entirely within the property of the Forest Preserve District.

Any persons interested in discussing these proposed improvements should feel free to contact the Barrington Hills Park District or the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

April 4, 2014

## MEMO

To: Forest Preserve District of Cook County  
- Christine Slattery, Director of Planning & Development  
- Kindy R. Kruller, Senior Planner, Planning & Development  
- David H. Kircher, Chief Landscape Architect, Planning & Development  
- Daniel B. White, Landscape Architect

In response to the material and information you presented during the meeting at the Barrington Hills Park District Riding Center on March 7, 2014, and your request for local comment to the proposed development within the Spring Creek Preserve (hereafter "Spring Creek") as shown in the attached Exhibits A, B and C and the trail plan sent to us as set forth in the Trail Master Plan & Policy (March 2014), a meeting was held with representation from various local governmental bodies and other organizations. They represent the Barrington Hills Park District, the Friends of Spring Creek Forest Preserve, Citizens for Conservation, the Audubon Society, the Spring Creek Stewards, the Barrington Area Conservation Trust, Fox River Valley Pony Club and the Riding Club of Barrington Hills. These organizations represent various Spring Creek neighbors and users who enjoy hiking, conservation work, cross country skiing, bird watching, dog walking, horseback riding and other similar activities on grassy, natural trails.

The development and trail plans presented by you to be reviewed included the potential construction of a roadway and parking lot off of Higgins Road, the possible construction of a picnic structure, and the suggested construction of two trails: the 'brown trail, being a "looped" trail in the southern section of Spring Creek Preserve; and the second trail being the "yellow trail", a north-south trail proposed to run from Lake-Cook Road on the north end of the preserve to Higgins Road on the south end. The trail plan also indicated that some of the existing trails would be discontinued.

We support the proposed plans desire to increase access to Spring Creek so that it can be enjoyed by the public in its increasingly rare, unspoiled natural setting. The representative organizations share the interests of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and desire to work together to make this Spring Creek Preserve an open and inviting preserve. However, we have strong reservations about some aspects of the proposed plan. For example, in order to maintain the natural setting it is suggested that a minimal parking lot and entrance roadway be considered. We do not believe that a pavilion or mowed areas would be a positive addition to this preserve. In addition, the proposed plan does not appear to represent the collaborated trails that were agreed upon several years ago with a good process involving the Riding Club, Park District, Audubon, the Spring Creek Stewards and various other stakeholders. Significant ecological restoration is occurring and is planned in Spring Creek and, it is our understanding that the ecological plan for the preserve is not yet in place. The representatives of the various organizations are of the opinion that before any thoughtful trail plan is finalized, the ecological plan for the Forest Preserve should be completed; and, to construct the proposed trails before that plan is completed may undermine the plan that is already underway with the Army Corp, Spring Creek Stewards, Audubon, Citizens for Conservation and other organizations. The

representative organizations request that trail plans be revisited when the ecological plan has been completed and then there be collaboration to arrive at with what is best for the ecosystem and the stakeholders.

The organizations identified above have for a considerable period of time had the privilege to work with the staff of the Forest Preserve District (the “District”) to create and maintain long-term programs within Spring Creek which are consistent with good land management. These efforts are consistent with the priorities stated in the District’s “Next Century Conservation Plan.”

We applaud the District for investing in restoration and stewardship. The goal of our organizations is to restore the ecological health of Spring Creek, to increase public awareness and appreciation of the natural habitat, and to encourage compatible activities within Spring Creek. We have been investing our time, funding and resources into restoration of Spring Creek for nearly half a century.

We join the District in efforts to mobilize people to heal and nurture the land. These organization’s volunteers have contributed tens of thousands of hours spent removing invasive buckthorn and noxious weeds, gathering and disseminating rare seeds to restore areas to their healthy, natural state, restoring, protecting and preserving wetland, prairie and woodland plants and animals, rescuing oak woodland areas, and sponsoring events to create awareness of the value of Spring Creek among youth and other preserve users through meetings and educational tours. For more than 40 years members of these organizations have worked with the District to mobilize people to heal and nurture Spring Creek. They have created a culture of spirited and consistent volunteerism which has passed, in some instances, through generations.

The District currently has specialty areas identified within its preserve system. Those include paved bike trails, mountain bike trails, swimming pools, golf courses, soccer and baseball fields, model airplane flying fields and large mowed areas with pavilions for picnics. However, what makes Spring Creek extraordinary is not having them. The public appreciates these lands for their natural forest preserve values. Their principal attraction is their calm and unspoiled nature. With its over 3,900 acres of grasslands, woodlands and wetlands, Spring Creek Forest Preserve currently comprises a peaceful oasis in northwest Cook County that has thus far managed to sustain populations of rare animals, fragile plants, grassland birds and a rich variety of habitats. Grass footpaths and trails provide a serene wilderness experience for its users; and, the principal attraction of the public in Spring Creek is its undeveloped and unspoiled natural area.

The District’s public statements include a commitment to improving environmental management through education of youth, collaboration in order to expand its capacity for restoration, and the commitment of resources for scientific research. The plan to establish hard-surface trails, and the related plans to close many links to the wider equestrian trail system as well as occasionally used small trails critical to equestrian events does not appear to be consistent with the District’s public commitment. We welcome the continued ‘culture of collaborative accomplishment’ that has been achieved in Spring Creek through the efforts of enthusiastic stewardship. These activities have taken place over the past decades by scores of volunteers who are unpaid, and

who raise tens of thousands of dollars to procure equipment and seeds to assist the District in fulfilling its mission to restore these lands.

In 1957, in order to preserve open space, the District condemned some of the land which is now Spring Creek Preserve and, the District set aside from the land being condemned 15 acres in order for an equestrian riding center to be constructed, now a public asset maintained by the Barrington Hills Park District. More recently, in the 2008 Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement between the District and the Barrington Hills Park District the Park District agreed to construct a trail head with parking area for public access and the District designated Spring Creek as an equestrian facility for public recreational use.

The underlying theme of that Agreement is recognition of the value of the equestrian nature of the area in and around Spring Creek and that Spring Creek is intended to be used for riding and hiking on mowed grass trails. The Agreement also recognizes that residents of the surrounding community have engaged in equestrian activities in the area since at least the 1920s and they have developed a system of horseback riding trails extending for approximately 116 miles, all of which are maintained by the Riding Club and the Pony Club at no expense to the District. These are of great value to the entire region as a destination.

In summary, there was a time when nature was everywhere, and an important element of culture was activities which allowed development of a personal relationship with nature. However, because of the extensive development of land in and around metropolitan areas, much of the current and most of the future generations of people will find nature in its pristine state only in a very few forest preserves. In addition, loss of access to open, natural land has been found to be the greatest threat to the future of all outdoor activities. All of the representative organizations believe that it is critical to preserve the natural character of Spring Creek for all time. This area is home to beautiful and diverse natural spaces, which give this portion of the Forest Preserve District's system in northwest Cook County its most special and appreciated character.

In the event you have any additional or different questions, or would like to present additional materials or information, please contact me at your convenience.

Very truly yours,

Barrington Hills Park District  
Friends of Spring Creek Forest Preserve  
Citizens for Conservation  
Audubon – Chicago Region  
Spring Creek Stewards  
Barrington Area Conservation Trust  
Fox River Valley Pony Club  
Riding Club of Barrington Hills