



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 26, 2024

TO: Forest Preserve District Planning & Utilization Committee

FROM: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Presentation and Approval of the Centennial Celebration Public Art Sculpture Project at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Committee with information to consider the approval of a public art sculpture built and installed at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve for the upcoming Centennial Celebration for the Forest Preserve District scheduled on June 8, 2025.

BACKGROUND:

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the Forest Preserve District, we are excited to announce a transformative project at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve in Elburn. To honor a century of conservation efforts, the District plans to restore 35 acres of agricultural land to its natural state, featuring forests and vibrant prairies. A centerpiece of this initiative is the commissioning of the District's first public art sculpture, which will serve as a focal point for visitors and inspire appreciation for our natural environment. In conjunction with this sculpture, the public will have the opportunity to engage in the restoration of a 12-acre woodland area by planting 800 trees, creating a living legacy of conservation. The Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process was initiated to identify an artist with a proven track record of public art, ensuring the creation of a meaningful and lasting installation. A Centennial Art Committee was created comprised of five staff members, two Forest Preserve Commissioners, the Kane Forest Preserve Foundation Board President and two artists from local arts organizations. This committee evaluated artist submissions based on criteria such as artistic vision, project approach, and relevant experience.

The RFQ process began with a broad call for artists, attracting five submissions from various qualified candidates. Each submission included two to five sketches, project approaches, and relevant experience. After thoroughly reviewing the initial submissions, the artist review committee narrowed the pool to four artists for interviews. During the interview phase, the four artists presented their proposals in detail, allowing the committee to assess their visions and approaches. Following these discussions, the committee refined the selection to three artists, who were asked to create a three-dimensional model of their proposed sculpture. The artists who provided three-dimensional models received a \$1,000 reimbursement for their efforts. This step ensured the committee could evaluate each design's artistic intent and feasibility.

Ultimately, Mike Baur's submission, which features the sculpture "Guardians," stood out as the most compelling. His design reflects a deep understanding of the natural environment and its cycles, aligning perfectly with the project's vision. Inspired by the intricate patterns formed by fallen branches in Midwest forests, Baur's design features two monoliths crafted from high-strength concrete and steel, capturing the essence of protection and guardianship over our landscapes. Baur will spend the winter months preparing materials and building the formwork in his studio, with installation planned for May 2025. The sculpture is designed to be durable and maintenance-free, aligning with our long-term goals for sustainability and conservation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The selected artist will negotiate a final contract with the District for a total amount not to exceed \$150,000. \$150,000 was budgeted in FY2024/2025 (account 03-35-35-7050 project # 31016) for this expense to include the sculpture's design, materials, and installation costs. Additionally, the District will actively seek sponsorships to help fund the artwork.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the District approve the centennial art committee's recommendation to commission Mike Baur's "Guardians" sculpture for an amount not to exceed \$150,000. The sculpture will be unveiled during a public celebration of the District's centennial anniversary at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve on June 8, 2025.

ATTACHMENTS:

Johnson's Mound Project Location Map

Guardian's Sketch

Guardian's Project Approach