



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 30, 2024

TO: Forest Preserve District Planning and Utilization Committee

FROM: Patrick Chess, Director of Natural Resources
Ben Haberthur, Executive Director

VIA: David Petschke, Chief Financial Officer

SUBJECT: Presentation and Approval of Bid for the Construction of an Electric Fence at Burlington Prairie Forest Preserve

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Committee with information to consider the approval of a bid for the construction of an electric fence at Burlington Prairie Forest Preserve for the purpose of creating a 32 acre bison grazing pasture.

BACKGROUND:

The tallgrass prairie once covered Illinois, and much of the Midwest, in an ocean of grass. These diverse and productive ecosystems persisted until 1837 and the invention of the steel plow. Prairies were rapidly plowed into rich agricultural fields, ultimately leaving Illinois with less than a tenth of a percent of its original 22 million acres of prairie.

Restoring tallgrass prairie has been one of the primary goals of the District and it now manages several thousand acres of grasslands. Key to the historic management of these grasslands was disturbance, primarily driven by two factors: fire and grazing. Fire has been reintroduced across the landscape by staff, but the grazing component is still missing.

Conservation efforts to preserve the North American bison have been wildly successful in the west, and more recently, conservation agencies within Illinois have started to reintroduce bison herds within their properties. The District is now faced with the opportunity to bring bison back to a restored prairie at Burlington Prairie Forest Preserve, aided by the acquisition of a \$90,100 grant from the Kane County Grand Victoria Riverboat fund to help construct the pasture fence.

The first step in the reintroduction process is to construct a fence around the future pasture. Specifications were created for the installation of both a 6 foot tall and an 8 foot tall woven wire fence. The fence would also contain three hot wires powered by solar panels as an additional deterrent to keep the bison contained. Discussions with current bison ranchers indicate that a 6 foot fence will be sufficient for containment and that the 8 foot height is not a necessary addition.

The District originally advertised in August, 2023 for the construction of this fence. The lowest qualified bid was received from Farm Way Fencing, LLC of Kingston, Illinois in the amount of \$144,859.76 and was awarded

in October, 2023. In the interim, the bidder defaulted leading the District to re-bid the project. In March, 2024 the project was advertised with one bid received. The lowest qualified bid was received from Provantage Systems, Inc. of St. Charles, Illinois in the amount of \$252,865 for the 7,350 linear feet of fencing. Negotiations with the sole bidder allowed the District to reduce the linear feet of the fence to 5,280 feet and bring the cost for construction to \$150,000. Staff additionally recommends a contingency of \$15,000 to cover any unforeseen costs that may arise during this project.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Funds totaling \$144,859.76 were approved in October 2023 for the Bison Reintroduction project. All \$144,859.76 within Account #03-31-31-7060 Project #21009 remain, to cover the majority of the \$165,000 expense (\$150,000 bid plus \$15,000 contingency).

Funds totaling \$80,000 were budgeted in total for the Burlington Prairie FP Pothole Creation project. Construction of the second water control structure if approved would leave \$30,400 remaining in account 03-31-31-7060, project 21002. Transfer of the savings of this project in the amount of \$20,140.24 to account 03-31-31-7060, project 21009 will provide sufficient funds to cover the total project cost in an amount not to exceed \$165,000.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Committee approve the contract for the construction of an electric fence for the purpose of creating a bison grazing pasture provided by Provantage Systems, Inc. of St. Charles, Illinois for a total not to exceed \$165,000.

ATTACHMENTS: *Bid Abstract*
 County Locator Map
 Project Area Map