



Human Resources Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Habberthur, Executive Director
FROM: Jennifer Clough, Director of Human Resources
RE: January 2026 Department Monthly Report

HUMAN RESOURCES

- The District's new Horticulturist, Amy Martin, began on January 5, 2026, and is quickly assimilating to day-to-day operations.
- Human Resources partnered with the South Operations management team to interview five internal candidates for an open Ranger position following a recent promotion. Upon completion of the interviews, the District offered the Ranger position to Laura Smith, with a start date of February 2, 2026. This internal promotion led to the external posting of an Assistant Ranger opportunity.
- Human Resources and the Finance management team have reviewed the candidates for the new Financial Analyst position, and top candidates have been invited for first round interviews.
- Due to part-time officer resignations within the Police department, a job posting was created, and first round interviews have been scheduled first week of February for the top five candidates.
- The department is working with managers on their seasonal hiring needs for 2026. All seasonal postings should be posted by the first week of February.
- HR and Finance have been working with ADP to develop, implement, and manage new programs and processes related to the ADP payroll and HR software migration, including multiple meetings focused on payroll preparation, scheduling for Police staff, and coordination with Kane County IT for data exports into the ADP system. Staff expects portions of the ADP suite of technology to go live throughout 2026. The cross-departmental team has begun status calls with ADP to prepare for going live in the next couple of months with a portion of ADP profiles.
- The Department has prepared a revision of the employee handbook in coordination with legal counsel. The document reflects changes to clarify language, align with current practices, and reflect laws effective in 2026. It will be presented to the Finance and Administration committee in February.
- The District continues its formal negotiations with the District's full-time police officers' collective bargaining unit with the Metropolitan Alliance of Police, having participated in a productive discussion in January. Its next bargaining sessions are planned for February and March.
- A new 2026 Illinois law requires employers to offer health coverage to parents who meet the federal poverty level criteria. Human Resources contacted the District's insurance cooperative,



Amy Martin, Horticulturist



Laura Smith, Ranger

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IPBC, to obtain details regarding employer requirements, communication expectations, and administrative responsibilities. The District has been made aware that IPBC's benefit year renews each July, at which time the new benefit will become effective. Staff plans to attend the IPBC Board of Directors and Annual Members Meeting in March to gain further insight into this and other benefits and the District's associated responsibilities.

- HR has been planning for the upcoming spring open enrollment period with IPBC, including securing a BCBS representative to provide information on supplementary benefits beyond traditional medical coverage, such as Blue365 member discounts and wellness and incentive programs.
- The department has continued to prepare budget documents, requests, and related analysis in support of the District's FY 26/27 budget process. These include recommendations to improve the competitiveness of the District's various benefit plans and programs available to District staff.

SAFETY & WELLNESS

Claims Information

There were no employee injuries reported in the month of January, along with no new property/general liability claims.

- The District was awarded a Risk Management Grant from PDRMA, which funded the purchase of handheld lightning detectors. The first batch has been received and is being distributed to employees.
- The Safety and Wellness Coordinator presented a 60-minute educational session at the 2026 IAPD/IPRA Conference titled "*Change Your Organization's Safety Culture in Sixty Minutes.*" This presentation was selected from hundreds of submissions, reflecting its high quality and relevance.
- Staff coordinated the biannual boiler inspection at Creek Bend Nature Center; subsequently, the State Fire Marshal certification was secured through 2028.
- The Safety and Wellness Coordinator distributed updated 2026 Employment Law posters to all facilities across the District.
- The Safety and Wellness Coordinator is collaborating with local Police to develop an Active Shooter training program for all employees, while also conducting training across multiple departments and providing updates on annual compliance initiatives and upcoming employee health screenings.
- The District coordinated a vehicle recall and annual maintenance for the pool vehicle with Fleet Management

VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

Volunteer Impact

In January, 894 volunteer hours at 53 events were given to the District!

- Staff conducted its first comprehensive Volunteer satisfaction survey to gather feedback from volunteers across all programs and positions. The survey collected basic volunteer information, areas of service, and offered respondents the option to request staff follow-up regarding questions or concerns. Volunteers shared positive feelings about their experiences with the Forest Preserve. They described staff and stewards as friendly, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic.

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They also appreciated how well the programs and workdays are organized. Many people mention how meaningful the restoration work feels, and how much they enjoy the sense of community and working alongside others who care about the land. Small touches like snacks, training opportunities, and recognition events also went a long way in making volunteers feel valued. Some opportunities were identified in the survey, and staff are collaborating to review them all. Moving forward, staff plans to expand survey use following special events and trainings to continue collecting timely and meaningful feedback from volunteers serving in these capacities.

- The Volunteer Coordinator and Officer Splittgerber hosted a Snowmobile Safety Patrol meeting and welcomed a new member.
- The Department has been working diligently updating the Volunteer Handbook and onboarding process to align with similar processes of employees. It also began digitizing all signed tool and policy agreements to ensure proper documentation and provide volunteers with copies.
- The Volunteer Coordinator launched annual herbicide training with volunteers, with nearly 60 completing the course, while also successfully completing Illinois Department of Agriculture herbicide/pesticide licensing on January 7 to ensure continued regulatory compliance.



SSP had a productive meeting and welcomed a new member, TJ, with the sign!



Staff completed a Stewardship hike/drive with Sue Bohne at Jon J Duerr Forest Preserve.