

Camping Opportunities Update June 13, 2006

**Bill Seith, Council President
Ross Johnson, Camping Opportunities Committee**

The Des Plaines Valley Council (DPVC) Executive Board recently met in Special Session to hear a report and recommendation from the Camping Opportunities Committee (COC) to sell Camp Tomo Chi Chi Knolls to the Kane County Forest Preserve District for more than \$8.5 million.

Chairman Ross Johnson briefly summarized the efforts of the COC over the last approximately four months, following authorization by the Board to determine possible interest in purchasing the Camp Tomo property, in part to support DPVC's partnership with Three Fires Council in a Joint Venture to develop a Cub Scout Adventure Camp. Ross asked Bill Sarther, who led the Committee's efforts to identify potential buyers, to summarize his efforts.

Bill summarized the Committee's efforts to secure Letters of Intent from qualified and seriously interested potential buyers. In all, Bill met with and provided tours of Tomo for about 12 different groups of developers, land investors and representatives of the Kane County Forest Preserve District. This literally involved hundreds of hours of meetings and other interactions. Finally, seven formal Letters of Intent or other expressions of interest were received and carefully analyzed and evaluated by the COC, DPVC legal counsel, and other leadership.

Prior to the Executive Board's Special Session, the COC met to consider two very attractive alternative proposals, one from a developer and the other from the Kane County Forest Preserve. While the developers offered somewhat more money for the property, in excess of \$35,000 an acre, the Kane County Forest Preserve proposal was viewed as more in the interests of the Council. The County proposal was seen as comparable in real value to others received, lower in risk, and attractive because funds would become available for our use at least a year earlier than with any of the other commercial proposals. The prospect of keeping Camp Tomo open space and available for public use, including DPVC's, also was attractive and seen by the COC as in keeping with Scouting values.

Following Bill's report and reading of the proposed Resolution authorizing sale of the property as recommended by the COC, the Board unanimously approved the recommended sale to the Kane County Forest Preserve. The Board also approved an associated contract that had been developed with the expert legal assistance of Tom Allan's firm. Bill Seith was authorized to sign the contract if the land acquisition was to be authorized by the Forest Preserve Board at a meeting today, June 13, 2006.

This morning the Kane County Forest Preserve Board met and authorized its staff to pursue the purchase of Camp Tomo. Shortly thereafter, a contract for the sale of Camp Tomo to Kane County Forest Preserve for \$8,508,182 was executed. The sale is expected to close in mid-August and the funds will be available to DPVC at that time.

Our Executive Board has decided how the funds obtained from the sale would be managed in the near-term. The Joint Venture Agreement requires that about \$2.4 million be provided upon sale of Tomo to fulfill our obligation as a partner in that agreement. The Board has asked the Finance Committee to consider how to manage the remaining approximately \$6 million until such time as the Board decides how best to use these funds to address Council needs.

At the recent Special Session the Board also heard a summary report from Dave Miller of Three Fires Council on the Joint Campaign Readiness Committee and the findings of Dini Partners regarding a possible capital campaign to support the development of the new Cub Scout facility. The study involved a survey of a number of individuals and organizations in our Council area that might be considered potential contributors to the capital campaign. (A similar study has already been successfully completed in Three Fires Council area.) These interviews identified a number of issues that the Council will need to consider to be successful, including that of developing a strategy to address the Boy Scout Camping Program and the Wisconsin camps. Overall, however, the study concluded that a capital campaign in DPVC, in partnership with a similar campaign already underway in Three Fires area, has a good chance of successfully raising the approximately \$10 million that is expected to be needed to develop the new Cub Scout facility.

Following this report, DPVC Board voted unanimously to proceed with the capital campaign in our Council. We will report to you on the plans for this campaign in future Updates.

One positive sign of the potential for success was reported at the May Executive Board Meeting, where the Board heard about some dramatic developments in Three Fires on-going campaign: commitments for \$100,000 have already been received and another \$350,000 is in discussion. But even more excitingly, a member of the Three Fires Board and his wife have made a gift of 1 million dollars! This was a great start in Three Fires for what is now our Joint Capital Campaign.

As a last order of business at the Special Session, and an appropriate way to conclude this Update, the Board recognized and expressed its gratitude to Ross Johnson and the COC committee, particularly Bill Sarther who gave so much time and energy to the sale of Tomo. Thanks were also due to Tom Allan and his associates for their excellent legal assistance and advice; Irene, Tony Roth, and the other staff who provided invaluable service at critical junctures; Council President Bill Seith and the many other DPVC Executive Board members who supported the effort through the Campaign Readiness Committee and other various ways; and our excellent Joint Venture partners in Three Fires Council.

This is but a milestone on a longer journey to improve camping opportunities in our Council, but it is a key one. Now as a Council we will move ahead with energy and determination to raise the funds needed to develop our new Cub Camping facility and to shift the COC focus to the challenges of Boy Scout camping and our Wisconsin properties. A COC meeting has been scheduled for August to continue this effort.