

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: May 13, 2025

To: Village President and Board of Trustees

Through: Napoleon Haney, Village Manager

From: Terence Acquah, Assistant Village Manager

Topic: Selection of Consulting Firm for Prairie Lakes Stormwater Detention Facility Water Quality Testing and Approval of Budget Amendment

PURPOSE

Staff requests for the Village Board to authorize the Village President to enter into a contract with Fehr Graham of Aurora, IL, in an amount not to exceed \$100,000, to provide consultant services for the Prairie Lakes Stormwater Detention Facility. The scope of work includes water quality testing, monitoring, analysis and pond water and a sediment depths survey for the Prairie Lakes Stormwater Detention Facility.

PROCESS

A collaborative team consisting of Village staff and members of the Izaak Walton Preserve executive board, recently met with the consultant to review the consultant contract and further refine the scope of work. After discussions, the consultant agreed to make the requested changes to the scope and reassign costs for the various work items. The contract cost was then negotiated by Village staff. Staff anticipates that the final consultant cost for the work will be well below \$100,000.

A corresponding budget amendment will also be required to allocate funding for this project. This water quality testing, monitoring and analysis initiative is being completed in partnership with the Izaak Walton Preserve, who has agreed to contribute \$7,500 toward Fehr Graham's final consultant cost.

Background: Prairie Lakes Stormwater Detention Basin

The Prairie Lakes Business Park and Stormwater Detention Basin was developed on the former site of the Washington Park Race Track, which was destroyed by fire in 1977. In 1991, the Village purchased 178 acres of land and considered several redevelopment options before constructing a stormwater detention system to address regional flood control and water quality management. The detention basin was designed with best management practices (BMPs), including sediment control, biofilters, and aquatic vegetation to improve water quality naturally.

In 2006, the Village entered into a 99-year lease agreement with the Izaak Walton Preserve (IWP), granting them responsibility to oversee the stewardship of the property as a community amenity.

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Allegations Regarding the North Pond

In 2023, Izaak Walton Preserve members shared concerns about a smaller body of water designed as a sediment basin and separated from the open water area by a stormwater bio-filter area. In response, the Village and Izaak Walton Preserve jointly funded a preliminary water quality study conducted by Bryan Environmental Consultants, Inc. of Homewood, IL, with samples collected in November 2023.

Typically included with water quality testing is a “monitoring” component. Monitoring ensures that the initial baseline tests are not flukes or skewed by a number of naturally occurring conditions. According to the USEPA, a proper and qualifying water quality should at minimum include the following:

- establish baseline quality levels for water
- identify appropriate sampling locations and sample at the same locations in the future
- visually monitor/assess any specific changes in surface waterbodies
- follow recommended sample collection and analytical procedures

Before the preliminary Bryan report was released, media outlets—including the Chicago Sun-Times, Southtown, and WBBM Radio—published claims that the pond was toxic and harmful to humans and animals.

Village’s Response and Engagement with the Illinois EPA

Recognizing the seriousness of these allegations, the Village immediately engaged the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) to conduct an independent review of the Bryan Environmental Study. The IEPA reviewed decades of historical site data and performed their own analysis of the 2023 water quality results.

The IEPA recommended continued monitoring but could not classify or identify the pond as hazardous.

Historical records suggest that debris from the 1977 racetrack fire, including charred wood and ash, was likely incorporated into the soil during Prairie Lakes’ construction. This historical contamination may explain the presence of Fluoranthene, a common byproduct of burned materials. The proposed testing by Fehr Graham will provide better analytical data to verify the source of this pollutant.

Request for Qualifications

The Village of Homewood, in partnership with the Izaak Walton Preserve, issued a Request for Qualifications on March 7, 2025, to retain a consulting firm to conduct a comprehensive water quality and sediment testing and monitoring study of the entire Prairie Lakes Basin. The goal of this project is to support the long-term environmental health of the basin.

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Two (2) firms responded to the Request for Qualifications: Fehr Graham of Aurora, IL, and ILM Environments of Waukegan, IL. Village staff, along with Izaak Walton Preserve representatives John Brinkman (President) and Kevin Jennings (Executive Board Member), met with both firms to evaluate their proposals and qualifications.

Following these evaluations, Fehr Graham was selected as the preferred consultant. Their selection was based on their clear understanding of the project scope, depth of expertise across relevant disciplines, and closer proximity to Homewood.

Fehr Graham brings over 50 years of experience working with municipalities, government agencies, and private entities to deliver data-driven solutions and long-term management plans for watershed and stormwater systems. With a staff of 250 professionals—including biologists, water quality specialists, landscape architects, engineers, geologists, and surveyors—Fehr Graham is well-equipped to address all aspects of the project.

OUTCOME

The testing of the Prairie Lakes Stormwater Detention Facility shows the Village commitment to environmental stewardship and ensure the long-term health of the Prairie Lakes Detention Basin. This will provide clarification on the current status of the pond.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

- **Funding Source:** General Fund
- **Budgeted Amount:** \$0
- **Budget Amendment Amount:** *not to exceed* \$100,000

LEGAL REVIEW

Pending review of the revised *General Condition* of the Consultant Agreement

RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION

Approve a budget amendment in the amount not to exceed \$100,000; and, authorize the Village President to enter into a contract with Fehr Graham of Aurora, IL to provide consultant services for work associated with the Prairie Lakes Stormwater Detention Facility in an amount not to exceed \$100,000; subject to final approval of the General Conditions by the Village Attorney.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- Fehr Graham proposal
- Request for Qualifications