



Fall 2023

# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

North America's first successful rails-to-trails conversion. Founded 1963.

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## Illinois Prairie Path Annual Meeting

### SAVE THE DATE

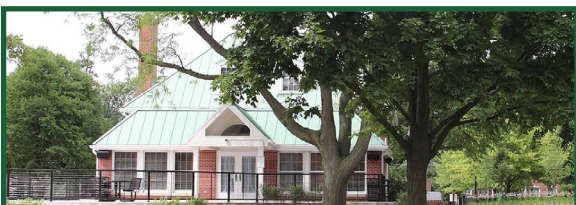


We are pleased to announce that the IPPc is holding its annual meeting, once again, at the iconic **Mary Lubko Center** in Wheaton. Originally built as a coach house in 1888, this beautiful facility features wood paneled rooms, stone fireplaces, and great views. The facility is handicap accessible including nearby parking.

The Illinois Prairie Path Annual Meeting will feature three presentations with exciting new trail developments. Our topics will include:

- DuPage County Trails Plan Update
- IPP eastern expansion from Maywood to the CTA blue line station at Des Plaines Ave
- East Branch DuPage River Trail Recent Developments

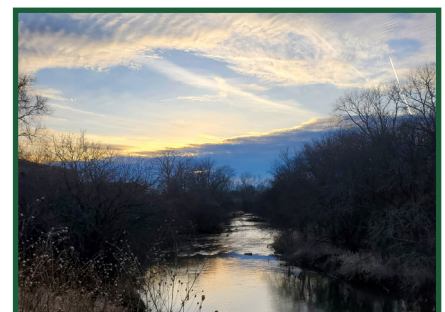
2023 is our organization's 60th anniversary. It has been an exciting year especially with these trail expansion plans. Please join us for the celebration!



## DuPage County and the Illinois Prairie Path(c) Contract Update

Every decade or so, the Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation (IPPc) and DuPage County have to re-negotiate a contract so that the IPPc retains its beneficial relationship with the county. Some of the privileges the IPPc enjoys are the right to host the Earth Day Cleanup, installing signs and other amenities such as benches, and maintaining the kiosks. The previous agreements were in 1986, 2005, and 2011. We are pleased to announce that in July 2023 the DuPage County and the Illinois Prairie Path(c) successfully negotiated this agreement! We'd like to thank all those at the county for their patience and all their hard work in seeing this agreement to completion.

By Erik Spande, President



West Branch DuPage River - Winfield

## Annual Meeting Topics & Speakers

### DuPage Trails Plan

After 2 years of development:

- A first round data collection from stakeholders and public engagement
- A detailed review of the acquired information with county and partners on “actionable” items
- Review with the DuPage County Department of Transportation

This major step of the DuPage Trails Plan is nearing the end of the planned development process. The next step will include seeking to circulate the draft plan for public comment this fall. Also, during this public comment period, DuPage County will reconvene with stakeholders to provide further input for the development of the draft plan.

Among the items for feedback will include:

- Elements of the draft trails plan - including Wayfinding and Signage
- Trails Ecology
- Partnership and Agreements

We look forward to hearing Sid’s overview and insights into the future developments of this plan and its impact on the Illinois Prairie Path and its communities.



*Sid Kenyon  
DuPage County Trail Coordinator  
and Senior Planner*

### The Illinois Prairie Path’s Eastern Extension Update

Interestingly, Ralph DiFebo had been working with Commissioner Brandon Johnson, now Mayor Johnson of Chicago, since 2018. Mayor Johnson’s Cook County Board successor, Tara Stamps, has continued this earlier work with a primary goal to extend the Illinois Prairie Path’s current trail head from First Avenue in Maywood to the CTA Des Plaines Avenue Blue Line station. This presentation will outline current progress including engineering studies and highlights of ongoing discussions between the County Department of Transportation and Highways (DOT) and Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).



*Ralph DiFebo  
Illinois Prairie Path  
Board Member*



*Vito Ippolito  
Illinois Prairie Path  
Board Member*

### East Branch DuPage River Trail: Benefits, Barriers and Building Timelines

Our presenters have been strong, tireless advocates for this trail for several years securing widespread recognition through ongoing community information meetings and efforts to secure thousands of petition signatures. This presentation will update meeting attendees on the following:

- Why DuPage County needs this trail to be built as soon as possible
- Five barriers to success that we can overcome
- Timelines to completion and what we know now



*Ginger Wheeler  
President, Friends of EBDRT*



*Steve Johnson  
Vice President, Friends of  
EBDRT*

## Prairie Path Presentation – DuPage County Historical Museum

On September 27th, Erik Spande, IPPc President, and Ken McClurg, IPPc Director, presented “When a Pebble Starts an Avalanche: Exploring the History and Value of the Illinois Prairie Path” at the Wheaton Community Center. May Watts’ 1963 letter to the Chicago Tribune urged development of the abandoned CA&E railway into a nature trail. This was the beginning of the Illinois Prairie Path and served as a blueprint for other US rails-to-trails conversions. The presentation also outlined the role of the IPPc today. The entire presentation can be found [here](#).



*Ken McClurg presenting at the Wheaton Community Center*

## Illinois Prairie Path(c) 60-Year Anniversary Celebration / Family Bike Ride

On Saturday September 30th, the IPPc hosted a 60-year anniversary celebration with the Glen Ellyn Park District.

Daily Herald biking columnist Ralph Banasiak recently wrote....

“Thanks to naturalist May Theilgaard Watts’s vision, bikers and trail users are now reaping the benefits in Cook, DuPage and Kane counties. Her September 1963 letter to the Chicago Tribune proposing a nature corridor to replace the abandoned Chicago, Aurora and Elgin electric rail line led not only to “a proud resource,” the Illinois Prairie Path, but also a national rails-to-trails movement.” Full article [here](#).

IPPc founders and early volunteers built the path almost entirely with volunteer labor, donated money, materials & use of equipment.

Guided bike tours were held throughout the event focusing on the past, present and the future.

Past: We visited CA&E railway artifacts, former station sites, railyards, etc. We toured historic IPP sites including Volunteer Park & Bridge, Founders’ Park, and DuPage River bridges.

Present: We pointed out nearby trails, parks and other amenities.

Future: We shared the East Branch DuPage River Trail plan including where it is expected to intersect the Prairie Path.

Take the self-guided tour!

[Map](#)

[Detailed Stops](#)

The 60-year anniversary celebration also included food, music, games, goody bags, raffles and information tables. It was a fun day with beautiful summer-like weather!! Thanks to the Glen Ellyn Park district for sponsoring this event.



*Site of the CA&E Taylor Street station  
Photo by Brian Kalbfreisch*



*Cruising on the Family Bike Ride  
Photo by Glen Ellyn Park District*



*IPP Information table  
Photo by Glen Ellyn Park District*



*Getting ready to start the ride  
Photo by Glen Ellyn Park District*



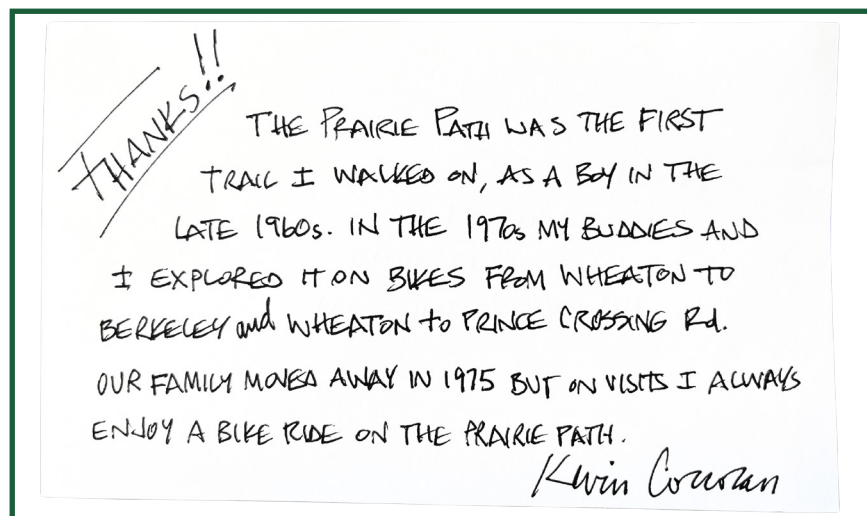
## American Planning Association Visits the IPPc

On September 11-13th, the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association held their annual conference at North Central College in Naperville. On Tuesday afternoon, a number of these planners from cities around the state boarded a bus to visit the new Warrenville Illinois Prairie Path Trailhead, including the founders' memorial area. Staff from DuPage County and the City of Warrenville joined one of our board members in describing the origins of the Illinois Prairie Path and this beautiful, new amenity.



Rob Sperl, IPPc Treasurer, providing a brief overview of the IPPc at the newly completed Warrenville Trailhead

### IPP Thank You



### The Village of Bellwood and the Illinois Prairie Path

Here at the IPPc, we often think of ourselves as the “Lorax” of the Illinois Prairie Path. In this self-proclaimed role, we engage with local communities, municipalities, counties, and residents to “care for the path”. While we have many developments occurring across our entire 62-mile trail system, we have recently engaged with the village of Bellwood in a variety of new and interesting projects. Specifically, we are collaborating on path beautification plans, trail optimizations, art work, and a wide variety of other trail enhancement projects we hope to complete in the future.

As the mayor of Bellwood, Andre Harvey, shared, “We believe it is important to continue to invest in the Illinois Prairie Path as a means to further connect and enhance the lives of our local residents and those who pass through our village”.

The Illinois Prairie Path corporation agrees with Mayor Harvey, and we look forward to our continued partnership!

June | July  
August | September

*Thank you*

*Your membership and donations are used to provide services and fund improvements benefiting Illinois Prairie Path members and users.*

#### Donations

Rozanna C.

#### Cybergrants

Hamill Family Foundation

Srinivasa J.

Daniel J.

Jerry & Katherine J.

Michael J.

Bill N. & Rita N

Marilyn S.

S & E Bramsen Foundation

#### New Members:

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Kim G.

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Gene J.

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Tim L.

Gina M.

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