

# Frankfort Square Park District is the bee's knees

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**A** new program being planned by the Frankfort Square Park District is literally the bee's knees. Participants likely will discover much more about bees – whose knees are covered in sweet nectar – as the park district will make a site available to beekeepers next spring.

First, the park district will seek to amend Will County's zoning map to allow bees at Island Prairie Park, by becoming the first one to use a relatively new zoning classification for parks and open space.

Beekeeping is "an up and coming" activity and a new zoning will make it easy for bees to be in the natural parks, said executive director Jim Randall. The zoning should be approved in the next month or two, but the ideal time to begin a new hive is in the spring, he said.

The park district has been thinking about this for long time and it fits in with its mission of environmental stewardship, said Randall, noting that the park district also uses solar and wind power, and provides milkweed for Monarch butterflies. Bees are vital to the pollination of fruits and flowers and their numbers have been dwindling for various reasons.

Just as the bees provide free honey, the program will come at no cost to the park district or to beekeepers.

"All we do is provide the land," near the nature center at Island Prairie Park, Randall said.

Beekeepers will provide their own bees, hives and equipment and maintain the hives, he said.

It is an opportunity for residents who would never be able to keep bees in their own yards, he said, adding that he already has a list of residents who are interested.

Depending on the demand, it's possible to expand the available land, Randall said.

In Will County, beekeeping is allowed in agricultural and estate zonings, but in residential areas, it requires a special use permit, which requires a public hearing and a fee.

Randall said the park district land is now in a residential zoning, but it will take advantage of new Special Purpose Parks and Open Space zoning district, as recommended by the Will County's land use department.

Frankfort Square will be the first to use this classification, which was adopted by the county in October 2012, said David Dubois, of the land use department.

It allows for uses – such as bees – that are not specified in the current zoning, he said.

Instead of obtaining a special use permit, the park district will seek approval from the Will County board to amend its zoning map from residential to parks and open space. The change could be approved by the county board in the next couple of months.

Dubois said it "should not be an issue."

The Parks and Open Space district is intended to "help preserve and protect lands set aside for park and open space use" ... and ... "to be applied to public parks and open space lands under the jurisdiction of the forest preserve district or other county, state or federal government agencies. The SP-PO district may be applied to privately owned lands only with the private property owner's consent," according to the county's code.

Among the allowed uses are a community center, golf course, country club, playground, swimming pool and school.

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