

## **Churchill Property – Current Status as of July 19, 2006**

The Forest Preserve decided yesterday, July 18, 2006, to not consider hiring the firm Wight & Co. to perform an evaluation of what it would take to renovate the Churchill Property. This comes at a shock especially because Dewey Pierotti, Forest Preserve President for DuPage county, assured the Citizens for Glen Ellyn Preservation that the Forest Preserve Commissioners would evaluate this option. Since not one of the commissioners would make a motion to approve the estimate for the assessment of the property by Wight and Company, the original resolution to tear down the buildings stands.

Local citizens are shocked to learn of the Forest Preserve decision to not pursue an assessment for restoring the Churchill Property, former residence of Superintendent Robert L. McKee. It is strongly suggested that the Forest Preserve Commissioners reverse this decision immediately and put into motion plans to assess the Property's renovation requirements. The Property holds major historical and architectural significance as a WPA structure and symbolizes the beginnings of forest and land preservation in our area.

There are many possible uses for the Property that should be considered:

\* **Events Venue** - Facility similar to Wheaton's Danada House where weddings, reunions, and other occasions could be held. A joint arrangement could be made with another entity, such as a neighboring Park District, to manage and run the facility. Churchill would not compete with Danada which is fully booked for weekends. Churchill would simply address the over-flow of demand that is not being met and provide a structure on the eastern portion of DuPage County, easily accessible via St. Charles Road. This would, in turn, open the structure to interest from towns presently not served by Danada.

\* **University of Illinois Extension Service** - The U of I often seeks properties to house their programs such as the Master Gardener program. Churchill could possibly house Extension programs in joint cooperation with the U of I and the Forest Preserve.

\* **Classroom / Laboratory** - Become space for local colleges and universities to expand programs in the natural sciences. Students in the fields of forestry, ecology, biology, and other areas may come to Churchill to learn in a natural setting. Due to the historic nature of the facility, coursework in historical preservation, architecture, and general history may also be offered.

\* **Arts Center/ Artist in Residence** - Facility to house an artist in residence program where art students live on the premise. Coursework could also be offered to local students and residents. Such an operation could run independently with supporting grant funding or through affiliation with a local college or Park District.

Many of these ideas will require cooperation across other organizations, but the possible benefits to the public are substantial. Clearly, the Forest Preserve's mandate is securing and preserving open space. However, open space at the cost of demolishing historically and architecturally significant structures is not in the interest of DuPage County taxpayers. Commissioners should consider the above cited options, continue the moratorium on demolishing the Property, and begin plans to assess renovation requirements.