

1 December 2023

To the Lake County Board,

It is my pleasure to submit an application to serve as a commissioner for the Avon Fremont Drainage District. My desire to join the AFDD stems from formative life experiences coupled with a burgeoning interest in watershed ecology and local environmental stewardship.

I have an affinity for rivers, lakes, and wetlands born of childhood summers spent in northern Minnesota with my grandparents. I remember hunting for frogs on a partially submerged wooden sailboat marooned in the bulrushes, overturning stones near the boat dock in search of crayfish, and watching my grandfather take Secchi disk readings while we were out fishing. Trips to visit the Mississippi River headwaters at Itasca State Park were occasional but impactful experiences. Wading across the narrow, knee-deep river 2,552 miles from its terminus in the Gulf of Mexico was magical.

Before moving to Grayslake in 2022, I learned firsthand the importance of well-managed urban watersheds when my Oak Park basement flooded during a major rain event in 2019. On that occasion, various factors led to water infiltration: the undersized Oak Park sewer system was quickly overwhelmed by the deluge, my home was located downhill immediately to the east of a continental divide resulting in additional rainwater runoff, my hardscaped backyard—installed by the previous owner—was improperly graded toward the foundation, and the majority of the downspouts drained into the backyard.

To mitigate future issues, my wife and I began overhauling our backyard watershed. This work coincided with a newfound interest in gardening with native plants. We removed impermeable hardscape by the ton, dug rain gardens to corral rainwater from downspouts, and dug a graded drainage swale to direct water out of the small alley between our house and the neighbors' and into our front yards. Since moving to Grayslake, we planted over 300 native plugs in our yard and are slowly converting our grassy rainwater swale into a bioswale filled with sedge, irises, and water-loving wildflowers.

Recently, I began leading a volunteer lake monitoring effort in the Prairie Crossing subdivision. My goal for this program is to take readings in Lake Aldo Leopold and Sanctuary Pond at least once a month (preferably twice per month) from April 1 through November 30. The plan is to begin simply with regular Secchi disk measurements. Eventually, I hope to track dissolved oxygen, pH, and conductivity, perform six-month constant temperature monitoring, and do plankton tows.

I am an optimistic person who enjoys a good challenge and takes pride in doing a job well. My friendly, upbeat attitude underpins all of my biggest accomplishments and makes it easier to accomplish my goals. I am confident that I have the skills and aptitude to succeed as a commissioner for the Avon Fremont Drainage District.

Sincerely,

Patrick Aubyrn