



Forest Preserve District of Cook County

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

www.fpdcc.com

For Immediate Release: October 18, 2012

Contact: Karen Vaughan,
Karen.vaughan@cookcountyil.gov
708-771-1176 (office), 312-521-9840 (cell)

Preckwinkle Unveils Forest Preserve District's Fiscal Year 2013 Executive Budget Recommendations

Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle unveiled her 2013 Executive Budget Recommendations to the Board of Commissioners today. The proposed budget is \$190 million dollars and is balanced without raising property taxes.

It is our honor and privilege to carry out the mission of conservation and preservation that the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's founders laid out nearly a century ago, Preckwinkle said. The 2013 budget builds upon a strong foundation of fiscal stability, helping the Forest Preserve District become a more accountable and transparent government agency. At the same time, this budget shows responsibility in ensuring the District has the resources necessary to fulfill its mission for the next 100 years.

In 2012, the District refinanced and issued new bonds for the first time in eight years, receiving \$110M in new project proceeds at the lowest cost of debt issuance in its history. This budget-neutral transaction reduced the need for large, one-time transfers from the Corporate Fund to the Construction and Development and Land Acquisition Funds, and resulted in a savings of \$3 million in the 2013 operating budget.

The budget also reflects savings found from new collaborations with Cook County departments to provide administrative services more efficiently and effectively than either agency could do on its own. Examples include coordination and cooperation in benefits management; increased audit and review services from the Office of the Inspector General; public safety communications systems; and Contract Compliance Administration.

The restoration and preservation of Cook County's most precious natural lands remains the District's top priority. In 2013, the District will decrease private contract costs and add part-time and seasonal staff to provide the same levels of natural resource maintenance and service, while reflecting the seasonal nature of much of its work.

The District also is adding additional part-time and seasonal staff for improved and enhanced recreation and outreach programs. These new outreach efforts will include one-on-one, targeted coordination with community groups, churches, not-for-profits and other organizations to attract new users from all areas of the County, and to equip them with the tools and knowledge to become frequent visitors of the Preserves.



Forest Preserve District of Cook County

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

www.fpdcc.com

The coming year will also see more special events programming, like those that were piloted in 2012, including canoeing and paddling outings, Films in the Forest and Forest Jams, and other family-friendly and educational offerings.

In addition to striving to reduce the cost of government, the District is working on behalf of taxpayers to keep property taxes flat, focusing instead on increasing non-tax revenues by 6%.

In 2013, the District is adjusting user fees for the first time in seven years. These adjustments will bring the District's rates for picnic permits and other licenses, special events, and athletic field rentals in line with the fees charged by other local Forest Preserves and Park Districts in the region. All rates will remain discounted for children, families, seniors and not-for-profit groups.

For example, this means that the rate for a typical family picnic permit, for a group of less than 100 people, will increase from \$35 to \$37 in 2013. Several picnic permits will see slightly larger fee increases. For example, the price of a permit for an event with more than 1000 people will increase in cost from \$760 to \$960. This higher cost reflects the bigger impact that larger events have on groves, requiring more maintenance, police, and other staff resources. Of nearly 8,500 permits sold so far in 2012, nearly 6,000 were for groups of fewer than 100 people, while only 21 were for groups of over 1000.

This budget also recommends that golf rates, which have remained exactly the same for the past five years, increase by \$1 at 9 of the District's ten courses, and \$2 at the signature George W. Dunne course.

The District will also begin charging for parking where property is used by outside vehicles, such as fleet vehicles from other units of government, commuters and local commercial traffic.

The total FY 2013 budget is \$190 million and is allocated as follows:

- \$52M Corporate Fund
- \$3M Self-Insurance Fund
- \$2M for Construction and Development
- \$6.3M for Capital Improvements (carryover)
- \$14.8M for Real Estate Acquisition (carryover)
- \$15.8M for Bond and Interest fund
- \$3.2M for Annuity and Benefit fund
- \$14.9M for Brookfield Zoo (the Zoo raises an additional \$48M for itself)
- \$9.3M for Botanic Garden, (the Garden raises an additional \$21.2M for itself)



Forest Preserve District of Cook County

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

www.fpdcc.com

While balancing the 2013 budget, the District is avoiding one-time fixes by spending down fund balances in a responsible, measured way that meets its minimum fund balance requirements, maintains its strong liquidity and does not contribute to future deficits. For example, the 2012 budget was balanced with \$8 million appropriated from the District's Corporate Fund Balance; for 2013, this amount is less than \$2 million. This is just one more example of how we are managing our finances with an eye towards sustaining and building our fiscal strength to support our ongoing operations, said Forest Preserve District of Cook County General Superintendent Arnold Randall.

To view the complete 2013 Budget Recommendations, visit:

fpdcc.com/2013budgetrecommendations.

#

Established in 1914, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County is the oldest and largest forest preserve system in the nation, maintaining more than 68,000 acres of open land for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public. The District strives to protect and restore the county's diverse ecosystems, so all our unique native plants and animals can live and thrive. Each year, more than 40 million people use these lands and facilities to enjoy or study nature, bicycle, hike, fish, cross-country ski, picnic, golf, canoe, or simply relax in a large preserve that leaves urban life behind.