



**Title:**  
**FEE WAIVER POLICY**

<b>Subject:</b> <b>FINANCIAL AFFAIRS</b>	<b>Page:</b> 1 of 4	<b>Policy Number:</b> 02.30.00
<b>Category:</b> <b>DISTRICTWIDE POLICY</b>	<b>Approval Date:</b> 01/23/2019	<b>Last Revised Date:</b> N/A

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (the “*District*”) recognizes the value of waiving or reducing fees in certain instances for the use of District facilities or land. The following procedures have been established for determining when fees may be waived or reduced.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to describe the procedure for approving waivers or reductions to fees set forth in Title 7 - Fees, Chapter 1 – Fee Schedule, of the District Code of Ordinances.

**AFFECTED AREAS:**

This policy applies to all entities or individuals requesting a Discretionary Discount. This policy shall not apply to Concessionaire Discounts, Contract Rates, Internal Events, Free Passes, or Non-Discretionary Discounts (*all as defined below*).

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Concessionaire Discounts:** Waivers or discounts offered directly by District concessioners (*e.g. ziplining, golf, biking, boating*).

**Contract Rates:** Rates determined for the use of District property via a partnership, license or other arrangement either approved by the District Board of Commissioners or otherwise authorized by the District Code of Ordinances.

**Discretionary Discounts:** Under Title 7 – Fees, Chapter 1 – Fee Schedule of the District Code of Ordinances, discounts or reduced promotional fees may be applied as made available by the General Superintendent. Discretionary Discounts do not include reduction or waiver of application fees, cost of District provided security, special use fees, security deposits, and vending.

**Education Access Permits:** An Education Access Permit is required for all school/educational activities, such as class field trips, practices or other group education visits to a Preserve or Nature Center, for all groups of 25 or more, and/or when requesting assistance from District staff. The permit is granted for the day(s) of the field trip or activity. There is no fee for the Education Access Permit.

**Fee Waiver Form:** The standard request form to be completed by non-District entities/individuals to request a Discretionary Discount.

**Free Passes:** Passes given out pursuant to District Board Approved Resolution, 16-0314, dated July 12, 2016.

**Internal Events:** Events where the District is a participant and/or organizer, and the Department of Permits, Rentals, and Concessions is not required to staff event, or open or close doors.

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**Non-Discretionary Discounts:** Under Title 7 – Fees, Chapter 1 – Fee Schedule of the District Code of Ordinances, certain discounts are non-discretionary if the stated criteria are met. For example, non-profit and veteran groups are eligible for certain discounts. Also, weekday use may be discounted in certain cases.

**PROCEDURE/PROCESS:**

**A. Eligibility for Fee Waiver:** The District may consider requests for Discretionary Discounts if, and when:

1. The facility/property requested is available;
2. Requested use of facility/property does not conflict with or impede other facility reservations and/or District general operations;
3. Request was made at least fourteen (14) business days prior to the proposed event/program/activity;
4. Requested use is less than one (1) week;
5. Fair market value of waiver/reduction is under \$2,500;
6. Requestor provided supporting documentation regarding purpose of the event, purposed activities, and other related information requested by the District;
7. The requester either: **(i)** meets the criteria set forth in Subsection B below for a set waiver; or **(ii)** the requester will provide a community benefit, public benefit, or other District benefit, of equal or greater value to the District than the value of the proposed waiver/reduction.

Such benefit analysis may include:

- a) anticipated number of new visitors to the District,
  - b) connection to Next Century Conservation Plan,
  - c) whether permit is currently subsidized and/or other Non-Discretionary discounts are applicable,
  - d) whether there is a charge for attending the event,
  - e) next best alternative use of space, and
  - f) benefits received or anticipated to be received from organization requesting waiver); and,
8. The event/program/activity shall comply with the District’s non-discrimination policy, and all applicable ordinances, other policies, and general permit requirements (*i.e. Certificate of Insurance with Endorsement, etc.*).

**B. Set Waivers:** The District may grant the discounts below:

1. **Emergency Management.** Training events or public service events (non-social events) by U.S. military, emergency management divisions of government, and public safety entities that are approved by the District’s Law Enforcement Department, in consultation with the Resource Management & Permit Department’s, are eligible for a Discretionary Discount up to 100%. The District may request that up to three (3) of its sworn law enforcement officers be allowed to participate in event if appropriate. Request for discount may be denied if conflicting event, costs too significant for the District, or other operational hardship exists (*see Denial of Discretionary Discount Requests in Subsection E below*).

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2. **Public Official or Units of Government.** Discretionary Discounts requested by public officials or units of government in their official capacity (non-social), are eligible for a Discretionary Discount up to 100%. Request for discount may be denied if conflicting event, costs too significant for the District, or other operational hardship exists (*see Denial of Discretionary Discount Requests in Subsection E below*). No discounts shall be provided for politically related events.
- C. **Review & Approval:** All requests for Discretionary Discounts must be reviewed and approved by the applicable Department Head, the Department of Finance, and Department of Permits, Rentals and Concessions, as recorded in the District's **Fee Waiver Form**.
- D. **Conflict of Interest:** In accordance with the District Code of Ordinances, Title 1 – Administrative, Chapter 13 – Code of Ethical Conduct, District employees are prohibited from participating in discussions, processes, or decisions relating to requests for Discretionary Discounts if the employee, the employee's spouse or minor child has any economic interest in such waiver or reduction that is distinguishable from that of the general public. "Economic Interest" means any interest valued or capable of valuation in monetary terms subject to certain exclusions. Further, District employees are prohibited from participating in discussions, processes, or decisions relating to requests for Discretionary Discounts if the employee sits on the board of, or receives any compensation from the organization seeking a Discretionary Discount.
- E. **Denial of Discretionary Discount Requests:** The District: **(1)** shall not waive/reduce fees for organizations or individuals requesting to use District facilities/property for politically related activities; and, **(2)** may deny requests for Discretionary Discounts for any reason, and at any time.
- F. **Fee Waiver Application Procedure:** **(1)** Applicant seeking a Discretionary Discount may obtain the **Fee Waiver Form** from the District's website or the Department of Permits, Rentals and Concessions; and, **(2)** the **Fee Waiver Form** and all other subsequent requirements as described in the **Fee Waiver Form** must be filled out completely and correctly and timely returned to the appropriate Department Head for review and consideration.
- G. **Acknowledgment:** All recipients of a Discretionary Discount shall acknowledge the District in all publicity relating to the event or activity. The language of such acknowledgement shall be pre-approved by the District.
- H. **Exceptions:** Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the General Superintendent.
- I. **Annual Report.** A summary of Discretionary Discounts provided by the District shall be included in any annual report to the District Board of Commissioners detailing free passes and discounts provided in the prior fiscal year.

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

**Department Heads:** Department Heads shall: **(1)** review and approve, or disapprove, requests for Discretionary Discounts related to the operations of the Department; **(2)** obtain the concurrence of the Department of Finance on approved requests; and, **(3)** ensure that the Department of Permits, Rentals & Concessions, and all other impacted departments, receive proper notification in order to coordinate and prepare for any approved event/program/activity.

**Department of Permits, Rentals & Concessions (PRC):** The Department of Permits, Rentals & Concessions shall: **(1)** manage the implementation of this policy; **(2)** maintain a copy of all related records; and, **(3)** track all approved requests for Discretionary Discounts on a quarterly basis.

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**Department of Finance & Administration:** The Finance & Administration Department shall review the data base of fee waivers maintained by PRC on at least a quarterly basis.

**Office of the General Superintendent:** The General Superintendent shall approve this policy and any amendments to this policy.

**TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:**

N/A

**COMMUNICATION PLAN:**

1. This policy should be added to the District shared drive, intranet, and website.
2. Dept. Heads should work to ensure that all necessary employees are knowledgeable about this policy.

**REFERENCES:**

**Forest Preserve District of Cook County**  
Fee Schedule, Forest Preserves Code Section 7-1-1

**Forest Preserve District of Cook County**  
Board Approved Resolution- 16-0314 (July 12, 2016)

**Forest Preserve District of Cook County**  
Land Access/Special Access Permits: <http://fpdcc.com/land-use-special-access/>

**POLICY LEAD:** Tracy Bishop  
Manager of Permits & Rentals  
Department of Permits, Rentals & Concessions

**APPROVAL:** Arnold Randall  
General Superintendent

**POLICY HISTORY:**

**Approved:** 01/23/2019  
**Revised:**

**If you have questions, comments, or suggestions concerning District policies, please contact:**

**Forest Preserve District of Cook County**  
Office of the General Superintendent  
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