



**Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Board of Commissioners**

Minutes of the Legislation and Intergovernmental Relations

Monday, June 21, 2021

1:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

PUBLIC HEARING

ATTENDANCE

Present: Suffredin, Britton, Aguilar, Anaya, Arroyo, Daley, Deer, Degnen, Gainer, Johnson,
Lowry, Miller, Moore, Morrison, Morrison, Silvestri and Sims (17)

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

1. Geri Aglipay – Concerned Citizen
2. Maria Acosta – Illinois Poor People’s Campaign (not present)

[21-0297](#)

COMMITTEE MINUTES

Approval of the minutes from the meeting of 1/22/2019

**A motion was made by Vice Chair Britton, seconded by Commissioner Daley, to approve 21-0297.
The motion carried by the following vote:**

Ayes: Suffredin, Britton, Aguilar, Anaya, Arroyo, Daley, Deer, Degnen, Gainer, Johnson,
Lowry, Miller, Moore, Morrison, Morrison, Silvestri and Sims (17)

[21-0284](#)

Sponsored by: LARRY SUFFREDIN, TONI PRECKWINKLE (President), FRANK J. AGUILAR, ALMA E. ANAYA, LUIS ARROYO JR., SCOTT R. BRITTON, JOHN P. DALEY, DENNIS DEER, BRIDGET DEGNEN, BRANDON JOHNSON, BILL LOWRY, DONNA MILLER, STANLEY MOORE, PETER N. SILVESTRI, BRIDGET GAINER, KEVIN B. MORRISON, SEAN M. MORRISON and DEBORAH SIMS, Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board of Commissioners

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

REQUESTING A HEARING INTO THE POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF THE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT TO PROTECT THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS AND BIPOC RESIDENTS AND VISITORS WITHIN COOK COUNTY

WHEREAS, Cook County has always been home to people from many racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the Cook County Forest Preserve District has been a public space and place to visit nature for these residents and visitors. With over one million immigrants, Cook County has the largest concentration of foreign-born residents in the State of Illinois. Many of these individuals and families visit our preserves and are among the over 60 million visits that the Forest Preserve District experiences each year over its almost 70,000 acres; and

WHEREAS, the Cook County Forest Preserve District has benefitted and continues to benefit culturally, socially, and economically from the diversity of its residents; and

WHEREAS, the Cook County Forest Preserve District and its partners, the Brookfield Zoo and Chicago Botanic Garden, are committed to being a Fair and Equal place for all immigrants, refugees, and their families, and for people of color; and are committed to energetically advance equity and inclusion, and to oppose any efforts that conflict with those values or reverse critical protections to immigrants, refugees, and their families, and to people of color; and

WHEREAS, the national political climate over the past four years has produced fear and anxiety among many Cook County residents, particularly among people of color, immigrants, Muslims, Jews, and members of the LGBTQ community. Recent events within Cook County and the Forest Preserve District have demonstrated that there is increased violence against diverse communities; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has also perpetrated xenophobia towards the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Over the course of approximately a year during the pandemic, 3,800 anti-Asian racist incidents such as verbal harassment, shunning, physical assault, and civil rights violations were reported across the country. Out of those incidents, nearly 68% were towards AAPI women; and

WHEREAS, the Forest Preserve District remains committed to protecting the civil rights of all residents and immigrant groups, to work toward equity and inclusion, and to ensure that all residents of Cook County and visitors feel welcome and safe in the Forest Preserves.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative and Intergovernmental Relations Committee hold a hearing for Forest Preserve District officials to report on current policies and practices and for input from our residents concerning both current policies and practices as well as best practices for protecting civil rights and welcoming all immigrant groups and people of color who visit the Cook County Forest Preserves into the future.

Testimony was provided by the following witnesses:

1. Arnold Randall, General Superintendent: Introductory comments and moderator of presentations.
2. Raquel Garcia-Alvarez, REDI Coordinator: Summary of Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work of the Cook County Forest Preserve District.
3. Dr. Kathleen Yang-Clayton, Clinical Assistant Professor and Director of Civic Partnership, Public Administration, College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, University of Illinois at Chicago: Operationalizing racial equity work within the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.
4. Terry Guen, Forest Preserve Conservation and Policy Council and President of Terry Guen Design Associations: Outreach to AAPI community.
5. Jacqui Ulrich, Forest Preserves Director of Conservation and Experiential Programming: CEP's outreach to diverse community groups.
6. Deputy Commander Martin Hasler, Forest Preserve Police Department: Efforts by the Forest Preserve Police Department to protect the general public, with sensitivity to unique needs and situations of immigrants and people of color.
7. Dr. Stuart Strahl, Ph.D., President and CEO of the Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo: Efforts by the Brookfield Zoo to protect the general public, with sensitivity to unique needs and situations of immigrants and people of color.
8. Jean Franczyk, President and CEO of the Chicago Botanic Garden: Efforts by the Chicago Botanic Garden to protect the general public, with sensitivity to unique needs and situations of immigrants and people of color.

No action was taken on this item.

[21-0285](#)

Sponsored by: DENNIS DEER, LARRY SUFFREDIN, JOHN P. DALEY, BILL LOWRY, STANLEY MOORE, PETER N. SILVESTRI, DEBORAH SIMS, FRANK J. AGUILAR, ALMA E. ANAYA, LUIS ARROYO JR., SCOTT R. BRITTON, BRIDGET DEGNEN, BRIDGET GAINER, BRANDON JOHNSON, DONNA MILLER, KEVIN B. MORRISON and SEAN M. MORRISON, Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board of Commissioners

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING MAY AS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH IN THE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY

WHEREAS, mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental

illness each year. 1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year. 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year, 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, 75% by age 24 and suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-34; and

WHEREAS, all Americans face challenges in life that can impact their mental health, whether it is due to the loss of a loved one, socioeconomic circumstances and especially during a pandemic; and

WHEREAS, mental health conditions are real and prevalent in our nation according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA), for adults aged 18 or older, the percentage who had any mental illness (AMI) in the past year increased from 17.7 percent (or 39.8 million people) in 2008 to 20.6 percent (or 51.5 million people) in 2019. Over that same period, the percentage who had serious mental illness (SMI) in the past year increased from 3.7 percent (or 8.3 million people) to 5.2 percent (or 13.1 million people); and

WHEREAS, prevention is an effective way to reduce the burden of mental health conditions; and

WHEREAS, there are practical tools that all people can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency, which include exercise, increase sleep, positive thinking and healthy diet; and

WHEREAS, with effective treatment, those individuals with mental health conditions can recover and lead full, productive lives; and

WHEREAS, each business, school, government agency, health care provider, organization and citizen share the burden of mental health problems and has a responsibility to promote mental wellness and support prevention and treatment efforts; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Cook County will: Led by the Cook County Board President and the Cook County Board of Commissioners (County Board), in collaboration with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to commit to increasing awareness and understanding of mental health issues, the steps our citizens can take to protect their mental health, and the need for appropriate and accessible services for all people with mental health conditions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, We establish May as Mental health Awareness Month in the Forest Preserve District of Cook County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, We establish May, 19th as Mental Health Awareness Day in the Forest Preserve District of Cook County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County Board hereby supports the efforts of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to raise awareness of mental health issues and the importance of maintaining one's mental health; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Legislative and Intergovernmental

Affairs Committee meet to discuss the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's outreach in regards to mental health awareness.

Testimony was provided by the following witnesses:

1. Dr. Teresa Horton, Northwestern University Department of Anthropology: physical and mental health benefits of being in the Forest Preserves

The following witnesses were available to answer questions:

2. Cathy Geraghty, Forest Preserves Director of Strategic Initiatives
3. Jacqui Ulrich, Forest Preserves Director of Conservation and Experiential Programming
4. Raquel Garcia-Alvarez, Garden Horticultural Therapy
5. Sgt. Amanda Kennedy, Forest Preserves Police Department

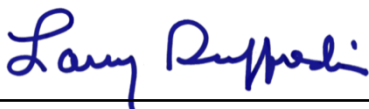
No action was taken on this item.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Bill Lowry, seconded by Commissioner John P. Daley, that this meeting adjourn. The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Suffredin, Britton, Aguilar, Anaya, Arroyo, Daley, Deer, Degnen, Gainer, Johnson, Lowry, Miller, Moore, Morrison, Morrison, Silvestri and Sims (17)

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman



Secretary

A complete record of this meeting is available at <https://fpdcc.legistar.com>.