

PROPOSED SUBSTITUTION TO 23-0329

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

REQUESTING A HEARING OF THE BOTANIC GARDEN COMMITTEE ON OPERATIONS, PROGRAMS, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OF THE CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

WHEREAS, the Chicago Botanic Garden opened 50 years ago, as a garden for all; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Botanic Garden has since matured into one of the world's great living museums and conservation science centers; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Botanic Garden's modern history began in 1962, when the Chicago Horticultural Society agreed to help create and manage a new public garden. With the groundbreaking for the Chicago Botanic Garden in 1965 and its opening in 1972, the Society created a permanent site on which to carry out its mission; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Botanic Garden today consists of 28 gardens and four natural areas that are uniquely situated on 385 acres on and around nine islands and six miles of lake shoreline; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Botanic Garden is the proud home to the Lenhardt Library, containing 150,000 items-including one of the nation's best collections of rare botanical books, and nine laboratories at the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Plant Conservation Science Center where scientists and graduate students alike conduct a wide variety of plant research; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Botanic Garden maintains engaging relationships with more than 60,000 members-one of the largest memberships of any botanic garden in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Botanic Garden today is an example of a successful public-private partnership, as it is owned by the Forest Preserves of Cook County and operated by the Chicago Horticultural Society; and

WHEREAS, over the last 10 years, the Garden has seen a 43 percent increase in visitors and now sees more than one million visitors annually; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Botanic Garden offers 52 free admission days for Illinois residents a year which are posted on the Garden website; and

WHEREAS, 2022 saw the successful passage of the Forest Preserves of Cook County referendum that will, in part, be used to address the deferred capital needs of the Chicago Botanic Garden including building repairs, stormwater and irrigation systems renovation, and installation of new paths; and

WHEREAS, in February 2022 the Chicago Botanic Garden implemented a new pricing structure with admission fee ticket prices ranging from \$9.95 to \$25.95 per person, and parking fees reduced to a flat \$8 fee, year-round. The new ticket now includes at no extra cost the Grand Tram Tour, Butterflies & Blooms, and the Model Railroad Garden; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby request that a hearing be convened during the June Botanic Garden Committee meeting of the Forest Preserve Board of Commissioners to discuss the operations, programming, and community engagement of the Chicago Botanic Garden; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the senior staff of the Chicago Botanic Garden will appear before the Committee for this hearing prepared to present and answer questions from the Cook County Board of Commissioners; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chicago Botanic Garden senior staff presentation shall include the capital improvement plans as a result of the referendum passage, preliminary observations about the revised fee structure and attendance, a review of past and current revenue, and opportunities to engage more residents in experiencing all the Garden has to offer.