

11.5.19

Good morning

I'm

Mark

Vice

Chair

of

the

Council

Talking

Points

FPCC Budget Hearing ▪ November 5, 2019**Mark: We must prepare for change now**

As my colleagues on the Conservation and Policy Council have stated, the Preserves are an incredible resource for all who reside in Cook County and who visit ^{from} ~~it~~ ^{here} from throughout ^{our country and the} the world. My two children, my wife and I have spent countless hours in the Preserves and have benefitted physically, emotionally, and spiritually from the time that we have spent there.

That's why it is personal to me—and to others on the Council—that the District has been unable to scale up to meet the ambitious and important Next Century Conservation Plan goals related to land acquisition, restoration, and making the preserves more open and accessible.

And, as you all know, these are not the only financial challenges the District faces. The District must also find a way to meet its pension obligations and to address a backlog of deferred maintenance. The Zoo and the Garden, which are located on Preserves' land and are vital partners of the Preserves, are struggling to address their significant capital needs.

On behalf of the Council, each year I meet with Forest Preserves CFO Steve Hughes to review the district's proposed budget. Based on my experience as a former CFO for a similarly-sized organization, I believe that the District has

managed its resources thoughtfully and efficiently under the leadership of Superintendent Arnold Randall.

As indicated in our annual report to the board, the Council is recommending approval of a status quo budget for the Forest Preserves for this coming year. But the District will not be able to maintain the status quo for long. In the very near future, the Forest Preserves will have to move in one direction or another financially. Either the District will secure additional resources, or the District will need to cut back on services and programs in order to address its backlog of deferred maintenance and its pension obligations. This does not even include funding the ambitious but critical goals of the Next Century Conservation Plan.

The Council & its many partners
~~We~~ We were very hopeful that a successful referendum would ~~provide~~ *have* the ongoing, sustainable resources the Forest Preserves needs.

As Laurel said, we Council Members are not giving up, and we will continue to seek a long-term, sustainable funding source for the Forest Preserves. In the meantime, we will work with staff and partners to analyze Forest Preserves' financial needs after 2020 and what changes need to be made to ensure that proposed expenditures match available resources. Many of the changes we will be exploring cannot happen overnight, and many of them are likely to affect many different constituencies, so it is important that we begin reviewing and discussing them now.

*Question on
not all have
have same constituencies*