

**Forest Preserves of Cook County
Conservation & Policy Council 5 Year Plan Review Committee
Minutes for August 7, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 9 am. The following Council members and others participated in the meeting; Falona Joy was not able to attend.

Conservation & Policy Council Review Cmte

Wendy Paulson
Mark Templeton (by phone)
Michael DeSantiago
Peter Ellis (by phone)

FPCC Staff & Others

Arnold Randall
Cathy Geraghty
Eileen Figel
Emily Harris
Lenore Beyer-Clow
Troy Alim

The following issues were discussed:

Council's obligations to report – these will be the focus of the Sept. Council meeting:

- Annual report to the President – this will be in the form of a brief summary memo summarizing where we are, how we got here, and where we are going. The report will highlight key aspects of the strategic plan and budget recommendations.
- Strategic operating plan.
- Budget recommendation.

Review of draft 5 year strategic plan. Emily Harris presented an overview of the draft 5 year strategic plan. The review committee offered the following suggestions:

Document Overview. There was consensus that:

- The strategic plan has three purposes:
 1. Connect the broad long-term goals of the Next Century Conservation Plan to operations of the District
 2. Set priorities
 3. Serve as an internal and external communications and management tool about how the NCCP is being implemented
- The primary elements of the NCCP vision are mutually dependent and the four goals are all in service of these priorities which include:
 - Restoration (30,000 acres high quality for ecological health)
 - Expansion (grow Preserves to 90,000 acres)

- Public Engagement (welcoming preserves, iconic for Chicago region, users/community of support reflecting diversity of Cook County)

Proposed Revisions. The current document moves in the right direction with the following changes:

- Add an introduction to: (i) Explain the purpose of the strategic plan and how it ties to the NCCP, (ii) summarize top priorities including building partnerships, changing culture, improving internal and external communications, etc., and (iii) highlight our approach to scaling up, increasing resources, and other challenges. These three elements should also be carried through to the introduction to each goal as appropriate
- There are many good programs and projects which address priority goals; the challenge is scaling these up to create large scale impact. The plan should be explicit about strategies to validate successful programs and/or design new pilot programs and evaluate the potential for replication and scaling up. These pilots/validation efforts will ultimately surface the metrics for evaluating the success of the plan, especially in terms of the People goal which is harder to measure.
- Be explicit about any actions omitted from 5 year strategy (such as local food production).
- Add details explaining how we will get from 2016 mileposts to 2020 outcomes (e.g. identify additional mileposts along the way.) The current draft is inconsistent.
- Make explicit whether resource needs are for the District or for Partner organizations. Clarify throughout throughout how the district can “set the table for others” to be effective partners in accomplishing the goals, recognizing that this level of partner engagement requires an investment of staff time by the District

Detailed recommendations.

- Final design: Provide a map of the entire forest preserves system in the final document. Provide working maps for the council detailing key programs and proposals (such as the 7000 acres currently under restoration, 3000 to 5000 acres which are a top priority for restoration, etc.)
- Nature Goal:
 - Metrics seem fairly explicit in terms of acres but more clarity needed about process vs. results
 - How do metrics for hours translate to restoration goal? Is there a way to monetize these as in-kind hours toward the ultimate cost of restoration to demonstrate what is being contributed?
 - Include a communication focus including continuing and expanding efforts to communicate more effectively to those already engaged
- People goal:
 - Metric is harder to achieve – theory is that positive experience will translate to engagement. Evaluation should test/validate this

- Be explicit that a goal is to reflect the diversity of Cook County and demonstrate how existing and pilot programs are increasing that engagement
- Include engagement of business community (civic leadership) examining things like how Corporate work days translate to ambassadors for the Preserves
- Consider new opportunities to partner with Chicago Public Schools in ways that can lead to much larger scale participation of diverse urban audience. Difficult to achieve, but consider a pilot designed to be scaled

Review of draft 2016 budget recommendations. Eileen Figel and Troy Alim presented a framework for the 2016 budget recommendations. The Review committee agreed that the entire district budget should be reflected in the analysis to enable a conversation about costs/benefits and tradeoffs of both new and “legacy” programs. This conversation may be limited during this first year, but could become more in-depth in future years.

Determining how to count partner investment is tricky. It is important to be explicit about the relationship to Plan priorities – e.g. restoration investment that is toward the priority sites identified by the District’s natural and cultural resources master plan.

Next Steps. The committee asked to proceed as follows:

1. Committee members will send to Eileen questions or suggestions they have regarding any aspects of the draft 5 year plan.
2. Eileen and Cathy will review and respond to questions.
3. Staff will update the draft plan, add an introduction and prepare budget recommendations and distribute the updated documents to the review committee. Staff will offer various group or individual phone calls to get feedback from the review committee.
4. Eileen will incorporate feedback and forward a final draft to the full council one week prior to the September 10 council meeting.
5. The Council will be asked to approve the 5-year plan with proposed changes and authorize the review committee to approve a final document (including designed format) for presentation to the President and Board of Commissioners. We will utilize the same process for annual report and budget recommendation.