



DATE: June 22, 2020

MEMO TO: Angelo D. Kyle, Chair
Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Agenda Item# 9.2

FROM: Alex Ty Kovach
Executive Director

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend approval of a Resolution approving the Lake County Forest Preserve District’s revised Strategic Plan Objectives from now through December 31, 2025. The recommendation is to focus on four objectives for the District’s Strategic Plan over the next five years as follows: 1) Steward Healthy Landscapes 2) Strengthen Connections 3) Ensure Financial Stability 4) Sustain Organizational Excellence.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED: Public Access and Connections; Conservation; Leadership; Communication; Organizational Sustainability; Education and Outreach.

FINANCIAL DATA: No immediate impact.

BACKGROUND: In October 2013, under then-President Ann B. Maine, the District began the process of developing a long-range strategic plan. The District contracted with the Institute for Conservation Leadership (“ICL”) to help facilitate the District through the process. The strategic planning process was divided into three phases: Phase I is preparation of a vision statement, Phase II is preparation of strategic directions and goals to pursue the vision, and Phase III is objective development.

In Phase I, a series of educational sessions were offered for Commissioners regarding key issues facing the District, and visioning sessions were held with the Steering Committee, Commissioners, stakeholders (i.e., other governmental agencies and non-profit and for-profit companies committed to conservation), and District leadership staff (i.e., Department Directors and Managers). Using ideas generated during the visioning sessions, the staff prepared a draft vision statement, which subsequently was reviewed by the Steering Committee, leadership staff members, and focus groups of the District’s key stakeholders. The resulting vision statement was approved by the Board of Commissioners in January 2014.

Phase II of the strategic planning process began later that same month. Sessions were held with District Commissioners, staff, volunteers and stakeholders, first to identify strategic directions for the next 20 to 25 years, and then to define five- to ten-year goals to begin implementing each of the directions.

In July 2014, the Board of Commissioners approved the District’s “Strategic Plan,” which includes the vision statement, the 20-25 year strategic directions, and the five- to ten-year goals.

Phase III work began in January 2015. That work was to identify five-year objectives that, if accomplished, would help the District move toward its five- to ten-year goals, strategic directions, and 100-year vision. A Core Team of ten staff was selected to lead the objective development process.

A process structure was developed that allowed for a range of participation open to all staff. In total, 50% of the staff participated in some way in the creation of 13 objectives. The objectives provided benchmarks for prioritization and other decision-making regarding the use of resources and issues facing the District. The 13 objectives were approved by the Board in September 2015 and underpinned the District's work plan for its day-to-day functions and priorities during the five years following that approval.

The 13 objectives were evaluated by District staff from fall of 2015 to present to assess which objectives were advancing the District's 5-10 year goals and long-term strategic directions and which were not. Through this evaluation, it became clear that the District had too many objectives and that, looking forward into the next five years, the District would need to revisit the objective development process.

In June 2019, President Angelo D. Kyle appointed a Strategic Planning Steering Committee (the "Steering Committee"), with the advice and consent of the Board, to help guide the District's efforts of updating the objectives of the 100-Year Vision and Strategy. The appointed Steering Committee includes: President Angelo Kyle, Chair; Commissioner John Wasik, Vice-Chair; Commissioner Jennifer Clark, JD; Commissioner Ann Maine, PhD; Commissioner Jessica Vealitzek; Judith Stockdale, Director, Nuveen Funds; Betsy Hough, Board Member, Preservation Foundation; John Rogner, Deputy Director, Illinois Department of Natural Resources; Angela Larsen, Director of Planning, Alliance of the Great Lakes; Lydia Scott, Director of Chicago Regional Tree Initiative, Morton Arboretum; Lindsay Birt, PhD, Customer Solutions Architect, Xylem Inc.; Pati Vitt, PhD, District Manager of Ecological Restoration; Alyssa Firkus, District Education Manager. In July 2019, President Kyle appointed Commissioner Paul Frank to the Steering Committee.

The District again contracted with ICL to facilitate the process. As with the 100-Year Vision and Strategy, the District wanted to ensure that Commissioners, staff, and District stakeholders were given an opportunity to provide input to develop the new objectives.

Over the last year, the Steering Committee has met four times and the ICL facilitator led two sessions with the Board of Commissioners and a session with roughly 50 members of stakeholder. From these touch points, the Steering Committee was provided all the input and feedback. Each Steering Committee member was then asked to contact five interested persons to inquire about the issues that they or their organizations are concerned about.

From these efforts, a list of draft objectives was created. ICL took that draft, consolidated and arranged the draft objectives, and presented them for consideration at a Steering Committee workshop. At that workshop, the Committee agreed upon a list of refined draft objectives.

The District then asked several of its staff members to craft the final language and organization of the objectives. After that, the draft objectives were again reviewed by District staff at several levels and presented back to the Steering Committee on March 9, 2020. At the March 9, 2020 Steering Committee Meeting, the Committee made recommended language changes and asked Staff to bring the objectives back to the Steering Committee so that it could, as a Special Committee of the Board, make a final recommendation to the full District Board for approval. The Committee-recommended "Road Map to 2025", attached to the attached Resolution, has four Objectives and each Objective has key tactics to reach the Objective over the next five years.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Department Directors, Chief Operations Officer, Human Resources Manager, Corporate Counsel.

**LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

**A RESOLUTION APPROVING AMENDED OBJECTIVES
FOR THE LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT'S STRATEGIC PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Lake County Forest Preserve District (the "District") was created by public referendum on November 4, 1958, and over its first 50-plus years has grown to become the second largest forest preserve district in Illinois, owning and managing over 30,000 acres of forest preserves throughout Lake County; and

WHEREAS, the District is governed by the Downstate Forest Preserve District Act, 70 ILCS 805/0.001 et seq. (the "Act"), and the District's statutory purposes under the Act include acquiring, restoring, restocking, developing, and maintaining lands in their natural state and condition to protect and preserve their flora, fauna and scenic beauties for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public; and

WHEREAS, the District, consistent with the Act, has determined that its mission is "to preserve a dynamic and unique system of natural and cultural resources, and to develop innovative educational, recreational and cultural opportunities of regional value, while exercising environmental and fiscal responsibility"; and

WHEREAS, in July 2014, the Board of Commissioners approved the District's "Strategic Plan," which includes the District's 100-year Vision for Lake County and the District's 20-25 year strategic directions and 5-10 year goals; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate for the District to identify 5-year objectives which, when accomplished, will facilitate its advancement of its 5-10 year goals, 20-25 year strategic directions, and 100-year vision (the "Objectives"); and

WHEREAS, on September 8, 2015, the District approved "A Resolution Adopting Strategic Plan Objectives for the Lake County Forest Preserve District" (the "2015 Resolution") identifying such Objectives; and

WHEREAS, the District's Strategic Planning Steering Committee has developed and recommends the adoption of the new Objectives identified in the attached "Road Map to 2025", which support the next phases of the Strategic Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners finds that it is in the best long-term interest of the District and the current and future citizens of Lake County to adopt and actively pursue the Objectives set forth in the attached "Road Map to 2025" in furtherance of the Strategic Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Lake County Forest Preserve District, Lake County, Illinois, THAT:

Section 1: Recitals. The recitals set forth above are incorporated as part of this Resolution by this reference.

Section 2: Approval of the Objectives. The Objectives, included in the attached “Road Map to 2025,” are hereby approved and adopted, and the Executive Director is hereby authorized and directed to use the Objectives to guide the work of the District’s staff pursuant to the Strategic Plan.

Section 3: Repeal of 2015 Resolution. The 2015 Resolution is hereby repealed.

Section 4: Effective Date. This Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval in the manner provided by law.

PASSED this _____ day of _____, 2020

AYES:

NAYS:

APPROVED this _____ day of _____, 2020

Angelo D. Kyle, President
Lake County Forest Preserve District

ATTEST:

Julie Gragnani, Secretary
Lake County Forest Preserve District

Exhibit No. _____

Road Map to 2025



Lake County
Forest Preserves

Objective

Steward Healthy Landscapes

Protect and restore ecological habitats and services.

Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Resiliency

Tactic: Define and monitor six metrics that audit climate adaptation and mitigation actions that measure carbon sequestration, aquatic systems and oak ecosystems. Continue evaluation of implementation strategies.

Tactic: Implement regenerative farming pilot projects on 25% of our forest preserve agricultural lands.

Water Resources

Tactic: Focus on aquatic systems by continuing collaboration and reprioritizing existing staff resources to enhance the quality of our rivers, streams and lakes.

Tactic: Understand the unique challenges of Lake Michigan.

Green Infrastructure

Tactic: Quantify the monetary value of ecosystem services our preserves provide per acre of habitat.

Tactic: Prioritize action steps to implement the Green Infrastructure Model and Strategy.

Tactic: Increase the tree canopy in Lake County from 28% to 32% focusing primarily on oak ecosystems.

Conservation Plan

Tactic: Restore an additional 2,400 acres of forest preserve lands.

Tactic: Based on mEco ecological data, implement precision conservation for restoration efforts focusing on ecological complexes, large habitats and priority species.

Objective

Strengthen Connections

Extend public access, brand awareness, and education and outreach.

Communications

Tactic: Design an integrated marketing campaign using print, digital and grassroots methods to increase countywide awareness of the Preservation Foundation from 16% (2019 survey results) to 32%, and increase the donor base from 4,600 to 9,200.

Tactic: Grow *Horizons* magazine distribution by 20% to increase public awareness; align editorial content with Road Map to 2025 strategic priorities.

Healthy Communities

Tactic: Expand communications that promote our forest preserves as a fitness and recreation destination for physical and mental wellness.

Tactic: Broaden conversations with diverse audiences to increase awareness and motivate them to actively use forest preserves, participate in programs, and become a volunteer or donor.

Education

Tactic: Offer diverse and innovative educational opportunities that engage the changing population and expand our reach to and within every Lake County zip code.

Tactic: Empower and develop Board Commissioners, Preservation Foundation Board and Committee members, and staff to become leading experts in their fields by investing in educational training and professional development opportunities.

Human Interactions

Tactic: Train Board Commissioners, Preservation Foundation Board and Committee members, and staff and volunteers to be brand ambassadors so every public interaction delivers consistent messages.

Objective

Ensure Financial Stability

Build a clear economic pathway for long-term capacity.

Endowment Campaign

Tactic: Ensure a permanent source of revenue for tree planting, reforestation and habitat restoration through charitable financial support in the amount of \$20 million.

Tactic: Commit staff resources to cultivate relationships with potential donors to reach the Preservation Foundation's endowment goal.

Understand Capacity

Tactic: Prioritize investments of available resources using data-driven, performance-based decisions that consider outside trends and long-term impacts.

Tactic: Analyze existing and new agreements with third parties to leverage only those that are mutually beneficial toward achieving our efforts or extending our goals.

Secure New Funding

Tactic: Create a designated fund to take advantage of meeting grant opportunities that advance strategic priorities.

Tactic: Pursue legislative action to amend the Downstate Forest Preserve District Act to increase the statute's maximum tax rates for the general corporate levy and the development levy, each by no more than 0.02%.

Objective

Sustain Organizational Excellence

Emphasize mission-centric leadership to balance organizational resources, core activities and culture.

Diversity and Inclusion

Tactic: Enhance our cultural competency and knowledge of diversity, equity and inclusion practices so that we can best serve and engage all Lake County residents in enjoying and caring for the health of natural landscapes and cultural heritage in our county.

Tactic: Identify and implement actions that foster a diverse workforce across every level of the organization. Understand how we need to change in order to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

Tactic: Complete Phase 1 of the revised Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan.

Tactic: Empower and motivate staff to work at the top of their professional abilities and core work functions to collaborate on issues impacting the region. Be named one of the "Best Places to Work in Illinois" through the Daily Herald statewide competition.

Comprehensive Master Planning

Tactic: Establish components for the framework of a long-range plan that integrates operations, land use, ecosystems services, and public access projects. This will be used to guide sustainable development and management of new and existing preserves.

Tactic: Continue analyzing and prioritizing rehabilitation and redevelopment opportunities of preserves in which infrastructure is nearing the end of its useful life and where use patterns have changed over time. The intent is to rightsize impervious surfaces, eliminate adverse impacts to natural resources, reduce long-term operational expenses and provide improved recreational experiences.

Innovations

Tactic: Enhance our organization's digital capabilities and incorporate emerging technologies that automate and support core functions and create internal efficiencies.

Safety

Tactic: Continue to prioritize public and staff safety and reduce our safety incident rate by 71%.

Tactic: Educate and train all staff on applicable safety standards; conduct job safety analyses.