



# The Civic Federation

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October 6, 2009

The Honorable Todd H. Stroger  
President  
Forest Preserve District of Cook County  
118 N. Clark Street  
Room 537  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear President Stroger:

On Wednesday, October 7, 2009, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board is scheduled to vote on whether Hinsdale should be allowed to lease 30 acres of Forest Preserve land to transform it into a village park. I am writing on behalf of the Civic Federation to urge you to vote against this proposal, which is contrary to the mission and policy of the District and was opposed by Forest Preserve District staff.

Unfortunately, the Hinsdale proposal is only the latest in a long string of requests from different governmental units for portions of the 68,000 acres of Forest Preserve District land. Such requests conflict with the District's core mission and codified policy to "acquire and hold lands...for the purpose of protecting and preserving the flora, fauna and scenic beauties...[and] for the purpose of ...education, pleasure and recreation." Despite Hinsdale's proposal to restore some of the natural lands contained within the 30 acre parcel, the fact remains that creating a village park by clear cutting areas for soccer fields and restroom facilities is fundamentally different from restoring pristine forest preserve.

The Civic Federation and Friends of the Forest Preserves released a report in March 2008 calling for the creation of a separate Board of Commissioners for the Forest Preserve District. The report found that the current dual Board structure results in an unavoidable conflict of interest among the commissioners who must balance the irreconcilable needs and missions of the county and the forest preserves. These conflicts of interest have resulted in several land transfers, including one in 2007 giving 16 acres of District land to the Illinois Tollway. Such transfers have no doubt encouraged the Village of Hinsdale to submit its alternate land use proposal to the District.

The Federation and Friends strongly believe that a separate Board of Commissioners, elected based upon their positions, credentials, experience and interest in the forest preserves, would best serve the District as their only consideration would be for the mission and policy of the District to preserve natural land. The Federation urges you to support the creation of a new Forest Preserve District Board, legislation for which is currently being considered in the Illinois General Assembly.

Only when all governments in northeastern Illinois recognize that Forest Preserve District property is not a land bank for their use will requests such as Hinsdale's stop. Please vote against the Hinsdale land lease and help preserve the county's "emerald necklace" against encroachment for future generations to enjoy.

Sincerely,

  
Laurence Msall  
President

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