



# **FISCAL STRATEGIES FOR COOK COUNTY**

2001

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# **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Fiscal Year 2001 budget is \$99 million larger than last year. While the \$2.7 billion budget is balanced, our future budgets may not be as prosperous. With property taxes remaining static and the cost of salaries, health care, and arbitration awards rising, Cook County is increasingly reliant on one-time allocations of resources. The current budget is only balanced due to the increasing inclusion of one-time revenue sources such as the Torrens Fund, lawsuit settlements and an undetermined amount from the fund balance.

These temporary boosts to our revenue are assets to our county's economy but should raise concern. Next year's budget will have to pay for next year's growth and year 2000 increases. We are raising revenue but there are limitations to this growth. While we seek to maintain and improve county services, we cannot continually rely on an economic structure that could ultimately lead to tax increases after these revenue sources disappear.

## **HOME RULE TAXES**

The revenue from home-rule taxes has increased by \$46.1 million since FY97. However, without the imposition of the parking tax, the projected revenue from home-rule taxes in FY2001 would be approximately \$2.5 million less than the projected revenue from FY2000. These taxes are subject to limitation and the parking tax revenue, like the other home-rule taxes, will decrease due to diminishing returns. Cigarette, gas, and sales tax revenue predictions have each decreased by half a million dollars. Alcohol tax revenue is predicted to decrease by \$1 million. The parking tax could ultimately earn less revenue with a decrease in parking lot consumers. At that time, what are our choices? The creation of another home-rule tax?

## **ONE-TIME REVENUE SOURCES**

This year's budget includes numerous one-time hits including this year's one-time withdrawal from the Torrens fund, lawsuit settlements, estate taxes, and grants. The Treasurer's office has

already experienced the dramatic impact of one-time hits as estate tax revenues fluctuate greatly in each new fiscal year. Our budget may be balanced with these one-time boosts yet when the next budget does not include these one-time revenue sources it may unfortunately lead to county service disruptions or future tax increases.

## **GRANTS**

Grants are a critical source of ongoing revenue for the County. Cook County currently receives over \$129 million in grant monies. These grant funds pay for 1052 employees of Cook County. However, approximately 31% of these grants have not received final funding approval and no grant has a lifetime revenue guarantee. It is unrealistic for the county budget to absorb the costs of salaries, health care, and automobiles of employees hired under grant programs, at the termination of the grant funding. We need to be selective of our grants and be more informed as to what our share of the costs of the grants are. Elected officials should keep within the scope of statutory authority. A central County grant coordinator should manage county grants to reduce program overlap and to minimize county expenditures.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we vote on this budget, we must remember the limitations of our revenue sources. Even in this booming economy basic economic principles apply. Diminishing returns will ultimately decrease our revenue from our home-rule taxes. There will be a day when grants end--are we then prepared to end programs and employment? There will be years without one-time hits--are we prepared when that happens? The long-term solution is comprehensive cost cutting, alternative methods of delivering services, privatization, and the exploration of alternative revenue sources other than taxes. This summary raises options for the Cook County Board and the Forest Preserve to explore and implement. The following is a broad list of options that should be analyzed and implemented in Cook County. While these options will certainly not be popular, ultimately the only alternative will be property tax increases or service reduction.

## II. COST CUTTING AND REVENUE SOURCES

### COST CUTTING

#### PRIVATIZATION

Privatization affords local governments increased flexibility, decreased costs and fosters market competition. If a particular service can be offered at an equal or higher degree of quality, for less expense to the County, it is practical to implement this course of action. For example, certain specialized services, such as special events coordination and information technology services are typically conducive to privatization. Privatization is not always the best route, but the following are a few additional examples in which privatization has demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency.

#### **Golf Course Management**

Many public bodies, including the Chicago Park District, have achieved cost savings by privatizing golf course management.

#### Consideration:

- *The Forest Preserve District (FPD) should contract out management and maintenance. The changeover could most likely be made without layoffs of current employees, and the change would create significant operational cost savings.*

#### **Waste Disposal**

The County currently contracts out waste disposal services at the county building located at 69 W. Washington.

#### Considerations:

- *While the County has shown the initiative in taking this first step, the Sheriff's Department still controls waste disposal services at the Daley Center, the County Building, and other buildings. Contracting out these services is more cost-effective and efficient, and the County should implement this course of action for the rest of its buildings.*

- *The County should create a Recycling Coordinator's position to plan, organize and expand upon the County's shift to recycling.*

### **Service of Process**

Plaintiffs who file civil lawsuits in the Circuit Court of Cook County must pay the Sheriff a fee for service of the summons and complaint. Generally, the fee for service of a summons in a civil lawsuit is \$23.00 per defendant plus 40 cents a mile. The sheriff makes as many attempts as possible to serve the summons upon the defendants by a certain date. Then, if the sheriff is unsuccessful, the plaintiff must go to court and request permission to appoint a special process server. Once the court grants permission, the plaintiff hires a private individual or firm to serve the defendant, for another, usually higher fee.

#### Consideration:

- *To promote judicial efficiency, the county should eliminate the requirement that plaintiffs hire the sheriff for the initial service of process attempts. If the county wants to continue to provide this service, the service should be outsourced to a private entity.*

### **JOINT PURCHASING**

Across the country, governmental bodies are availing themselves of the increased buying power and decreased administrative costs that result from combined purchasing efforts.

For example, through a program organized by National Association of Counties (NACO), the Alaskan Municipal League (AML) and its municipal members have joined with L.A. County in California to contract with Office Depot for office supply discounts. By combining their buying power with L.A. County's, AML members save up to:

- 61% on general office supplies
- 44% on office furniture
- 41% on electronic equipment and
- 35% on miscellaneous supplies, such as briefcases, labels, typewriters, etc.

Locally, the increasing cost of healthcare has prompted eight local taxing bodies, including the City of Chicago, the Chicago Public Schools and the CTA, to fund a Civic Federation study about the possibility of joining together to negotiate employee healthcare benefits. Cook County and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District are the only two local taxing bodies that have not yet agreed to participate in this study, despite the fact that no long-term commitment is required at this time.

Considerations:

- *Our Bureau of Health Services has already implemented a joint Request For Proposal (RFP) system under which the entire Bureau submits RFPs for supplies, rather than each individual institution. However, our Purchasing Agent should extend this idea to other departments. Our Purchasing Agent should compile a list of items commonly purchased by more than one county department and assess which are suitable candidates for joint RFPs.*
- *Given the increasing costs of healthcare for Cook County employees, the county should agree to participate in the study of the feasibility of joint healthcare purchasing.*
- *The county should work with NACO to increase its purchasing power for office supplies and other products.*

## **ANNEXATION**

### **Unincorporated Land**

The County has decreased the amount of unincorporated land throughout the County from 450 square miles in 1976 to 230 square miles in 1997. While the largest single category of unincorporated land lies within the Forest Preserve District's holding, there still remains a large portion of unincorporated land scattered throughout the County. These isolated pockets are difficult for the county to maintain. Note also that while the amount of unincorporated land has decreased, the number of sheriffs patrolling the remaining land has actually increased. In 1993, one sheriff patrolled every square mile. Today, two, sometimes three sheriffs patrol the same square mile.

Considerations:

- *The County should aggressively pursue intergovernmental land transfers with municipalities surrounding the unincorporated areas.*
- *The Sheriff should return the patrol units to their previous staffing levels.*

### **Sale of Surplus Land**

Cook County may be able to receive additional revenue through the sale of surplus land.

Considerations:

- *The County needs to conduct an inventory to determine if there is additional surplus land that has not yet been designated.*

### **COUNTY ROADS**

The county currently owns 660.43 miles of road. Approximately 80 miles are located within the City of Chicago and approximately 579.85 miles are located in suburban Cook County. The county is allocating substantial resources for the repair of county roads. These roads also are expensive to maintain. What is most difficult about maintenance of these roads is the scattered layout of our holdings. For example, the county owns and maintains:

- a one mile strip of Wilke Road off the Northwest Highway;
- 1/2 mile off the Joseph Busse Highway;
- three miles on the Tollway between North Avenue and Franklin;
- a strip of road, off the Stevenson, near Midway Airport, of less than one-fourth of a mile.
- a one mile stretch of Fullerton Avenue maintained by the County when less than two miles away there is five and-a-half miles of county roads maintained by other jurisdictions.
- off Harlem Road, a one mile stretch of county road with another one-and-a-half miles of county road less than a mile away that is maintained by another jurisdiction.

Considerations:

- *The County should more aggressively pursue intergovernmental land transfers for many of the small isolated strips of county roads that are difficult and inefficient to maintain.*
- *The County should explore the potential cost savings of having other jurisdictions maintain additional county roads. There are currently approximately 86.75 miles maintained by other jurisdictions. There could be potential cost savings by including additional roads.*

## **ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES: GOING GREEN SAVES GREEN**

### **Environmentally Friendly Golf Courses**

The International Audubon Society sponsors a program that allows golf courses to become more environmentally responsible. The Audubon Society works closely with the courses to help them achieve recognition in six designated areas. Once they do, they receive status as an Audubon Certified Course. Over 260 courses nationally, and 19 in the Chicagoland area are currently Audubon certified, and the program has received overwhelmingly positive feedback for both the aesthetics of the courses as well as the positive publicity that certification has brought. Further, as a result of managed care techniques, such as reduced pesticide use and water conservation, significant operational cost savings are a strong possibility on an annual basis.

Consideration:

- *The FPD should implement the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary program for all its own courses.*

### **Rubberized Asphalt**

States such as Arizona, California, Minnesota and others currently use rubberized asphalt to pave many of their roads and highways. The product has been proven to be very successful in warm and cold weather locations alike. In addition to offering a crucial alternative to stockpiling tires in landfills, the benefits of rubberized asphalt include a longer lifecycle of 15% or more, a much greater resistance to cracking and deterioration promoting maintenance cost savings, and a 50% reduction in noise, leading to a reduced need for expensive sound walls.



Consideration:

- *The product has moved well beyond the “experimental” stage, and is the standard material used to re-pave roads in many areas today. Because rubberized asphalt is of higher quality than regular asphalt, and allows substantial cost savings when a life cycle analysis is done, it would be a prudent move for Cook County to choose this product to pave its own roads.*

## **Green Buildings**

Green Buildings are based around the concept of energy-efficient design. While conserving natural resources greatly reduces the negative impact a building has on the environment, it also promotes significant cost savings over the building’s lifespan. Energy, water, maintenance, and disposal costs are all reduced when green design strategies are used. Winter cost savings on heating alone can range from 20 to 35%.

Green building initiatives abound in both the public and private sector. City ordinances have already been implemented in Austin, Seattle, and San Francisco, while other cities and counties have strong programs in place.

Consideration:

- *By adopting a green building ordinance, Cook County would not only increase the value of its own buildings, but would establish itself as a leader in innovative approaches to fiscal savings amongst governing bodies.*

## **Recycling**

The Forest Preserve currently does not recycle at its own facilities. The County has made a minimal effort at recycling. The recycling ordinance now in the Environmental Committee would require all FPD and county-run facilities to achieve a waste diversion rate goal of 25%. This would reduce waste disposal costs by the same 25%.

Consideration:

- The County should pass both versions of the recycling ordinance currently in committee and implement a 25% diversion rate plan as quickly as possible.

## **DIVERSION**

In DuPage County, when a motorist is given a traffic ticket, rather than receiving a court date, the offender receives an instruction sheet that informs the offender of how to pay the fine. The offender must also submit an affidavit swearing that he/she is eligible for court supervision. When the offender submits payment, the clerk checks the offender's driving record on the computer to be sure they are eligible for supervision. If so, the violator is given a 90-day suspension period, without ever attending court. If not, a conviction is sent to the Secretary of State's Office and the offender is notified accordingly.

Within one year of the start of this diversion system, DuPage completely eliminated one of its five traffic courts. As a result, DuPage saved itself the cost of the rental space of that former courtroom, the salaries paid to staff that courtroom (bailiffs, court clerks, etc.) and the diversion program freed the time of one judge for more challenging assignments.

### Consideration:

- *We appreciate the efforts of the Chief Judge, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and the Chicago Police Department on this issue. However, the County Board should encourage these three departments to develop additional plans to divert more traffic cases from our busy courtrooms. DuPage achieved success with its program in less than one year. If started today, within a year from now, Cook could have fewer courtrooms, and more judges available to dispose of more serious cases in shorter time periods. In addition, the county would save costs of staffing and renting at least one courtroom in the Daley Center.*

## **VEHICLES**

The Cook County Board is regularly asked to approve vehicle purchases and leases for the Sheriff's Department. The necessity of new vehicle purchases has been difficult for the Board to assess due to conflicting inventory figures from the Sheriff's Department.

### Consideration:

- *The Sheriff's Department should conduct a thorough inventory of its current automobile fleets and determine its vehicle needs. The Board should then draft a comprehensive*

*plan for the regular purchase, lease and maintenance of vehicles, rather than submitting requests in a random fashion. The Board should approve the entire plan at one meeting. Additional purchase or lease requests outside the parameters of the plan should be accompanied by a thorough explanation of their necessity.*

## **HOSPITALS**

Cook County faces a tremendous growth in health care responsibilities as the new hospital is almost complete. However, we need to ensure that as we are addressing our health care services we do not focus on expansion without focusing on efficiently meeting community need.

### **West Side Medical District**

For example, a merger of the three west side medical empires -- Cook County Hospital, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Rush-St. Luke's Medical Center -- would be sound public policy for a variety of reasons. First, managed care has increased outpatient surgeries and competition for patients. Today, one of every three hospital beds remains empty. As a result, public/private partnerships are becoming more and more common.

Second, existing relationships among Cook County, the University of Illinois, and Rush-St. Luke would make the consolidation smooth and efficient. The County already has a Master Education Affiliation Agreement with Rush Medical School. The County and Rush have an existing agreement that allows Rush to provide highly technical services, such as transplant surgeries to Cook County patients. The County and Rush already jointly recruit specialized services where it is cost-effective. Additionally, in 1997, the County endorsed the University's new ambulatory building and helped protect the University's teaching programs by publicly denouncing the closing of the west side VA Hospital.

Third, the three institutions are located directly across the street from one another. It is cost-effective to merge duplicative health care services and share common expenses such as parking, purchasing, and maintenance. This joint provision of services would allow all three facilities to focus on providing quality healthcare and would free up more resources to enhance that focus.

Finally, the idea has previously been discussed. In 1993, the County, the University and Rush-St. Luke discussed establishing an affiliation or a consortium relationship. After discussion, a partial affiliation was consummated between Cook County and Rush.

The three institutions hired a hospital consultant, Lewin Group, to study the issue. The Board cannot presently make any determination on the issue, as the Lewin Group's report is still outstanding. Additionally, the Lewin Group's report may be of questionable value anyway, as the scope of their study is quite narrow and their reporting requirements are too restrictive. These limitations will likely hamper the Board's ability to make a meaningful assessment of the feasibility of this merger.

### **Provident Hospital**

Provident Hospital is another example. The hospital addresses a critical need in Chicago; the emergency room is consistently busy assisting the community. However, the general hospital beds are not always full. The average census rate for the hospital is 66%. While the need for surgical beds may be higher, this should come at a decrease of regularly staffed hospital beds.

#### Considerations:

- *The County should merge Cook County Hospital, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Rush-St. Luke's Medical Center. This is a necessity to maximize cost-efficiencies and enhance the overall quality of patient care for all insured and uninsured county residents.*
- *The County should assess the best role for Provident Hospital's facility aside from the obvious Emergency Room and community health care center. Perhaps we can better address community health care needs by encouraging residents to visit community clinics to treat medical conditions before they become more expensive medical emergencies.*

### **GRANTS**

Grants are a critical source of ongoing revenue for the County. However, Cook County lacks central coordination of grant applications and grant monies. Currently, individual departments apply for and receive grants. Due to the lack of coordinated authority, our departments may, in effect, compete against each other for the same grants and the county may have overlapping programs. Secondly, FY2001 indicates that 1052 employees are funded from grant programs.

While some departments, such as the President's Office maintain policies of not absorbing former grant employees, this is not consistent across all county offices.

Considerations:

- *Cook County should create a County grant coordinator position that will oversee applications and grant maintenance.*
- *The County should analyze the number of employees hired under temporary grant programs that were absorbed into other county agencies and the cost of this absorption.*
- *The County should create a county-wide policy stating that at the termination of grant funding, employees hired under the grant cannot be absorbed by the department. These employees can apply for previously advertised positions in the County.*

## **VIDEO BOND COURT**

The Chief Judge recently installed a video system at the criminal courts that allows defendants to remain in their own buildings for their bond hearings. This allows the sheriffs to reduce their staffing needs, because fewer sheriffs are needed to transport the defendants to these usually short, cursory proceedings. Currently, however, the video bond court is only saving the County minimal transportation costs because the system is only being used within 26<sup>th</sup> Street. The system currently saves the sheriffs the trouble of transporting the defendants up several flights of stairs within the criminal court building.

Consideration:

- *It costs much more to transport defendants between facilities, than it does to transport defendants from one room to another room in the same building. The Chief Judge should implement the video bond system at other sites so the county may save the cost of transporting the defendants between sites for their bond hearings.*

# REVENUE

## INVESTMENTS/INTEREST INCOME

The County Board should be provided with comprehensive reports detailing the interest earned on all funds and accounts. This report should include recommendations for enhancing revenue from these investments and funds. We need to maximize the pooling of all funds to leverage up our investment earnings potential. Currently some accounts earn as little as 2% interest. Many accounts transfer into larger funds on a monthly basis. Transferring daily would require improved cash flow estimates, but would increase interest earnings.

## WHEEL TAXES

Residents of unincorporated Cook County pay an annual wheel tax of \$25.00 for passenger vehicles. Since 1997, the wheel tax revenue has decreased 62% from \$1,123,608 to \$700,000 projected for FY2001. While a change in unincorporated land accounts for a portion of this drop, it is also a problem of compliance. In a three month period from July 1 -September 30 2000, 245 tickets were issued by the sheriff's department for lack of compliance. The Revenue Department could not provide exact figures but estimated that the compliance rate is approximately 60%.

### Considerations:

- *Increase the wheel tax. The maintenance of county roads is costly, especially in unincorporated areas. The city wheel tax is \$75 for the average passenger automobile.*
- *Increase compliance rate by increasing penalties for lack of sticker and delinquent purchases. Currently fines are determined by a judge and range from \$5-\$100.*
- *Offer mail-in payments for the wheel tax and for tickets.*

## SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

Currently the FPD offers a variety of activities including five toboggan slides, cross country skiing, three pools, eight 18-hole golf courses, two nine-hole golf courses, and three driving ranges.

Considerations:

- *The FPD could offer additional activities such as volleyball tournaments. Revenue could be generated through activity fees, equipment rental, and additional concessions.*

**CONCESSIONS**

The FY2001 budget anticipates \$362,106 in income from concessions. Revenue in this area is falling. The FY2000 budget predicted \$465,000 in revenue yet the current estimate is only reach \$344,705. The FPD currently contracts out the following concessions:

- 10 golf course food/pro shops
- 1 driving range
- 1 golf car rental contract
- 2 food/fishing concessions
- 3 food/pool concessions
- 2 winter sports food concessions
- 6 ice cream concessions

Considerations:

- *The FPD should create other concessions, while only considering those that would not despoil the Preserves.*
- *The FPD should actively encourage additional sports and sporting events in the Forest Preserves. Events such as volleyball tournaments, and would generate additional revenue through equipment rental and concessions.*

**FEE REVENUE--USAGE FEES**

**Golf:** The sport of golf is widely considered to be the fastest growing in popularity, especially amongst younger age groups. Cook County Golf Courses provide golfers the opportunity to play on well-managed, high quality courses for very affordable rates. Courses such as Indian Boundary, Chick Evans, Edgebrook, Burnham Woods, and others currently charge a standard weekday rate of \$16, and only \$11 with an activity card. The proposed increase for 2001 is only \$1, to \$17 and \$12 respectively.

Considerations:

- *While the fees to play on these public courses should be substantially lower than private courses, perhaps the County is undervaluing the service they provide. The County could increase the rates more significantly, and generate a substantial amount of revenue as a result. The rate increase could be non-applicable to seniors, thereby putting no monetary strain on the most tight-budgeted segment of the community.*
- *Furthermore, the FPD currently charges the same rates for residents as it does for non-residents. The Chicago Park District charges a higher green fee for non-residents, and this seems to be a valid levy for the County to impose as well.*

**Pools:** The FPD currently does not charge any fees for use of its pools.

Considerations:

- *The FPD should consider a small fee, or a onetime seasonal pass purchase to generate a new source of revenue from a service already provided.*
- *An effort should be made to increase marketing at revenue-generating facilities that operate below capacity.*
- *Let the Chicago Park District take control of facilities within the City. The marginal costs of the county operating a small number of pools or ice skating rinks within the City are high.*

## **SHIFTING OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **BOOT CAMP**

Presently, participants in the Cook County Sheriff's Boot Camp are inmates between the ages of 17 and 35 who have been sentenced to the camp after conviction or plea-bargaining.

There are currently three boot camps operated by the Illinois Department of Corrections that require similar qualifications for their prospective participants. The camps in Green County and DeCoyne hold capacities of 200 men each, while current occupancy is between 150 and 160 individuals. The camp in Dixon Springs is able to hold 234 participants, with 50 of those spaces reserved for women. Current occupancy there is at about 125, including 25 women. This means that there are currently at least 180 available beds in the State's three boot camps.



Consideration:

- *The boot camp program provides a constructive alternative to incarceration that is potentially beneficial to both the offender and the community. However, the County is paying for the reform of citizens who would otherwise go through the State's same program. Thus, the County could avert a significant cost of its own if it would allow these convicted individuals to go by way of the State's camps.*

## **APPELLATE DEFENDER**

Pursuant to statute, the State Appellate Defender's Office is obligated to handle criminal appeals in which the defendant is unable to afford private counsel. In every other county in Illinois, the State Appellate Defender's Office is automatically assigned to handle these appeals. However, here in Cook County, our Public Defender's Office also has the ability to handle criminal appeals. Several years ago, when the Appellate Defender's Office had a backlog, the Public Defender's Office agreed to handle more of the appeals to ease the burden on the Appellate Defender's Office. Today, out of habit, criminal court judges routinely continue to assign the majority of criminal appeals to our Public Defender's office. Now, because of this shift in assignments, it is our Public Defender's Office that has a significant appeals backlog.

Considerations:

- *The Chief Judge should discuss this matter with all criminal court judges and request that judges begin to assign a higher percentage of cases to the State Appellate Defender's Office that is statutorily obligated to handle these cases.*
- *Alternatively, the County should return the responsibility for criminal appeals back to the State Appellate Defender's Office altogether.*

## **SPECIAL PROSECUTIONS UNIT**

The Special Prosecutions Unit of the State's Attorney's Office handles unique criminal cases, such as arsons, organized crimes, gang crimes and various other prosecutions. The unit employs 52 attorneys and disposes of approximately 1,300 cases a year. Ordinary criminal courtrooms, that generally operate with an average of only three Assistant State's Attorneys are able to dispose of an average of approximately 1,200 cases a year.

Consideration:

- *From these figures, it appears that a number of the 52 attorneys employed by the Special Prosecutions Unit could be better utilized in other, busier assignments.*

### **III. ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS AND IDEAS COOK COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT**

#### **FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION**

The Brookfield Zoo and the Chicago Botanic Garden both have private fundraising boards that raise revenues from the private sector for various high-profile projects. The Brookfield Zoo Women's Board hosts an annual black-tie gala at the zoo that nets a minimum of \$450,000 a year. The Women's Board also holds a "Shopping Night" at a department store, with a portion of that evening's proceeds going to help fund a specific project at the zoo.

The Botanic Garden has a \$27 million endowment that is occasionally dipped into for capital costs. The \$1.7 million dollars in interest earned from the endowment's investments helps offset the garden's operating expenses. The garden held a 12-year-long endowment drive to reach the goal of \$27 million. It should be noted, however, that \$10 million was raised in 1999 alone, as the garden organized one final fundraising push to meet its goal.

Considerations:

- *The FPD should establish its own foundation to raise revenues from the private sector. The foundation could host an annual event, similar to the Zoo Gala, to fund the FPD's more popular programs, such as the Haunted Forests. The foundation could hold smaller-scale events also, to offset the costs of other ongoing services the FPD provides, such as the Nature Centers or the FPD's toboggan slides.*
- *As a long-term goal, the FPD should begin an endowment drive. Depending on the success of the drive, the interest from the endowment's investments alone could significantly increase the FPD's annual revenues.*

## **SPONSORSHIPS**

Our FPD Special Events division generates sporadic revenue from corporate sponsors. From time to time, the division also accepts food and resource contributions from sponsors to help reduce the costs of staging the district's special events. In contrast, the City of Chicago Special Events Department routinely recruits large corporate sponsors. For example, the City recently put on "Chicagoween," a series of Halloween celebrations around the city. The event was sponsored by the clothing and apparel company "Old Navy," who paid a total of \$50,000 for the right of sponsorship.

### Consideration:

- *The FPD Special Events must develop and implement a more comprehensive plan to market their events to potential sponsors, so that events such as "Haunted Forests" which has many visitors, particularly of younger ages, could generate larger streams of revenue.*
- *The FPD could attempt to solicit sponsorships from forestry product companies and Waste Management.*
- *Nationally, "Adopt a Highway" programs have been successful revenue generators. Locally, Brookfield Zoo raises approximately \$1 million through its "Shared Care" animal adoption program. The FPD could investigate allowing groups to "adopt" certain sections of the forest preserve.*

## **ADVERTISING**

The FPD has had success with the incorporation of advertising on the golf courses. Since last year, the FPD installed 180 new ball/club washers throughout FPD golf courses. These were provided through an advertising agreement that not only provided the ball/club washers at no cost, but will generate additional revenue.

### Considerations:

- *The FPD should consider cooperative advertising agreements in other areas such as golf carts.*
- *The FPD prints a wide variety of publications, as well as tickets to Forest Preserve events. The FPD should develop and implement a plan to sell advertising space on these publications.*

## **DONATIONS OF SURPLUS EQUIPMENT**

In addition to donations of cash and land, many non-profits accept donations from corporations of surplus equipment such as cars and office equipment. The non-profit can sell the asset, and the corporation obtains a tax write-off on something they already planned to discard.

### Consideration:

- *The FPD should investigate this kind of program if it currently does not already have one in place.*

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

The FPD runs a wide variety of educational programs for example, the nature center, the Youth Opportunity Corps, etc.

### Consideration:

- *The FPD could investigate whether there are courses that can be run primarily for profit, perhaps in partnership with the city, community colleges, school districts, or private educational opportunities.*

## **Forest Preserve Volunteer Accreditation**

Our 68,000 acres of Forest Preserve land are in need of not only maintenance, but clean-up and major restoration. The County has a valuable supply of volunteers with training and expertise in these areas. However, there have been instances where many volunteers arrive at the Forest Preserve for a day of restoration activities, only to have to return home when their FPD supervisor does not show up for work. Volunteer crew leaders could maximize the use of volunteers through expanded volunteer opportunities and could increase the quality of work through increased supervision.

### Considerations:

- *The FPD should consider taking measures to increase the number and quality of trained burn crews.*

- *The FPD should pursue the initiative, proposed long and discussed from time to time, to train volunteer crew leaders. The FPD could get a great amount of value from volunteers if certified crew leaders could supervise work. As a result, significant amounts of staff time could be saved.*

## IV. CONCLUSION

This memo serves as an example of ways in which our county can continue to cut costs and discover alternative revenue sources. This is increasingly important as we continue to rely on home-rule taxes, one-time revenue sources, and grants. We must remember the limitations of these revenue sources. Is our county going to continue to rely on one-time revenue sources? This reliance will lead to budgetary problems once the revenue source dissipates. The specter of a \$200 million budget shortfall from the reduction of Illinois's Medicaid funding reimbursements amplifies our need to be creative.

The long-term solution is comprehensive cost cutting, alternative methods of delivering services, privatization, and the exploration of alternative revenue sources other than taxes. While these options will certainly not be popular, the only alternative will be property tax increases or service reductions. The future of Cook County finances is in our hands as we set financial precedent for years to come.