

## Board of Directors

Steven H. Abbey  
David A. Abel  
A.G. Anglum\*  
Adrienne Archia\*  
Murray E. Ascher\*  
Brian A. Bernardoni  
Jeffrey Bethke  
Roger H. Bickel  
Scott A. Bremer  
Whitney Carlisle  
Victor Chang\*  
Timothy L. Christen  
Robert J. Christie  
Richard A. Ciccarone\*  
Jerry Cizek III\*  
Nancy J. Clawson  
Thomas Coomes  
Ronald S. Cope  
Omar Daghestani  
Mark R. Davis\*  
Nancy DeMaso  
Kevork M. Derderian\*  
Jon B. DeVries  
Charles R. Droege\*  
Michelle Dukler  
Jeff Emme  
Brian D. Fabes  
Stephen B. Friedman  
Charles R. Gardner\*  
John P. Garvey  
Anthony G. Gedeller  
Ronald J. Gidwitz  
Judith A. Gold\*  
Susan Hayes Gordon  
Andrew F. Gottschalk\*  
Paul D. Green  
Phillip Hale  
Albert C. Hanna  
Jason Horwitz  
Gregory C. Hosbein  
Margaret Houlihan Smith  
Lori H. Iglesias  
Mark Ishaug  
John A. Janicik\*  
James H. Kane  
William Ketchum  
Jim Kranjc\*  
Liam Krehbiel  
Kandace C. Lenti  
Thomas E. Livingston\*  
William D. Mack\*  
Christine Maki  
James G. Maurer  
Glenn Mazade  
Susan McKeever  
Thomas J. McNulty\*  
Bradley D. Mincke  
Timothy E. Moran  
Monica M. Mueller\*  
Brian Murphy  
Michael E. Murphy\*  
Bert Nuehring\*  
Michael F. O'Brien  
Holly O'Connor  
Gregory O'Leary\*  
Robert Pasin  
Donovan W. Pepper\*  
Samuel L. Persico  
Moira K. Pollard  
Sylvia Puente  
Amar Rajpurkar  
Tony Reinhart  
Aaron C. Rudberg  
Scott Saef\*  
Harry J. Seigle\*  
Brian Septon  
Stratford Shields  
Stephen R. Smith\*  
James E. Spiotto\*  
Daniel C. Sprehe  
Barbara L. Stewart\*  
Eugene S. Sunshine  
Courtney A. Thompson\*  
Jack Tierney  
Christopher Tobin  
Allen B. Truesdell  
Thomas C. Vanden Berk  
Robert S. Vihon  
Daniel Wagner  
Sue E. Wallace\*  
John F. Ward, Jr.\*  
John L. Ward  
Andrew L. Weil  
Jerrold Wolf  
Jill Wolowitz  
Corinne Wood  
Daniel T. Yunker

# The Civic Federation

10 North Dearborn Street, Suite 800, Chicago, IL 60602 • 312.201.9066 fax 312.201.9041 • civicfed.org

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2015

For more information, contact Laurence Msall at (312) 201-9044

### CIVIC FEDERATION SUPPORTS FY2016 FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY BUDGET

#### *Reasonable Plan for the Next Year, but Underfunded Pensions Remain a Concern*

(CHICAGO) In an analysis released today, the Civic Federation announced it supports the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's proposed FY2016 budget of \$190.3 million. The District proposes a reasonable, balanced budget without using fund balance reserves for operations while holding the District property tax levy relatively flat. The full 57-page analysis is available at [www.civicfed.org](http://www.civicfed.org).

"The Civic Federation is pleased to see the Forest Preserve District hold the line on general tax increases at a time when many other local governments have sought large revenue enhancements," said Laurence Msall, president of the Civic Federation.

"However, the respite for taxpayers will likely be short-lived as the District's severely underfunded pension fund will require an infusion of revenue, even if the proposed reform package contained in Illinois Senate Bill 843 is passed and survives court challenges."

In the budget document, the District states its intention to deliver a long-term plan to President Preckwinkle and District Commissioners as to how it will afford its pension obligations under SB 843. This is a praiseworthy objective, but the District should also produce a contingency plan for what it will do in the absence of pension reform in order to prevent the Forest Preserve District pension fund from becoming totally insolvent within the next 20 years under the current State-mandated funding plan. The pension plan's actuarial funded ratio has decreased to 60.2% in FY2014 from 86.9% in FY2005.

In a positive contrast to past budget years, in FY2016 the District will only tap excess Corporate Fund reserves to finance capital projects and for land acquisition, which are best-practice uses of such one-time revenue resources. Even after using \$8.2 million in fund balance, the District will retain a significant fund balance ratio well in excess of the GFOA-recommended level of two months' worth of expenditures or revenues. In addition, the budget does not contain any fee increases, and instead mostly relies on increased revenue from licenses, camping fees and permit revenue to cover increased personnel costs.

The Civic Federation's full analysis also continues the call for an independent and separate Board of Commissioners for the Forest Preserve District. The current board structure has the Cook County Commissioners governing both Cook County and the Forest Preserve District which results in an unavoidable conflict of interest between the County's mission and that of the Forest Preserve. In the past, this conflict has resulted in land use policy violations, poor oversight of District land holdings and inadequate transparency of District finances. On June 8, 2015, Moody's downgraded the District's general obligation debt to A2 from A1 and cited the current structure as one of its concerns.

*The Civic Federation is an independent, non-partisan government research organization that promotes efficient delivery of public services and sustainable tax policies in the Chicago region and State of Illinois. For more information, please visit the Federation's website at [www.civicfed.org](http://www.civicfed.org).*



## OFFICERS

Allan R. Ambrose  
*Chairman*  
Elizabeth G. Coolidge  
*Vice Chairman*  
Donovan W. Pepper  
*Vice Chairman*  
Kent A. Swanson  
*Vice Chairman*  
Patrick J. Hagan  
*Treasurer*  
Laurence J. Msall  
*President*  
Sarah J. Wetmore  
*Vice President*

\*Executive Committee  
\*Past Chairmen's Council