

**EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR THE
ROCK ISLAND COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE
DISTRICT**

**APPROVED BY THE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT'S
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
ON OCTOBER 17, 2023**



I. Purpose & Background

Purpose

The Rock Island County Forest Preserve District (“District”) formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on May 16, 2023 by Resolution, to study efficiencies and report recommendations regarding those efficiencies and increased accountability pursuant to 50 ILCS 70/1, *et seq.* (the “Committee”).

Background

In June of 2022 and subsequently amended in February of 2023, Public Act 102-1088 – titled Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency Act was signed into state law. The Act requires all units of local governmental within Illinois (excluding local municipalities, counties and school districts) to form a public committee to review efficiencies and accountability within their organization.

The Act requires the committee to consist of the local elected board members, executive officer or director, other officers of the governmental unit, and two residents who reside within the local agency’s jurisdiction. The two residents must be appointed by the president, with the advice and consent of the board of commissioners. The committee must meet a minimum of three times and the meetings are required to comply with the Open Meetings Act. The residents should take the OMA/FOIA training just like the board of commissioners as the committee is a public body.

The Act requires the committee to prepare and submit a report to be filed with Rock Island County. The report should include the District’s efforts as it relates to efficiencies and accountability efforts currently practicing and those efforts to increase efficiency and accountability. Currently, the Act requirement is that this procedure is to take place every 10 years. The report must be submitted to Rock Island County within 18 months after the formation of the committee. After the report is filed, the committee is dissolved for the next ten years.

II. Committee Membership

The Committee consisted of the following individuals:

- President of the Forest Preserve Commission Kai Swanson
- Commissioner Rich Morthland
- Commissioner Melissa Moreno-Baker
- Commissioner Larry Burns
- Commissioner Luis S. Moreno
- Commissioner Brian D. Vyncke
- Commissioner Porter McNeil
- Commissioner Carla Enburg
- Commissioner Drue Mielke
- Commissioner David Adams
- Commissioner Richard H. “Quijas” Brunk
- Commissioner Timothy A. Foster
- Commissioner Edna Sowards
- Commissioner Bob Perkins
- Commissioner Enyo Dewith
- Commissioner Rodney K. Simmer
- Commissioner Johnnie M. Woods
- Commissioner Chuck Layer
- Commissioner J. Robert Westpfahl
- Rock Island County Resident, Karen Dahlstrom
- Rock Island County Resident, Holly Sparkman
- Rock Island County Auditor (District Auditor), April Palmer

- Rock Island County Treasurer (District Treasurer), Nick Camlin
- Rock Island County Clerk (District Secretary), Karen Kinney
- District Director Jeffrey Craver

III. Committee Meetings

The Committee met as follows:

Meeting Date	Meeting Time and Place
July 18, 2023	5:30 PM Rock Island Police Dept. 1212 5 th Ave, Rock Island, IL 61201
Sept. 19, 2023	5:30 PM Rock Island Police Dept. 1212 5 th Ave, Rock Island, IL 61201
Oct. 17, 2023	5:30 PM Rock Island County Building 1504 3 rd Ave, Rock Island, IL 61201

Minutes of these meetings are available on the District's website or upon request at the District's administrative office located at Loud Thunder Forest Preserve, 19406 Loud Thunder Road, Illinois City, IL 61259.

IV. General Overview of Governing Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, Procedures, Powers, Jurisdiction

The District was established by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters of the District in 1942. All Illinois forest preserve districts other than Cook County, are governed by the Downstate Forest Preserve Act, 70 ILCS 805/0.001 *et seq.*

Having a separate and distinct taxing body whose sole mission to protect and preserve the flora, fauna, and scenic beauties within the district, and to restore, restock, protect and preserve the natural forest and such lands together with their flora and fauna, as nearly as may be, in their natural state and condition, for the purpose of education, pleasure and recreation of the public within the local community, which operates apart from general purpose governments, is extremely beneficial to the community for many reasons, as detailed further in this report.

- **Elected board of Commissioners.** The District is governed by a board of nineteen commissioners. Per 70 ILCS 805/3a when the boundaries of a district are coterminous with any county, city or village the corporate authorities of such county, city or village exercise the powers and privileges and perform the duties and function of the commissioners provided in the Downstate Forest Preserve Act. Commissioners must reside within the boundaries of the district and are elected as County Board Members in even-numbered years dependent on the county district term. Pursuant to the Downstate Forest Preserve Act, commissioners serve with little to no compensation and receive no benefits such as health insurance or retirement benefits. Per diems cannot be claimed if a per diems was claimed on the same day as county board business.
- **Accessible and focused representation.** Having a dedicated board to oversee these invaluable facilities, programs, and services provides the community with increased access to their elected representatives and allows those elected representatives to remain focused solely on those facilities, programs, and services. This is contrasted with general purpose governments where elected representatives are responsible for broad oversight on a wide range of issues. This special purpose benefit is particularly advantageous when it comes to fiduciary oversight.
- **Increased transparency.** Having a dedicated unit of local government to provide park and recreation type services with an emphasis on conservation and preservation of natural resources also improves the relationship between the district and its residents because of the transparency and openness related to the board and district operations. Having detailed agenda and action items allows taxpayers to be better informed about the inner workings of their local government. When individual units of government are responsible for providing specified services like forest preserve districts, transparency is increased because action items and budget

procedures are more detailed. Additionally, these items and budgetary decisions are subject to more scrutiny by locally elected officials than is the case with larger, multi-purpose governments with a multitude of departments.

- **Protection of revenues.** Because the District is its own body politic and corporate unit of local government, the revenues it generates can only be used for district purposes. This assurance is contrasted with general purpose governments like cities, villages, and counties that provide a multitude of services such as fire, police, public works, economic development, etc., where revenues that are generated specifically for parks and recreation services can be expended on the other services with limited, if any, input from voters. Example: the Rock Island County Forest Preserve District which owns and operates Niabi Zoo, the levy utilized to fund Niabi Zoo's operations can only be used for Niabi Zoo and all revenues generated at Niabi Zoo must remain within the fund for maintenance and operation thereof.
- **Protection of assets.** Public parks and other real property owned by the district is held in trust for the residents of the district, and, subject to very limited exceptions, can only be sold or transferred in very limited and strict procedures.
- **Providing the community more with Less.** The District does more with much fewer funding options. Unlike other units of local government that receive direct state funding, and income, sales, use, hotel/motel, motor fuel and other numerous taxes, the District's only tax revenues come from a modest portion of a resident's overall property tax bill. In fact, despite its limited funding options, the District share is only approximately +/- 1.5% of a resident's local property tax bill. In a typical fiscal year, the District operating budget relies on less than 50% in property taxes to operate. The remaining revenue sources come from mainly from fees for services and programs with personal property replacement taxes and hotel/motel taxes fulfilling the remaining. It should be noted that the hotel/motel taxes received is not a perpetual revenue source, current these funds are provided through an inter-governmental agreement which is to expire in 2028.
- **Plans & Planning Documents, Procedure & Policy.** As part of good governance and implementing best practices in the management of day-to-day operations, the District has also adopted the following planning documents, surveys, reports, policies, and procedures which can be found in the appendix of this report.

[Board Manual](#)

[Procedure Manual](#)

[Employment Manual](#)

[Comprehensive Park Plan 2018](#)

[Niabi Zoo Master Plan](#)

[Niabi Zoo Strategic Plan](#)

[Niabi Focus Group Analysis](#)

[Indian Bluff Golf Course Survey](#)

[Community Perception Survey 2012](#)

[District Public Perception Survey 2017](#)

[Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Audit](#)

[Access Audit 2012](#)

[Forest Management Plans for Loud Thunder, Illiniwek Forest Preserve and Dorrance Park](#)

V. List of Shared Services and Partnerships

The District works diligently to provide the best possible programs, services, and facilities to our community at the least possible cost. One of the many ways the District achieves this goal is by partnering with Rock Island County and at times other units of local government, the State, and many non-profit organizations. Below is a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the District's mission of delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to our community.

1. Other intergovernmental agreements or partnerships with units of local governments, special purpose districts, or colleges/universities

- Rock Island County Intergovernmental Agreement for professional services. Allows for utilization of Bi-State Regional Authority services such as joint purchasing program, grant writers and planning.
- Participation in Rock Island County's health insurance pool for employee health benefits.
- Illinois Parks Association Risk Services (IPARKS) for shared risk management pool with members throughout the State of Illinois.
- Rock Island County Soil & Water Conservation District for shared educational programming and expertise.
- Local Field Office of the US Fish & Wildlife Service for restoration expertise, habitat development and management, wildlife surveying, and grant funding partnerships.
- Black Hawk College-The Highway Construction Careers Training Program provides students to get job experience on projects that benefit the district and its users.
- Black Hawk College, East Campus-Educational space for field training and wildlife surveys.
- River Valley Library-Programming space.
- Riverdale Elementary-Staff provide educational sessions
- Western Illinois University Quad City Campus-WIU staff and students have provided research and internship opportunities.
- Alleman High School-Indian Bluff Golf Course is home to the school's golf team

2. Intergovernmental agreements or partnerships with the State of Illinois

- Illinois Department of Natural Resource-Office of Water Resources and District Foresters.
- Conservation Police-Assist staff with wildlife enforcement and general park policing.

3. Partnerships or agreements with athletic or similar affiliate organizations that operate sports or other leagues

- Upper Rock Island County Recreation Association-a very popular 501c3 in northern Rock Island County who provide athletic opportunities to youth at Dorrance Park.

4. Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits

- River Action
- Living Lands and Waters
- Friends of Off-Road Cycling
- River Cities Rotary
- Quad City Astronomy Club
- Civil Air Patrol
- Niabi Zoo Foundation
- Illinois Native Plant Society-Quad City Chapter
- African painted Dog Research Trust
- Snow Leopard Trust
- Ch'ooj Ajauil
- University of Dubuque
- Zoo Conservation Outreach Group

5. Partnerships with federal agencies

- US Fish & Wildlife Service Field Office
- Natural Resource Conservation Service Field Office

6. Informal cooperation with other units of local government which save taxpayer dollars

- Rock Island County-the District allows the Rock Island County Highway Department the use of District property for a salt shed and maintenance shed at Illiniwek Forest Preserve. At Indian Bluff Golf Course, the District allows Rock Island County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) property in which the EMA building is stationed and occasionally assists with equipment repairs through the use of the District's mechanic.

VI. Other Examples of Efficient Operations

Use of volunteers. One way in which the District reduces the burden on taxpayers is through the use of volunteers. Here are some examples in which such volunteerism was accounted for by District staff.

Dozens of volunteers are needed for the various special events and general operational needs assistance at Niabi Zoo. In 2022 these individuals totaled 5,641.87 of volunteer hours. These volunteer hours are broken down into the following categories.

Niabi Zoo's Junior Zoo Keepers volunteered 2,241.82 hours at Niabi Zoo. Junior Zookeeper volunteers receive training on topics such as conservation, interpretation & public speaking, and learn a wide range of information about animals and their habitats. They assist staff with zoo camps, animal event days, animal enrichment and assisting in animal areas such as guinea pigs and domestic animals. They also help maintain animal habitat viewing areas and the zoo grounds. All of the skills and experiences are helpful for future jobs and college applications.

Niabi Zoo provided 1,254.05 worth of internship hours.

Niabi Zoo had 2,146.67 hours of volunteering associated specifically with Niabi's Enrichment Supply & Task Center in which volunteer's provided enrichment to the animal collection at Niabi Zoo.

In addition, in 2022, Black Hawk College's Highway & Construction Career Training Program logged 432 student hours and 202 instructor hours while making improvements throughout the District.

Friends of Off-Road Cycling (FORC) maintains approximately 9 miles of trail at Illiniwek Forest Preserve and Dorrance Park. In 2022 FORC members volunteered over 150 hours providing trail maintenance.

Living Lands & Waters assists the District with technical support on prairie restorations at Amôwa & Illiniwek Forest Preserve, and Dorrance Park mainly with invasive species removal. In 2022 over 100 people provided 230 hours. Living Lands and Waters also sponsors an adopt-a-river mile and assists with an annual riverfront clean-up along the shoreline at Illiniwek Forest Preserve. This annual clean-up event brings approximately a dozen participants who log between 10-15 hours annually.

Youth & college student employment. The District actively seeks youth to employ as well as individuals in college who desire careers in similar operations to those of the District such as zoology, natural resource management, turf grass management and education. The District utilizes youth and college student employment as well as internships as an efficient way to deliver services. The youth, college student employment in addition to internships serve as a valuable training tool for the future workforce and job placement.

Joint purchasing. The District participates in the Bi-State joint purchasing cooperative pursuant to the Governmental Joint Purchasing Act (30 ILCS 525/0.01 *et seq.*) thereby saving taxpayer dollars through economies of scale.

Private Partnerships. The Niabi Zoo Foundation last year raised over \$300,000 in private donations and grants, which help alleviate the burden on taxpayers. The Foundation also supported the District by providing volunteers for the annual Pints for Preservation special event.

Collaboration with other forest preserve districts on best practices. Because forest preserve districts are not in competition with one another, they are more willing than the private sector to share best practices. These best practices help to avoid unnecessary costs and deliver services more effectively and efficiently. The District is active in the Illinois Association of Conservation Districts which hosts an annual conference that provides networking and training at exceptional value.

Reliance on Non-Tax Revenue. Unlike most local governments that rely on a wide range of sales, use, and income taxes, the District is not permitted to assess these types of taxes. Additionally, although the District is an economic engine for the community and generates revenue for the state and our community in the form of hotel/motel, sales, and motor fuel taxes, the District does not directly receive any of these revenues. Also, unlike Illinois cities, villages, counties, and school districts that received billions of dollars in direct financial assistance from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), our District did not receive any such direct federal aid. Our District also does not receive state funding under the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) or General State Aid (GSA) that these same cities, villages, counties, and school districts receive through the State budget.

Instead, the District provides all of the programs, facilities, and services to the community with a very modest amount of property taxes and from **non-tax sources** such as user fees primarily. Other sources of revenue in addition to user fees come from memberships, program registrations, local and occasionally state or local foundation grants and gifts from residents.

Fiscal Responsibility. The current bond ratings of the District;

S&P Global Ratings “A+” when last reviewed in September 2022

Moody’s issued an “A2” rating and while this was rating was last upgraded in 2021, it should be noted that Moody’s indicates the District’s rating is positively or negatively impacted by that of Rock Island County

Professional Associations

Staff belong to many Professional Associations to lead, learn and share about best practices in their related field or profession.

- Illinois Association of Park Districts
- Illinois Park & Recreation Association
- Illinois Association of Conservation and Forest Preserve Districts
- Illinois Association of Conservation Districts
- Northwest Illinois Golf Course Superintendents Association
- Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA)
- Zoological Association of America membership
- Zoological Registrars Association membership
- International Union for Conservation of Nature Otter Specialist Group Member
- International Union for Conservation of Nature Giant Otter Co-Chair
- Association of Zoo's & Aquariums Professional Associate Member
- Association of Zoo's & Aquariums Otter keeper Workshop/Giant Otter Instructor
- Zoological Association of America Professional Fellow Member
- Zoological Association of America Animal Welfare Committee
- Zoological Association of America Animal Management Program Committee
- Nutrition Advisory Group Member (Animal Nutrition)
- International Rhinoceros Foundation Member
- Bridgeway Employment Specialists Board Member
- Illinois Association of Zoological Parks
- ZCOG board member (Zoo Conservation Outreach Group)

VII. Transparency to the Community

The following information about the District may be obtained by citizens on the website at any time of their choosing or during business hours at Loud Thunder Park Office.

Documents

- Annual tax levy
- Annual budget and appropriation ordinance
- Agenda and minutes
- Annual audit
- Monthly Statement of Disbursements
- Conduct Ordinances
- Planning documents
- Strategic plans
- District Access Audit

The District offers residents many opportunities to provide feedback. These include:

- The board of commissioners meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month immediately after the conclusion of the Rock Island County Board meeting. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting. The public may also attend the Forest Preserve Executive Committee meeting which meets generally on the 2nd Tuesday of each month.
- The District, since 2012 has approximately every five years conducted a public perception survey that allows for public comment on the District's operations. The information provided collected is then interpreted and analyzed as a component for establishing District goals in its planning documents. The District also conducts public input meetings when updating its planning documents allowing for public input to the district facilities and services.
- The District's annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance is available in tentative form at least 30 days prior to its adoption at an open meeting of the District. Additionally, at least one public hearing is held prior to final action, and notice of the hearing is published in the newspaper at least 30 days prior to the hearing.

- The District’s annual property tax levy is approved at an open meeting of the District board in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The District follows all public notice and hearing requirements under the Truth in Taxation Law prior to the adoption of this annual tax levy. The District’s annual corporate levy and zoo fund levy is also subject to the limitations per the Downstate Forest Preserve Act and Forest Preserve Zoological Preserve Act.
- Residents may contact or request information from the District by phone at 309-795-1040 or email at jcraver@ricfpd.org

Community Representation

- Bi-State Regional Trails Committee
- Quad City Chambers
- Bi-Can (Bi-State Conservation Action Network)

Public Input

- Indian Bluff Golf Survey
- Zoo Focus Group Survey
- 2018 Public Perception Survey
- 2012 Community Perception Survey

VIII. District Awards and Recognition

The District's achievements whether through an accreditation process, award or certification have been recognized and other ways under-recognized in numerous ways. Every year the District's facilities are listed in the Locals Love Us or Quad Cities Times Best of the Quad Cities voting campaigns show favorably as finalists in categories such as Best Campgrounds, Family Entertainment, and Golf Course. District staff pursue certifications for their particular field or profession and have achieved awards or accreditation to demonstrate excellence and compliance with regulatory requirements and best practices such as;

- Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) award
- Zoological Association of America Accreditation
- Certified Park & Recreation Professional
- International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist
- Certified Playground Safety Inspector through the National Park and Recreation Association
- Certified Tourism Ambassador

VIII. Benefits and Services

The District serves the entire community from the youngest child to the oldest adult and all ages in between. It does so in a variety of ways.

1. Facilities

The District offered the following facilities to the community last year:

- Loud Thunder Forest Preserve, Illinois City
Natural areas, camping, horse arena, picnic shelters, Mississippi River boat access, Lake George boat access, boat rentals, natural surface trails, fishing access, deer archery program, playgrounds, rest areas
- Martin Conservation Area, Illinois City
Natural areas
- Illiniwek Forest Preserve, Hampton
Natural areas, camping, horse arena, picnic shelters, Mississippi River boat access, natural surface trails, fishing access, playgrounds, rest areas, sledding hill, programs
- Indian Bluff Golf Course & Preserve
Natural areas, picnic shelter, 18 hole golf course
- Niabi Zoo & Preserve
Natural areas, zoological park, on and off-site programming
- Dorrance Park, Port Byron
Natural areas, baseball fields, playground, natural surface trails
- Amôwa Forest Preserve, East Moline
Natural areas
- Great River Trail/Mississippi River Trail, unincorporated areas Hampton and the Rock Island County/Whiteside County line
Hard surface trail

2. Programs

The District offered the following programs last year. Registration numbers are also provided.

- Zoo daycamps-166 participants
- Zoo workshops-138 participants
- Zoo outreach programs such as virtual experiences or in-person or other presentations-1,597 participants
- Zoo tours-approximately 1100 participants
- Loud Thunder Archery Program-50 participants annually
- Loud Thunder Disabled Archery Program-10 participants annually
- Illiniwek Annual Tipi Gather-this event utilizes approximately 30 volunteers to play drums, dance, and educate several hundred attendees about native American life pre-European settlement-approximately 300 participants annually
- The Quad City Astronomy Club every year provides celestial viewing events at the various facilities of the District. These events draw approximately 100 people.

3. Additional Services & Benefits

The District provided the following additional services and benefits to the community. The core services provided by the District include two campgrounds, a golf course and zoo. Unfortunately, the District does not tally campers however a simple multiplier of 2 persons per reservation will be used. The numbers reflect those in calendar year 2022. Trail counters have been used to track a period of time however not any specific year's total usage. The District also provides picnic shelters and does not track the specific numbers associated with each reservation. Another very popular service is the Mississippi River boat launch areas at Illiniwek and Loud Thunder Forest Preserve. The District also has a boat launch area it maintains for those who want access to Lake George. The District does not track usage of these service at this time either and it would be a disservice to guess at the approximate usage.

Illiniwek Reservations 11,027 or approximately 22,054 daily campers

Loud Thunder Reservations 7,659 or approximately 15,318 daily campers

Indian Bluff Golf Course Rounds 25,109

Niabi Zoo Daily Attendance 113,844

Picnic Shelters 69 shelter reservations

While the District is a special purpose district, its impact to the community is multi-faceted and far reaching. For benefits of the District's parks, services, programming, and other opportunities improve the community's overall quality of life, use of the opportunities provide physical and mental health and other wellness benefits, thereby reducing stress and other mental and physical ailments. In many instances the District is an economic generator to business as individuals purchases of merchandise and goods used in recreation pursuits. Most importantly, the District's lands provide open space and trees filled with bio-diversity that help improve air and water quality, mitigate flooding and provide essential habitat throughout Rock Island County that allows for the preservation of wildlife in Rock Island County for future generations to access.

Besides the District's programs the district's facilities have hosted walks, runs and other various races over the years.

X. Recommendations for Increased Accountability and Efficiency

1. Intergovernmental Fees and Charges

One opportunity for efficiency would be the elimination of fees and charges assessed by other units of government. By way of example, below are amounts that other units of local government charge the District even though the District's taxpayers are also taxpayers of these other units of local government. Such fees and charges, and the bureaucracy that accompanies them, inhibit the district's ability to deliver programs, facilities, and services at the least possible cost.

Other units of local government should recognize that intergovernmental fees often lead to inefficiency in the expenditure of taxpayer dollars through extra bureaucracy and administrative costs. In many cases, the unit of government assessing the fee ultimately benefits from the project or event, meaning it can recoup its costs through the extra sales tax or other revenue that will be generated. Where such fees are absolutely necessary, general purpose units of government should offset the fee by crediting the district for all benefits they will receive from a project, event, or property. For example, open space that is protected and maintained by the District helps mitigate stormwater management costs, so assessing stormwater management fees on the District not only leads to inefficiency, but it is also shortsighted.

Governmental units should be discouraged or prohibited from charging more than their out-of-pocket costs associated with the activities covered by a fee that is assessed to another unit of local government with the same taxpayers. Put another way, one unit of local government should not profit by taxing another. Eliminating local permit fees is a way to reduce administrative costs without impacting overall public revenue. Local government best serves the people when it cooperates and works together. Some communities recognize this and do not charge fees to other units. All communities should be encouraged to follow that model to receive the best results for local taxpayers and to promote governmental efficiency.

2. Inefficiency of Other Governments

The District is also negatively impacted by the inefficiency of the state and other units of local government. The District is a small unit of government and relies on property taxes and fees to meet its operational needs. The District has a vast amount of land and infrastructure and due to the revenues received and earned going towards mainly operational needs it leaves little for large capital improvement updates and repairs. The lack of a state capital bill funding grant opportunities and funding the Illinois Department of Natural Resources with the appropriate staffing negatively impacts the District's ability to maintain and upgrade its infrastructure and to call on specific experts to address natural resource management issues.

3. Unfunded Mandates

Unfunded state mandates are another cost driver. While the District recognizes that there are benefits to some of these mandates, modifications could help alleviate some of the burden to the district.

a) Non-resident FOIA Requests. In some instances, the individuals/businesses submitting FOIA requests are from outside of the district boundaries and they appear to be serving a specific agenda, rather than assuring better local government.

Under current law, resident taxpayers end up footing the bill for these non-resident or commercial requests. In order to help alleviate the burden for these non-resident requests the law could be amended to: (1) add a requirement that non-residents identify/explain the purpose of the request for information; (2) add a time limit on how far back a non-resident can request information; (3) staff time and costs could be included in the amount that is reimbursable for non-resident and commercial requests; (4) move back the deadline for non-resident requests 10 business days so that the district does not have to delay services to its residents in order to comply with a non-resident request.

Sunshine laws are supposed to protect taxpayers by allowing them to shed light on any issue that is not exempt from FOIA. However, local government can be burdened by having to drop everything to rearrange priorities to meet FOIA deadlines, particularly if it has limited human resources or otherwise in the District's instance. Since local residents ultimately bear the expense of complying with FOIA, treating resident and non-resident requests differently would be justified.

b) Prevailing Wage. One way to reduce burden on local government staff is to limit the prevailing wage requirement to larger capital contracts. This would free up tracking of the paperwork on small repairs and projects. One reason for creating a threshold requirement is the cost of the administrative burden relative to the cost of the actual project. For example, eliminating prevailing wage on smaller projects, e.g., those less than \$50,000, will result in more local bids and decrease the overall cost for these smaller public works projects.

c) Newspaper Publication. The newspaper is no longer the most effective way to provide public notices. Websites are cheaper and have the ability to reach more people. Permitting the district to post the information on its website in lieu of newspaper publications would reduce costs.

d) Minimum Wage. The District facilities operate mainly on a summer seasonal basis and are not the type of jobs that could support oneself nor a family due to the limited number of hours the position provides. The increase in minimum wage has only increased the need for the District to rely on its property tax levies and fees.

4. Opportunities for Increased Transparency

As illustrated above, the District is very transparent in its operations. The following are opportunities for increased transparency:

- a) **Planning Documents.** Continue to review and periodically update planning documents. It is the general practice to review the District's Comprehensive Park Plan every 5 years by engaging the residents to determine needs and expectations.
- b) **Technology.** Software that allows residents to search vendors and payments.
- c) **Social Media.** Greater use in social media to inform and create awareness of the business matters of the District.

5. Opportunities for Savings such as Energy Efficiency Projects, Joint Purchasing or revenue opportunities.

- a) **Services Review.** Review District services such as shelter rentals. The District is a service, however the cost and number of those served is not proportional to other services provided throughout the District. The current shelters and support facilities are aging, have poor accessibility due to parking and other design flaws, manually intensive to maintain when comparing the to generation of revenue received. The District is not the sole provider of such services, which survey respondents have ranked low among desired services.
- b) **Volunteers & Partnerships.** Volunteers and partnerships are critical to the District's success, and therefore strategies to engage and support volunteerism and partnership should always be sought after and evaluated whenever the situations present themselves.
- c) **Energy Efficiency.** Through the budgeting process, staff evaluate cost efficiencies annually and one area that gets set aside quite frequently is alternative or renewable energy due to the initial capital cost or return on investment.
- d) **Technology Efficiency.** Review of a Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) to assist in maintenance operations and evaluate effectiveness and value of equipment. Review of payroll software, currently the District is in the process of budgeting for new software in next year's budget. The intent is to utilize a Tyler Technology software program that is a component piece and will easily interface with the existing financial software.

- e) **Sponsorships.** Develop a comprehensive sponsorship program for the district's facilities and programs.
- f) **Vendor Payment Services.** Contracting with a vendor to distribute payments for services and goods obtained by the District.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 21st day of November 2023.

Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission

Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission