



Lake County Forest Preserves

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DATE: August 6, 2026

TO: Gina Roberts, Chair
Finance Committee

Agenda Item # 11.2

FROM: Alex Ty Kovach
Executive Director

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend approval of a Resolution approving five-year Objectives for the Lake County Forest Preserve District's Strategic Plan (2026 - 2030).

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

FINANCIAL DATA: There is no financial impact.

BACKGROUND: In 2014, the District approved the 100-Year Vision for Lake County and a 25-Year Strategic Plan for the District. In 2015 and again in 2020, Five-year Strategic Plan Objectives were approved. These Strategic Plan Objectives identified near-term objectives and tactics to guide the District's work toward the 100-Year Vision.

In January 2026, the District engaged Partners in Capacity to develop and implement a process to develop new strategic plan objectives through 2030. The draft objectives were presented to the Board of Commissioners for review and discussion at the July 15, 2026 Committee of the Whole meeting. That feedback was incorporated into the final six strategic plan objectives and tactics, which are attached to the attached Resolution.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Chief Operations Officer, Director of Community Engagement & Partnerships, Director of Administration, Director of Finance, Manager of Board Operations, and Corporate Counsel.

STATE OF ILLINOIS)
) SS
COUNTY OF LAKE)

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
REGULAR AUGUST MEETING
AUGUST 12, 2026**

MADAM PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

Your **FINANCE COMMITTEE** presents herewith “a Resolution Approving Five-Year Objectives for the Lake County Forest Preserve District Strategic Plan (2026 through 2030)” and requests its approval.

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Date: 8-6-2026 ☐ Roll Call Vote: Ayes: _____ Nays: _____
 ☒ Voice Vote Majority Ayes; Nays: 0

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

**A RESOLUTION APPROVING FIVE-YEAR OBJECTIVES FOR THE
LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN
(2026 THROUGH 2030)**

WHEREAS, in July 2014, the Lake County Forest Preserve District (the "District") Board of Commissioners (the "Board") approved the District's "Strategic Plan," which includes the District's 100-Year Vision for Lake County and the District's 25-year Strategic Directions; and

WHEREAS, from time to time, the Board has approved five-year strategic objectives and tactics (collectively, "Strategic Objectives") to advance the District's Strategic Plan; and

WHEREAS, District Commissioners, staff, and outside organizations were surveyed and engaged in discussion regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that the District faces over the next five years; and

WHEREAS, County-wide resident surveys were conducted in 2025, 2022, and 2019 to understand the attitudes and interests regarding the District and those survey findings were incorporated into the development of updated Strategic Objectives; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners finds that it is in the best interest of the District and current and future Lake County residents to adopt and actively pursue the Objectives set forth in the attached document (the "Strategic Objectives Plan") through 2030 in furtherance of the District's Strategic Plan, including its 100-Year Vision for Lake County;

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 herein and made a part of this Resolution by this reference.

Section 2: Approval of the Strategic Objectives Plan. The Strategic Objectives Plan, in the form attached as Exhibit A, is hereby approved and adopted and the Executive Director is hereby authorized and directed to use the Strategic Objectives Plan to guide the work of District staff.

Section 3: Effective Date. This Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon its passage and approval as provided by law.

PASSED this ____ day of _____, 2026

AYES:

NAYS:

APPROVED this ____ day of _____, 2026

Jessica Vealitzek, President
Lake County Forest Preserve District

ATTEST:

Julie Gragnani, Secretary
Lake County Forest Preserve District

Exhibit No. _____

2026-2030 Strategic Objectives

25-Year Strategic Direction: Leadership

2026-2030 Strategic Objective: Align staffing capacity with system growth

How We'll Move Forward:

- A. Undergo a comprehensive evaluation of staffing needs across all departments.
- B. Inform and equip stakeholders with statistics and messaging related to the District's near- and long-term operating constraints and the need to land bank new acres such as the addition of former Route 53 land.
- C. Create a rubric to evaluate new proposals, projects, and partnerships through the lens of our mission, organizational capacity, and the strategic plan.

25-Year Strategic Direction: Leadership

2026-2030 Strategic Objective: Strengthen organizational alignment and culture

How We'll Move Forward:

- A. Deliver simple and consistent messages to Commissioners about strategic priorities.
- B. Integrate refreshed core values into training, communication, and performance expectations to strengthen organizational alignment and cross-functional collaboration.
- C. Pursue additional grant funding to strengthen internal and external communications.
- D. Rebuild/reevaluate employee recognition program using refreshed core values and employee input.
- E. Increase investment in safety initiatives to reduce the safety incident rate from 4.6 to the industry average for Government of 2.0.
- F. Establish a recurring employee survey process to assess organizational culture, communication effectiveness, and employee engagement.

25-Year Strategic Direction: Organizational Sustainability

2026-2030 Strategic Objective: Build sustainable revenue and financial capacity

How We'll Move Forward:

- A. Work collectively with Board of Commissioners and Lake County delegation to aggressively pursue legislative action to increase operating revenues.
- B. Complete \$20 million endowment campaign by 12/31/2027.
- C. Seek federal and state earmark funding for high priority projects.
- D. Seek grant funding for specific short-term, discretionary projects to support projects identified in the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan or in the annual operating budget.

25-Year Strategic Direction: Conservation

2026-2030 Strategic Objective: Prioritize operational sustainability and ecosystem-based planning as the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan moves forward, to ensure a healthy landscape

How We'll Move Forward:

- A. Develop and implement an organization-wide dashboard that tracks conservation and business performance metrics, and train all staff on the purpose, interpretation, and use of those metrics.
- B. Work with partners and funders to ensure the financial and operational sustainability of Lake County's first 10,000-acre complex, The Lake Plain Coastal Preserves.
- C. Improve the environmental sustainability of our business operations by reducing the direct emissions of carbon dioxide attributable to our energy use by 15% by 2030.
- D. Develop and secure Board approval for a plan and funding strategy to relocate District headquarters and the Dunn Museum to a destination location and achieve net-zero operations in the new facility.
- E. Eliminate single use plastics, where alternatives exist, from District operations by the end of 2027.
- F. Increase usage of natural and mechanical alternatives to chemical herbicide management and evaluate their effectiveness.

25-Year Strategic Direction: Public Access and Connections

2026-2030 Strategic Objective: Expand public access safely

How We'll Move Forward:

- A. Complete referendum-funded projects included in the approved 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan, ensuring public safety is prioritized throughout planning, design, construction, and operations.
- B. Offer programs and printed materials in Spanish to increase access to the Forest Preserves within existing resources.
- C. Seek sustainable funding for volunteer engagement and outreach in under-resourced communities.

25-Year Strategic Direction: Communication, Education and Outreach

2026-2030 Strategic Objective: Expand public engagement

How We'll Move Forward:

- A. Communicate the impact and progress of referendum-funded land acquisition, public access improvements, and habitat restoration, while helping stakeholders understand the need to land bank newly acquired acres in the near term.
- B. Explore grant funding for young adult engagement and workforce development, when conditions allow.