

Cook County Forest Preserve District Board
January 5, 2006

The meeting lasted only a little more than an hour. The audience was sparse.

There were four items on the **Finance Agenda:**

- two concerned transmission of subcommittee meeting reports to the Board;
- a third transmitted the January 5 disbursement sheet;
- and a fourth concerned the award to the low bidder of a contract for 10 drop-in tanks and water pumps (\$57,000.)

During consideration of the regular Board Agenda there was a fairly long discussion of a request for **authority to issue a #1.3 million bond** to the County to purchase capital items “pursuant to the 1997 Master Loan Agreement Ordinance.”

Comr. Anthony Peraica (R-16, Riverside) questioned an item submitting for approval with Sentinal Technologies, Inc. to provide technical support to the District based on its contract with the County. Comr. Peraica wanted to know **why this had not been put out to bid**, but Comr. John Daley (D-11, Chicago) said the idea was to go in with the County, which had already gone through the procedure involving issuance of requests for proposal.

As required by law, the **annual tax levy was put to a roll-call vote; it was approved** by 13 ayes, 3 nays, and one absent.)

The longest and most rancorous discussion was sparked by transmission of the 2005 employment diversity report. Comrs. Roberto Maldonado (D-8, Chicago) and Bobbie Steele (D-2, Chicago) took the lead in **deploring the FPD’s failure to hire enough minorities** to bring its work force into line with the County’s population . They noted especially the low numbers employed by Brookfield Zoo and the Botanic Garden.

In an effort to explain the problems involved, Pres. John Stroger (D-4, Chicago) noted that employees of the Zoo and Botanic Garden tend to stay in their jobs for a long time, and if their work is satisfactory they cannot be fired just to create an ethnic balance. He went on to say that, while **the Zoo and Garden receive money from the County, they are governed by independent organizations** and he has no control over them; in the FPD government proper, where he does have control, considerable progress in the hiring of minorities has been made. He also mentioned the long distance Hispanics must travel to get to the Garden, but Comr. Maldonado countered that many Hispanics make even longer commutes to the collar communities. (Comr. Maldonado later said he planned to introduce an ordinance that would force the FPD, the Zoo, and the Garden to increase minority hiring.)

The only **public speaker** was George Blakemore, who insisted with considerable passion that it was right to fire white workers at the Zoo and Garden and give their jobs to blacks,

who pay taxes and have a right to them. President Stroger repeated that he had no control over the Zoo and Garden, but Blakemore loudly contradicted him.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15.

Observed and reported by Daphne Daume.