



**HOW DO I REGISTER TO VOTE?**

Please go to [Champaign County Clerk - Register to Vote](#)

**HOW DO I VOTE?**

Election Day is November 3, 2020. See the Champaign County Clerk’s [website](#) for voter registration details and polling places.

**WHAT ARE THE FACILITIES OF THE CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT?**

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD) owns more than 4,000 acres in these six forest preserves: Homer Lake (Homer), Lake of the Woods (Mahomet), Middle Fork River Forest Preserve (Penfield), River Bend (Mahomet), Sangamon River (Fisher), and the Kickapoo Rail Trail (Urbana to Vermilion County line). Just added to the inventory but not yet opened is a new site acquired through grants and donations, Heron View Forest Preserve, located about mid-way between Lake of the Woods and Sangamon River preserves. In addition, the CCFPD owns and operates the Museum of the Grand Prairie and Homer Lake Interpretive Center, Lake of the Woods Golf Course, the Harry L Swartz Campground, and the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden.

**WHAT IS THE EXACT QUESTION THAT WILL APPEAR ON THE BALLOT?**

**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT – ONE YEAR LIMITING RATE INCREASE BALLOT QUESTION**

Shall the limiting rate under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law for the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, Champaign County, Illinois, be increased by an additional amount equal to 0.0160% above the limiting rate for levy year 2019 for forest preserve purposes and be equal to 0.1033% of the equalized assessed value of the taxable property therein for levy year 2020?

- (1) The approximate amount of taxes extendable at the most recently extended limiting rate is \$3,904,098, and the approximate amount of taxes extendable if the proposition is approved is \$4,619,626.
- (2) For the 2020 levy year the approximate amount of the additional tax extendable against property containing a single family residence and having a fair market value at the time of the referendum of \$100,000 is estimated to be \$5.33.
- (3) If the proposition is approved, the aggregate extension for 2020 will be determined by the limiting rate set forth in the proposition, rather than the otherwise applicable limiting rate calculated under the provisions of the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (commonly known as the Property Tax Cap Law).

**HOW MUCH WILL THIS REFERENDUM RAISE FOR THE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT?**

If approved, the referendum will increase the Champaign County Forest Preserve District’s annual revenue by about \$689,000. This amount will fluctuate annually depending on changes in the value of homes, the amount of new construction added to the tax rolls, and increases or decreases in the cost of living.

**HOW WILL THE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT USE THE FUNDS THAT ARE RAISED?**

If the ballot initiative is approved by voters, the funds would allow the Champaign County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD) to continue to carry out its conservation, education, and outdoor recreation mission. Funds are needed to maintain the lands and facilities owned by the District at its six preserves – Homer Lake, Lake of the Woods, Middle Fork River, River Bend, Sangamon River, and the Kickapoo Rail Trail. The CCFPD has a backlog of capital projects totaling more than \$4 million. Projects that would be addressed over the next five years include, but are not limited to, restoration and beach improvements at Willow Pond (Middle Fork River), covered bridge roof replacement (Lake of the Woods), spillway repairs (Lake of the Woods), dam repairs (Homer Lake), nature center improvements (Homer Lake), paved bike path repairs (Lake of the Woods), trail improvements (River Bend), upgrades to various restroom facilities and playgrounds, and the replacement of equipment that is long past its life expectancy. It would also allow the CCFPD to address staff shortages that affect natural area restoration, preserve operations, and delivery of educational programming.

**WHY IS THE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT ASKING RESIDENTS FOR THIS REFERENDUM?**

We are seeking these funds to protect the forest preserve assets that belong to and are enjoyed by the residents of Champaign County. CCFPD's tax rate, one of the very lowest in the county at less than 1% of total taxes collected, has remained substantially unchanged over the last forty years. Our buildings, shelters, roads, dams, and bridges are aging and we cannot address our current restoration and maintenance needs on a 1980 budget.

The CCFPD has been an excellent steward of the property taxes allotted to it by the citizens of Champaign County. The CCFPD has been recognized with back-to-back excellence in auditing awards by the Government Finance Officers Association. We would not be asking for this increase if it was not absolutely necessary to sustain operations.

**WOULD MY TAXES GO UP?**

If passed, the owner of a home with a market value of \$100,000 would see an increase of approximately \$5.33 per year, which is equivalent to roughly \$0.45 (45 cents) a month.

- Home value: \$150,000, approximate increase: \$8.00/year or \$0.66 (66 cents)/month.
- Home value: \$200,000, approximate increase: \$10.66/year or \$0.90 (90 cents)/month.

For an agriculture comparison, an 80-acre parcel with very good soil productivity would see an \$8.30 annual increase, on average.

If the referendum is successful, this would apply to your 2020 taxes, which you pay in 2021.

**WHAT PERCENTAGE OF MY PROPERTY TAX BILL GOES TO THE CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT?**

Less than 1% of your annual tax payment goes towards the CCFPD. Depending on where you live in Champaign County, it may be the smallest tax levied on your bill. See the breakdown in the graph at the end of this page.

**HOW DID THIS BACKLOG OF MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR NEEDS DEVELOP?**

Just prior to the implementation of tax caps in 1996, most taxing bodies took advantage of a one-time opportunity to increase their levy. In an effort to be fiscally frugal, the CCFPD chose not to do so. As such, the CCFPD has an annual capital budget of approximately \$240,000 annually, which has long been

insufficient to address its needs. Costly repairs or replacement of buildings and infrastructure must be deferred if grants and donations cannot be found to address them.

### **HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE AND BUILD THE KICKAPOO RAIL TRAIL AND REBUILD THE POND AND WATERFALL AT LAKE OF THE WOODS ON THIS SMALL CAPITAL BUDGET?**

We have been fortunate to identify grants or private donations for some of the projects we've accomplished lately. The two mentioned here were funded in this way. But projects like spillway, dam, and road repairs; furnace and roof replacements; and lake restoration projects are not eligible for grants and their costs far exceed what our Friends Foundation is able to raise through private donations.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF THE REFERENDUM DOESN'T PASS?**

Deterioration of some facilities and infrastructure will continue because the capital budget is inadequate to address more than a few projects each year. With deferred maintenance comes increasing replacement costs, which means that some projects may never be addressed and those facilities may need to be shut down. Willow Pond at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve is one example of a facility in need of complete restoration. Water loss and the resulting poor water quality cause us to have to shut down the pond several times each summer. Closures like these will continue if funds are not available to adequately address failing infrastructure and facility needs.

Services, events, or programs will also have to be cut, and facility and user fees increased. If the referendum is unsuccessful in 2020, it is likely to be on the ballot again in two years.

### **CAN THE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT GET ANY GRANTS TO HELP OFFSET THE COST AND ASK LESS OF TAXPAYERS?**

The CCFPD actively pursues grant funding and private donations. The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that was established in 1978 to raise funds in support of the mission of the CCFPD. The Friends Foundation will continue to actively pursue grants and funding support. As noted above, much of the work needed today is not eligible for grants and exceeds what private donors are able to cover. It is also important to note that many grants require a 20% to 50% local match. Funds raised through this referendum, if successful, could be used as match to leverage additional grant dollars.

### **WILL THERE BE PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS?**

The CCFPD does intend to hold informational meetings this fall. The details are still being worked out to provide a safe way to meet during the current public health crisis. As soon as dates, times, and locations are determined, we will make that information available to the public.

In addition, the public is always welcome to attend the monthly meetings of the Board of Commissioners that are held on the third Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm, at the Museum of the Grand Prairie in Mahomet. Please check the website for location changes as the current COVID-19 situation may require that we move the meeting to a larger venue.

### **MORE QUESTIONS?**

Please contact us at [hq@ccfpd.org](mailto:hq@ccfpd.org) or call Mary Ellen Wuellner, Champaign County Forest Preserve District Executive Director at (217) 586-3360 and we'd be happy to answer any other questions you have. Your additional questions will help us continue to develop our FAQ page and help your household make an informed decision this November!

