

Glen Ellyn News

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Yes votes urged on park, forest measures

Glen Ellyn Park District

Shall bonds or notes of the Glen Ellyn Park District, DuPage County, Illinois, to the amount of Eleven Million Nine Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$11,900,000) be issued for the purpose of the payment of land purchased for parks or boulevards, for the building, maintaining, improving and protecting of parks and facilities of said Park District and for the payment of the expenses incident thereto?

With a restructured plan and a little less money in mind, the Glen Ellyn Park District will return to voters for the ability to issue nearly \$12 million bonds for improvements to district facilities and the construction of a multipurpose facility at Ackerman Park.

It was just March that park officials approached voters for a similar amount of money; that referendum measure was soundly rejected by voters. But eight months later there is one major difference in their plans.

Officials have scrapped plans to tear down the Main Street Recreation Center and now plan a \$2 million renovation that will include a new roof, windows and bathrooms. The building's exterior will be preserved.

That appears to be enough for local preservations who earlier this year actively campaigned against the March measure because of the teardown plans. This latest plan has met with approval from Citizens for Glen Ellyn Preservation.

It's also enough for us, and we urge another yes vote for the Park District's referendum measure.

The bulk of the district's plan is the \$7.4 million facility at Ackerman Park. The facility will include three basketball courts, a three-lane walking track, locker rooms, a meeting area and a multipurpose athletics area. Park officials have said they are sorely in need for more space, and residents have come to expect a level of service from the district that the Ackerman Park facility would provide.

What's more, as with the last referendum measure, the approval of the bonds would not cause taxes to increase; however, if voters reject it, taxpayers would see a \$23.31 drop per \$100,000 in equalized assessed valuation on the district's portion of their

annual tax bill.

Park officials saw the error of their March referendum question and have fixed it. By admitting their mistake, they have earned the trust voters need to approve the additional funds.

DuPage County Forest Preserve District

Shall the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, Illinois, borrow money and issue general obligation bonds in the amount of \$68,000,000 to acquire natural areas and other land; improve, preserve and restore forests, wetlands and prairies, including natural areas and wildlife habitats; and construct and improve trails, recreational areas and other facilities, all in accordance with the Downstate Forest Preserve District Act of the State of Illinois, as amended?

Once again the DuPage County Forest Preserve Board is approaching voters for money to secure more open space in rapidly developing areas of the county.

The district's Board of Commissioners unanimously voted Aug. 15 to ask voters to approve the issuance of \$68 million in general obligation bonds. If the measure is approved, taxpayers could see an additional \$3.57 per \$100,000 of their property's equalized assessed valuation on their annual tax bill.

The money would be used to preserve up to 600 acres in the county as green space. The district holds about 25,000 acres.

We urge a yes vote on this measure.

Undeveloped county acreage dropped from about 26,300 in 1995 to about 12,500 in 2003. At the rate land is being developed, acreage will soon be in very short supply, and the time to act is now before developers buy what is left of pristine land.

DuPage County remains one of the most desirable places to live in the entire country, and the Forest Board's dedication to preserving open space has to be in no small measure a contributing factor to that ideal.

However, careful steps must be taken to avoid the temptation to buy up undeveloped land that may later turn out to be of little use the Forest Preserve District.