



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD earns praise at hearing for fiscally responsible 2019 budget

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Board of Commissioners adopted final amendments to the organization's fiscal year 2019 budget on Dec. 20, and the budget garnered strong support during public hearings.



The Civic Federation, a government research organization working to maximize the quality and cost-effectiveness of local government services, expressed its support for the MWRD's 2019 budget in a new report. The Civic Federation commended the MWRD for developing a strong capital improvement plan and five-year financial forecast. The report also lauded the MWRD for maintaining high general operating reserves; using working cash funds rather than short-term borrowing when awaiting property tax revenue; and holding study sessions on the budget and capital improvement plan. The MWRD's 2019 budget is \$1.2 billion.

"The MWRD remains a leader in adhering to prudent financial practices," said Civic Federation President Laurence Msall. "The Federation hopes the MWRD will continue to strive for maximum transparency moving forward."

The Civic Federation report credits the MWRD for taking a proactive approach to contribute toward its retirement fund and stay on track to eventually reach 100 percent funding. The MWRD has accomplished this by contributing above the actuarially determined contribution amount since 2013. This increased funding from both the MWRD and its employees has reversed a



President Mariyana Spyropoulos signs the MWRD's 2019 Budget documents.

downward financial trajectory, leading to more sustainable pension benefits for future generations of MWRD retirees.

"We can not provide essential services, address new stormwater challenges or invest in emerging technologies without being on sound financial footing," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "We have gained support for our budget by reducing energy costs, strengthening our long-term retirement reserves, promoting a favorable labor environment, discovering new revenue streams through resource recovery, and leasing of MWRD property."

The MWRD continues to maintain a AAA bond rating from Fitch Ratings and a AA+ bond rating from Standard & Poor's. The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada also awarded the MWRD with the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 34th consecutive year.

"We thank the Civic Federation for their support of our 2019 budget and we will continue to review additional analysis to strengthen our financial (*continued*)

MWRD earns praise at hearing for fiscally responsible 2019 budget *(cont.)*

standing going forward,” said MWRD Chairman of Finance Frank Avila. “We are proud to maintain a fiscally responsible budget and carry on a history of financial stewardship to benefit taxpayers.”

To bolster infrastructure, protect the regional water environment, address flooding concerns and support the local economy, the MWRD presents a five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) expenditures of \$923.5 million for 2019 through 2023. The largest category of capital spending in the CIP, 46.2 percent, or \$426.9 million, will be earmarked for stormwater management. The MWRD plans to increase its Stormwater Management Fund levy over the next five years as the MWRD continues to address flooding issues throughout Cook County. The 2019 budget calls for dozens of stormwater projects, partnering with local governments to fund cost-shared projects that include larger shovel-ready stormwater management projects and local green infrastructure projects that employ natural devices to soak up excess water. In addition, the MWRD is progressing on the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan by continuing construction on Stage 2 of the McCook Reservoir to hold another 6.5 billion gallons of water to mitigate flooding and protect area waterways from pollution.

“The 2019 budget incorporates our goals to recover resources and transform water in keeping with the priorities of our taxpayers and protection of our environment,”



Laurence Msall, president of the Civic Federation, delivered remarks at the MWRD's December 6 public hearing on the fiscal year 2019 budget. In a detailed analysis, the Civic Federation expressed support for the MWRD's budget.

said MWRD Commissioner Kari K. Steele, who presided over the public hearing on December 6 as chairman of the MWRD Committee on Budget and Employment. “We are committed to providing excellent service expected of the MWRD at a fair and reasonable cost to our taxpayers, and our strong reserves, stable finances and sustainable initiatives highlighted in this budget will allow us to meet those high standards.”

To learn more about the MWRD's 2019 budget, visit www.mwrld.org and to read the Civic Federation analy-

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrld.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.