



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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Support of MWRD's 2018 budget received at public hearing

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) received strong support for its fiscal year 2018 budget during recent public hearings before the MWRD Board of Commissioners.

The \$1.1 billion budget garnered support from the independent, non-partisan Civic Federation which based its opinion on the MWRD's ability to control spending; prepare for unforeseen expenses; restore its pension fund; address worker safety training programs, and encourage public participation in the budget process.

The Civic Federation, a government research organization working to maximize the quality and cost-effectiveness of local government services, outlined support for the MWRD "because it continues to control operating expenses and maintains financial safeguards, including substantial reserves, to cover shortfalls or financial emergencies."

Civic Federation President Laurence Msall said, "The MWRD's continued fiscal prudence and budgetary transparency initiatives demonstrate best practices for Illinois governments. By making strategic investments today and inviting the public into the process, the MWRD is laying the groundwork for strong financial health in the long-term."

The MWRD is keeping its Corporate Fund spending flat at \$366.6 million, maintaining a high level of reserves, and reducing workers compensation claims. MWRD's Bond Redemption and Interest Fund includes a prepayment of \$28.4 million on several State Revolving Fund loans that will result in \$9.6 million in interest savings.

"Our fiscal year 2018 budget provides future flexibility due to current financial stability for operating expenses, strong credit ratings and a solid funding plan for retiree pensions and benefits," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "Our attention to the bottom line and pension reform have made the MWRD a model agency for fiscal responsibility, and this support validates our responsible stewardship of taxpayer funds." The MWRD received credit from the Civic Federation for



addressing its pension fund and retiree health care trust fund. Addressing these unfunded liabilities responsibly will pay large dividends to Cook County taxpayers. Funding these programs ensure retirees will receive what was promised and ensure affordable health care throughout their life while taking the burden off of the back of taxpayers.

"Our responsive pension reforms have reversed funding trends in our favor and led to improved financial security for generations to come," said MWRD Chairman of Finance Frank Avila. "Thanks to this secure accounting and financing, we will continue to provide reliable service to more than 10 million people who rely on clean water every day in Cook County." (continued)

Support of MWRD's 2018 budget received at public hearing *(continued)*

Meanwhile, the MWRD continues to provide considerable service at lower costs than its counterparts across the country. The average annual single family residential charge for sewer services (used water collection and treatment) in 2016 was \$330.66 for a home with an average value of \$290,802 within the MWRD's service area. By contrast, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies reports that the *(continued)* average amount a single family residence pays for sewer services nationwide is \$479 per year. The MWRD also maintains bond ratings of AAA with Fitch Ratings and AA+ from Standard & Poor's.

"It is satisfying to produce a comprehensive 2018 balanced budget that receives support from the public and taxpayers we serve, as well as from the Civic Federation," said MWRD Commissioner Kari K. Steele, who presided over the public hearing as chairman of the MWRD Committee on Budget and Employment. "Having this sound financial footing allows us to remain true to our core mission of protecting our water environment and the health of the residents of Cook County."

In keeping with that mission, the MWRD recently unveiled Stage I of the McCook Reservoir to hold 3.5 billion gallons of water, part of the agency's celebrated Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) to mitigate flooding and protect area waterways from pollution. In 2018, the MWRD will continue progressing on the final portion of the reservoir which will eventually hold an additional 6.5 billion gallons of water. The 2018 budget also calls for dozens of stormwater projects, partnering with local governments to fund cost-shared



Sarah Wetmore, vice president and research director for the Civic Federation, delivered remarks at the MWRD's public hearing on the fiscal year 2018 budget. In a detailed analysis, the Civic Federation expressed support for the MWRD's budget.

local green infrastructure projects to soak up excess water. An environmental leader, the MWRD will continue to advance its ambitious resource recovery program in 2018, collecting and reusing valuable resources like energy, compost, clean water, phosphorus and other nutrients to protect the environment and provide a sustainable return to taxpayers.

To learn more about the MWRD's 2018 budget, visit www.mwrld.org and to read the Civic Federation analysis, see the full report [here](#) or visit www.civicfed.org.

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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 used water treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.