

## Don't sell to Rosemont, forest officials urged

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Conservationists, environmentalists and parents hoping to protect open space for future generations pleaded Tuesday for the Cook County Forest Preserve Board to scrap the sale of 2.4 acres to the village of Rosemont.

"Selling forest preserve land stinks," said John Sheerin, an Oak Lawn resident and member of Friends of the Forest Preserve. "The easiest thing to do is just sell the land to the wealthy, powerful mayor of Rosemont."

He was among 13 speakers who extolled the virtues of the 2.4-acre site along the Des Plaines River as part of Chicago's green belt legacy giving refuge to wildlife and flood relief from rain and melting snow.

"We shouldn't have to come before you like Realtors selling the merits of this land," said Judy Pollock, a mother of two children who teaches in Chicago schools and represents the Bird Conservation Network.

These critical comments came after the forest preserve board sent the proposed Rosemont sale to its Real Estate Committee, which will vote on the deal Tuesday. The final decision lies with the full board.

Rosemont Mayor Donald Stephens has long coveted the site to expand his village's convention center, but the deal had been steadfastly opposed by the forest preserve board's Citizen Advisory Committee. Two weeks ago, the committee suddenly decided to support the \$ 2.9 million deal, but only if it provides enough money so the forest preserve can buy 31 acres in the Palos area from a home builder to link Tampier Lake and McGinnis Slough.

"You may acquire land, but you may not sell, lease or swap any land. Do not betray this trust," said Mary Lou Quinn of Chicago's Edgebrook neighborhood, an opponent of many forest preserve restoration efforts.

Orland Park Mayor Dan McLaughlin was the only one supporting the sale. Selling 2.4 acres to buy 31 acres "is not a bad precedent," he said.

Opponents argued that the forest preserve district has \$ 10 million in

land acquisition funds, plenty of money to buy the 31-acre Palos site, estimated to cost \$ 2 million, without selling any land to Rosemont.

"These lands were set aside for our families . . . not until a future county board found a better deal," said Jack Darin of the Sierra Club. "You shouldn't have to sell preserves to buy new ones," he said.

Joseph Nevius, the forest preserve superintendent, said he supports selling the land to Rosemont so he can buy the Palos site without tapping his remaining land acquisition money. About half of that is earmarked for an adjacent 30-acre parcel in the Palos area, and the rest to "leverage" state and federal grants, Nevius said.