

Preckwinkle meets west suburban leaders



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Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle addresses west suburban leaders at 24 meeting of the West Central Municipal Conference. | Mark Lawton

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Sept. 29 3:19 p.m.

Revenue sharing, annexing unincorporated areas and health care were among topics discussed by Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle at a meeting of western leaders.

Preckwinkle spoke to a few dozen village presidents and mayors at a meeting of the West Central Municipal Conference in Brookfield.

Mayor Christopher Getty of Lyons questioned a 22-cent a ton inspection fee on stations approved by the county that exempts Chicago and the northern suburbs.

“Money collected is only spent on the areas where the taxes are collected,” Preckwinkle said in response to state requirements. It helps prevent improper disposal and recycling of toxic materials, environmental events and recycling.”

When Preckwinkle lauded how 114,000 people in Cook County recently got health care for the first time, Franklin Park Village President Barrett Pedersen asked if there would be an overall cost of insurance for everybody because those newly insured would need emergency rooms for treatment.

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“Emergency room care is very expensive,” Preckwinkle said. “They start with the most radical idea of what is wrong with you. Primary care physicians charge modestly. If people get good primary care it’s less likely they’ll end up in the emergency room.”

However, she added many of the people getting health care for the first time have serious conditions.

Robert Cole, assistant village manager in Oak Park, asked about a campaign called Transit Futures, which seeks to improve and build new mass transit throughout the region. The campaign wants the Cook County Board to create a “new revenue stream,” presumably a new tax or tax increase.

“We’re focusing on the pension crisis,” Preckwinkle said. “After that, I’m perfectly willing to talk about Transit Futures.”

Preckwinkle also discussed annexation, noting it’s expensive to supply county services such as police protection and building and zoning in unincorporated areas, which house about 100,000 people out of the 5.2 million in the county.

“Government is more effective the more local it is,” Preckwinkle said. “We’re only talking to people who want to do this and we’re to help pay.”

McCook Mayor and County Commissioner Jeff Tobolski asked about Community Development Block Grant funds.

“We know it declines every year,” Tobolski said.

Preckwinkle said the money goes from the federal government to the county to the local municipalities. Over the years, the amount of money from the federal government has decreased, leaving the county less money to share.

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