

## NIABI ZOO OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES FROM JULY 25, 2016

**PRESENT:** Committee members . J. Taylor, J. Craver, T. Brahm, T. Jarrett, L. Jackson, M. Byrne, W. Nelson.

**ABSENT:**

**ALSO PRESENT:** Dewayne Cremeens, District two Commissioner; John Ferrell, Zoological Society President (via phone); Scott Lohman.

Chairman Taylor called the meeting of the Niabi Zoo Oversight Committee to order at 5:31 PM on Monday, August 8, 2016, in the Education Room of the Administration Building at Niabi Zoo in Coal Valley, Illinois.

Roll was called:

T. Brahm, J. Craver, L. Jackson, T. Jarrett, J. Taylor, W. Nelson. (M. Byrne arrived 5:35pm after roll was called.)

**Total Present        7**

**Total Absent        0**

Chairman Taylor called for a motion to approve the consent agenda items.

**MOTION:** Mr. Nelson moved to approve the consent agenda items. Mr. Brahm seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Chairman Taylor called for a motion approving the minutes from the July 25, 2016 1:30pm meeting.

**MOTION:** Mr. Jarrett moved to approve the minutes from the July 25, 2016 1:30pm meeting. Mr. Brahm seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Chairman Taylor called for a motion approving the minutes from the July 25, 2016 5:30pm meeting.

**MOTION:** Mr. Jarrett moved to approve the minutes from the July 25, 2016 5:30pm meeting. Mr. Nelson seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Chairman Taylor called for discussion on the latest visit and information from Mr. Biddle and Ms. Grace.

Mr. Craver stated that this Committee should request that the Forest Preserve Committee ask for a written opinion from the State's Attorney's Office Civil Division on the legalities of entering into a Public/Private Partnership.

Mr. Nelson felt that would be a good idea. It will likely save some time if it is known which responsibilities can and cannot be handed over to a managing entity.

Chairman Taylor called for a motion to recommend that the Forest Preserve Committee request a written legal opinion from the State's Attorney's Office Civil Division regarding Niabi Zoo entering into a PPP.

**MOTION:** Mr. Nelson moved to recommend that the Forest Preserve Committee request a written legal opinion from the State's Attorney's Office Civil Division regarding Niabi Zoo entering into a PPP. Mr. Brahm seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Mr. Byrne entered the meeting at 5:35pm.

Mr. Brahm asked how long it would take to get the written opinion from the Civil Division.

Mr. Craver estimated three months, and added that the opinion would help the Oversight Committee narrow down the options for the agreement.

At 5:38pm Mr. John Ferrell entered the meeting via phone.

Chairman Taylor called on Mr. Ferrell for an update from the Society.

Mr. Ferrell stated that there were two updates. First that Pints for Preservation now had a total of five sponsored food vendors, and the last ticket count I heard was ninety-nine. The second is more of a clarification on funding requests. I wasn't sure what exactly the protocol is on requesting money from the Society. Mr. Jackson has made some requests, but we want to fund things correctly.

Chairman Taylor asked if there was a specific protocol in mind. Mr. Jackson could bring any funding requests to the Oversight Committee, and the Committee could pass that request along?

Mr. Ferrell stated that currently the Society has \$360,000.00 in unrestricted funds to spend, and looking for some guidelines, which would probably come from Mr. Jackson, regarding what the money should be spent on. Mostly we just want a plan, and want to know if the project list from earlier is going to be revisited. There's also a time sensitivity issue on some requests.

Chairman Taylor stated that now that Mr. Jackson was here, revisiting that list may be a good idea. There was mention of Mr. Jackson taking the Committee members on a tour to bring some things to our attention. Not sure whether those two things are related.

Mr. Jackson stated that Mr. Ferrell made a good point, and had intended on having that discussion tonight in regards to some animals that staff wanted to bring in with the Society funding the purchases. To be blunt, I was not lead to believe, nor do I believe, that I have to get Oversight approval to bring animals into the collection or to move animals out. That is what a director does; it's everyday business. Certainly for big projects, things that will require a new exhibit be built or major remodeling of an exhibit would be brought to the Committee, but to bring in an animal into an existing exhibit with the purchasing assistance of the Society should not require approval from this Committee.

Mr. Brahm asked to clarify that these animals would be going into an existing building without any capital expenditure.

Mr. Jackson stated that was correct. There may need to be a few small modifications, but nothing major.

Mr. Brahm stated that he didn't want to impede Mr. Jackson in bringing in new animals into the collection. Saw the role of the Oversight Committee as having a say in major/capital improvements and changes. However, it is important to keep the Oversight Committee informed as to changes in the collection and what those costs were.

Mr. Nelson stated that it makes sense to put a limit on the amount that can be spent without approval.

Mr. Jackson stated that the animals Mr. Ferrell is referencing are a group of Aldabra Giant Tortoises. They are approximately \$35,000.00 to \$40,000.00 per pair. Six were identified, the total came out to \$109,000.00. It got down to four, which dropped the amount to \$80,000.00. I'm not sure if we have the option anymore to bring these tortoises into the collection.

Mr. Byrne stated that he had envisioned more of a plan. That there would be a plan brought to the Committee at the beginning of the year, and a budget would be assigned to that plan.

Mr. Jackson stated that there is money for acquisition of animals in the budget that is handled by the Forest Preserve. However, this was a special purchase requested to the Society.

Mr. Byrne stated that he thought the Society needed a budget and plan also.

Mr. Jackson stated that he understood what Mr. Byrne was saying, but that's not in place right now. I'm trying to build the zoo for next year so progress can be made, and visitors can see improvement.

Mr. Nelson stated that there has to be some leeway so that Mr. Jackson can do what needs to be done.

Chairman Taylor stated that as long as the Society and Mr. Jackson agree on what to spend the money on, then what's the Committee's opinion on if we need to approve those purchases, or if we need to rubber stamp it, or if we just say thanks for the information.

Mr. Ferrell stated that the Society had already effectively approved the purchase. The big concern is that of the \$360,000.00 of unrestricted funds that the Society has, this purchase brings it down to \$280,000.00. Whatever Master Plan there is coming down the line, the Society wants to use some of that \$360,000.00 to fund those Master Plan projects.

Mr. Jackson stated that it was a Society decision as to how much they want to keep aside for the Master Plan. If the Society doesn't have the funds to make the purchase, then they have the right to say no. There will be no hard feelings if the Society does not have the funds for a purchase.

Chairman Taylor stated that what the Committee seems to be saying is that we want information, not necessarily approval. Is that correct?

Mr. Byrne concurred, and asked, wouldn't the Committee still need a plan for the 2017 season?

Mr. Jackson reminded the Committee that there is already a collection plan in place, and the Committee has been given that plan. The tortoises are in that collection plan.

Mr. Brahm asked if the collection plan would need to be updated.

Mr. Jackson stated that the collection plan should be valid for three more years.

Mr. Nelson felt that as long as an animal was in the collection plan its acquisition didn't need to come through the Oversight Committee.

Mr. Ferrell acknowledged the Committee's wishes on the matter. Let the Society know if the tortoises are still available, and we will fund it.

Chairman Taylor called on Mr. Jackson for an update on the zoo.

Mr. Jackson stated that he was looking for support from the Oversight Committee regarding taking a policy to the Commission for the ability to use firearms in emergency animal escapes. Last week during a drill for a lion escape it came to my attention that Niabi does not have any firearms on the premises. It is a standard practice. I was surprised to find that out, and had assumed that the District had a policy in place for that. It is an AZA requirement. Currently all that is available are the dart guns. In the

event of escape it would take between fifteen and twenty minutes for a dart to knock out an animal. In that time they could easily get into Coal Valley.

Mr. Byrne asked if there are policies at other zoos, and the District has never addressed this.

Mr. Jackson stated that yes, this is a standard practice at other zoos, and that it has not been addressed at Niabi.

Mr. Craver stated that it had been brought up in the past, but it was not something that was entertained at the time. As with other changes at the zoo, it should go through this advisory committee to the Forest Preserve Committee. An example from recently is the Cincinnati, Ohio this summer. The staff there had to put an animal down. Niabi has similar animals. I couldn't speak to why the Commission said no in the past, but this issue is important and needs to be addressed.

Chairman Taylor called for a motion to make a recommendation to the Forest Preserve Committee that a policy be drafted in accordance with AZA standards to include firearms in the training and procedures for animal escapes.

**MOTION:** Mr. Nelson moved to make a recommendation to the Forest Preserve Committee that a policy be drafted in accordance with AZA standards to include firearms in the training and procedures for animal escapes. Mr. Byrne seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Chairman Taylor moved on to discuss the possibility of forming small working groups within the Oversight Committee to look into some of the things discussed in the past. One that's been brought up several times is the need for a master plan.

Mr. Jackson stated that accreditation would be a very important one. It's valuable to educate everyone on what it will take to become reaccredited.

Mr. Byrne stated that a group should look into the PPP models and their feasibility.

Chairman Taylor stated that he would like to have something together by the next meeting, whether or not the groups have actually met. I can send around some emails to see which group members would like to be involved in.

After a brief discussion a future meeting for the Oversight Committee was set for September 13, 2016 at 5:00pm. It was also decided that once Mr. Biddle and Ms. Grace sent out the document that had been discussed at the last meeting, the Oversight Committee would determine if a second August meeting was warranted.

Chairman Taylor called the meeting adjourned.

Adjourned at 6:19 PM.

After the meeting adjourned Mr. Craver, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Nelson, Mr. Brahm and Mr. Cremeens took a tour of the zoo lead by Mr. Jackson to discuss potential plans for areas in the zoo.

Submitted by:  
Cassie Sullivan  
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant