

FOREST PRESERVE COMMITTEE MINUTES FROM APRIL 11, 2013

PRESENT: Committee members, S. Ballard, P. Banaszek, M. Burns, D. Adams, K. Maranda, G. Shelton and R. Simmer.

ABSENT: V. Dueysen

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Craver, Director; Marc Heinzman, Zoo Director; Scott White, Illiniwek Ranger; April Palmer, County Auditor; Cathy Bizarri.

President Ballard called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Committee to order at 3:01 PM on Thursday, April 11, 2013, in the County Board Office on the second floor of the County Building, Rock Island, Illinois

President Ballard called for a motion approving the March Committee meeting minutes.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Adams seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve the claims for the Forest Preserve Fund in the amount of \$62,989.45, the Niabi Zoo Fund claims in the amount of \$60,424.85, the Liability Insurance Fund claims in the amount of \$1,029.85 and the Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$47,814.39

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve the claims. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve the Transfers of Appropriation in the Forest Preserve General Fund, the Niabi Zoo Fund and the Forest Preserve Liability Fund.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the Transfers. Mr. Adams seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for approval of a Resolution transferring \$21,353.00 from Forest Preserve General Funds.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Maranda seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for approval of a Resolution transferring \$17,166.60 from unappropriated Niabi Zoo Funds.

MOTION: Mr. Adams moved to approve the Resolution. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for approval of a Resolution loaning \$10,000.00 from the Forest Preserve General Fund to the Forest Preserve Liability Fund.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve the Resolution. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called approval of a Resolution transferring \$10,000.00 from unappropriated Forest Preserve Liability Funds.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve the Resolution loaning the Liability Fund. Mr. Burns seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called on Mr. McGehee to present his findings and a Resolution on the salary for the Forest Preserve District.

Mr. McGehee handed out his Resolution for the Committee's consideration. He then stated that his research into the statute that governs the salary of a Forest Preserve District indicated that a Resolution setting the salary can only be done 180 days before the new administration. There were 3 amounts mentioned in the statute. They were \$36 dollars a day, \$1,500.00 dollars annually or \$3,000.00 annually. It can be paid over the course of a 12 month period.

Mr. McGehee further stated that he believed a Resolution clarifying what salary the Forest Preserves Commissioners were to receive, since the previous Resolution is unclear, should be fine. The previous resolution states \$36, but should be clarified to \$1,500.00. That is how the \$36 dollars are being interpreted. There will be no increase or decrease in pay. The Resolution is simply a clarification.

President Ballard stated that the salary was in addition to mileage, and that the salaries should be paid out of the Forest Preserve Fund, not the County's Fund as it has in the past. President Ballard further stated that the salary would be equally split throughout twelve months.

Mr. McGehee confirmed that the Commissioners should be getting paid out of the Forest Preserve Fund when they are doing work for the District. It was further stated that \$1,500.00 annually would split to \$125 per month.

Ms. Palmer asked for clarification that the Forest Preserve General Fund would then need to pay back the County General Fund for the months that the Commissioners have been paid out of the County General Fund.

Ms. Shelton felt that it would be the best way to go about this. The County would need to be reimbursed the funds that were paid to the Commissioners that should have been paid by the District.

President Ballard agreed, and suggested an intergovernmental transfer to pay the County back the funds that had been paid out for December, January, February and March.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve a Resolution allowing the Forest Preserve District to fix an annual salary.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved for approval of the Resolution fixing the annual salary. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve and take off display the Forest Management Plans for Illiniwek Forest Preserve, Loud Thunder Forest Preserve and Dorrance Park.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve and remove from display the Forest Management Plans for Illiniwek Forest Preserve, Loud Thunder Forest Preserve and Dorrance Park. Mr. Maranda seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve the Illinois Forestry Development Act agreements for Illiniwek Forest Preserve, Loud Thunder Forest Preserve and Dorrance Park.

MOTION: Ms. Shelton moved to approve the Illinois Forestry Development Act agreement. Mr. Maranda seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve and remove from display the District's Trail Management Plan.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve and remove from display the District's Trail Management Plan. Mr. Adams seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve and remove from display the District's Prescribed Fire Management Procedures.

MOTION: Ms. Shelton moved to approve and remove from display the District's Prescribed Fire Management Procedures. Mr. Burns seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve Cornbelt Running Club to use the Horse Corral area at Loud Thunder for the Du-State-Du event on Sunday August 18, 2013

MOTION: Ms. Shelton moved to approve the use of the Horse Corral at Loud Thunder. Mr. Maranda seconded the motion.

Dr. Simmer wanted to clarify that the event would not cause any scheduling conflicts with the group that usually uses the corral.

Ms. Bizzari confirmed that they had not intended on using it that day.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called on a motion to hire the Forest Preserve Office Administrative Assistant

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the hiring of the Forest Preserve Office Administrative Assistant. Mr. Burns seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called on Ms. Palmer for the Auditor's Reports.

Ms. Palmer reported that three quarters of the fiscal year have come and gone with one quarter remaining. The budget has one quarter left, and that is exactly where they should be. However, Ms. Palmer wanted to address the cash flow issues in relation to May's payroll. The next tax distribution will not be until late June, which is usually not a problem because June is typically the month where there are three paychecks. However, this year it is May, and there is not going to be enough to cash on hand to cover all three payrolls. As of today the Forest Preserve General has \$341,863.00, and the Niabi Zoo Fund has \$85,249.00. To make the 5 payrolls between now and the Tax Distribution \$450,000.00 is needed. This amount does not include claims, bond interest payments or Treasurer's Disbursements for the next month. With anticipated revenues, the District is still approximately \$120,000.00 short. Ms. Palmer went on to inquire if loans from the Golf Course Improvement Fund or the Niabi Zoo Capitol Improvement Fund would be a possibility. The District will need to come up with a plan quickly to avoid being short regarding payroll and expenses.

President Ballard inquired if this had happened in the past.

Mr. Craver stated that the District has not run into this problem in the past that he is aware of.

Dr. Simmer inquired about the previous loans that the Committee had given to the zoo.

Ms. Palmer explained that if the Forest Preserve General Fund was left alone it would have enough cash to cover its portion of the expenses. However, it is the fact that it has loaned so much to the zoo and liability funds that have created this issue. In years past when the zoo was loaned money from the Forest Preserve's General Fund, the General Fund has gotten it back. However, that is not the case this year, because we started out with the zoo owing the

general fund money and then the zoo has been loaned money on top of that. That is why the numbers have been lumped together, because the general fund is no longer an option for loaning money to the other funds.

President Ballard asked if the question now is: can we legally pull from those other balances to make ends meet.

Ms. Palmer confirmed that yes that seems to be the question.

Dr. Simmer asked for confirmation that both the Improvement Funds belonged to the District. The Zoo's Capitol Improvement Fund does not fall under the control of the Zoological Society?

Ms. Palmer confirmed that the funds mentioned are under the control of the District.

Dr. Simmer asked Mr. Craver if he had a suggestion as to which fund would be best to pull from.

Mr. Craver stated that the Bike Path Improvement Fund would be a good candidate. The Bike Path Fund was accumulated for the bike path that runs from Hampton up to the Northern County line. There were left over funds from that project, so the left over money was put into the Bike Path Fund to maintain it. The Committee can consider merging that fund into the Forest Preserve's General Fund and possibly creating a sub-department to budget for bike path maintenance. However, the bike path does have a shelf life and will need to be recoated or repaved in the future, so that should be kept in mind when making the decision.

Mr. White stated that there are already erosion problems on the bike path now. The Committee should keep that in mind also.

Mr. Craver stated that the bike path is close to twenty years old. The Committee should keep in mind that consolidating the two funds will help for the time being, but there will be the bike path repair expenses to budget for in the future.

Ms. Palmer inquired if it would then be better for the Bike Path Improvement Fund to loan the Forest Preserve General Fund the money and pay it back later.

Dr. Simmer expressed concern that if we are planning to repair and improve the infrastructure of the bike path that perhaps we should leave that money alone so it is there when we need it.

Mr. Craver stated that it would probably be best to loan money from the Niabi Zoo Capitol Improvement Fund to zoo because those funds have been raised for the zoo.

Ms. Palmer stated that it is the zoo that needs the money. Therefore, we could borrow from the zoo's improvement fund and leave the Bike Path Fund alone. Ms. Palmer also suggested budgeting for this situation next year, so we are not at risk of being in the same situation.

President Ballard stated that the suggestion of loaning the zoo money from the Niabi Zoo Capitol Improvement Fund sounded like a good idea, and called for a motion to allow the

Niabi Zoo Capitol Improvement Fund to loan the Niabi Zoo Fund monies on an as needed basis.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to allow the Niabi Zoo Capitol Improvement Fund to loan the Niabi Zoo Fund monies on an as needed basis. Ms. Shelton seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve Ms. Palmer's report.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve Ms. Palmer's report. Mr. Adams seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called on Mr. Craver for the Indian Bluff Golf Course report.

Mr. Craver reported that the weather has been uncooperative. Golfers have not been out like last year. There is a big outing scheduled this weekend. Also, due to the weather the past Monday or Tuesday was the first opportunity the staff has had to preform course maintenance on the golf course.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve the report for the Golf Course.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the report. Ms. Shelton seconded the motion.

President Ballard called on Scott White for Illiniwek report.

Mr. White reported that the water has been turned on and the park opened on the 5th, this past Friday. The Shower Building project is underway. North shower has been painted and the south shower has been gutted. The bike path on Route 84 has been power brushed, and cleaned up for users.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve Mr. White's report.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve Mr. White's report. Mr. Adams seconded the motion.

President Ballard called on Marc Heinzman for the Niabi Zoo report.

Mr. Heinzman stated that since March 11th when the zoo opened there have only been about five or six nice days. This past weekend was nice and the zoo had some good crowds. The grounds at the zoo are starting to green up and look good. Staff is making good progress on ongoing projects, and operations are going well. Mr. Alan Roocroft, a leading expert on Elephants came into take a look at our Elephant Program. Mr. Roocroft spent a few days at the end of February observing our program and provided the zoo a report which Mr. Heinzman had forwarded on to the Committee for their review. Mr. Heinzman explained that Sophie has severe arthritis in her two front ankles, and is therefore putting more of her weight on her back

legs due to the pain. Sophie sleeps standing up because she can no longer get up from a prone position, which is leading to problems with her back legs. These issues have been deteriorating and will continue to deteriorate and affect her health and well-being. The main reason that this is occurring is our facility is inadequate to house the elephants. In order to provide the elephants with an adequate facility the zoo would have to build a several million dollar elephant house. Mr. Heinzman also stated that he would recommend that a decision regarding the future of the elephants at the zoo be made soon, before Sophie's health deteriorates further.

President Ballard stated that Mr. Roocroft is scheduled to come back in June, and would like to have Mr. Roocroft attend either the regular meeting or have a special meeting and invite the press, in order to get these issues out into the public. President Ballard further stated that he believes the elephants should be where they can be healthy and happy, but that this will be upsetting news for the public.

Mr. Heinzman also pointed out the potential liability for the animal handlers that care for the elephants. If Sophie were to fall or react badly to the routine care that the animal handlers give, she could severely injure, or even kill one of our animal handlers. It only takes a second for an animal to do irreversible damage.

President Ballard stated to the Committee that Mr. Heinzman has been asked to do research on sanctuaries and their reputations for how well they care for the animals in their charge. Also, Mr. Heinzman has been asked to look into the options for what animals could replace the elephants that would also draw crowds as the elephants have, perhaps Rhinos.

Mr. Heinzman stated that the yard we currently have for the elephants could easily be remodeled and would do very well for Indian Rhinos, which are common. Mr. Heinzman further stated that he had been in contact with the Species Coordinator at the San Diego Zoo to find out if we would have access to these animals and the Coordinator also mentioned that in a few years the zoo could have access to being involved in a breeding program. Which would be a big asset to the zoo.

President Ballard asked for confirmation that there had been money raised and set aside for the elephants.

Mr. Heinzman confirmed.

President Ballard suggested that using that money to remodel for the Rhinos, provided the zoo was able to secure Rhinos, could be a possibility.

Dr. Simmer inquired if the staff and the Zoological Society were on board with finding another home for the elephants.

Mr. Heinzman stated that there are a few people that may be upset at first, but that he anticipates that there will be support once all the information has been presented.

President Ballard pointed out that if the elephants were to find a better home, then we could possibly get our AZA accreditation back.

Dr. Simmer stated that losing the accreditation has been a major criticism of the zoo. Dr. Simmer further stated that he is surprised that we have held onto them this long due to the amount of cold weather that we get in this area.

President Ballard further expressed a desire to have this resolved by the end of the fall.

Mr. Heinzman stated that the elephants must be kept inside when the temperature is below forty-five degrees outside. That ends up being four to six months out of the year.

Dr. Simmer asked Mr. Heinzman if the Rhinos would be more tolerant of the cold weather.

Mr. Heinzman stated that what the zoo was looking at doing with the remodel, since Rhinos are significantly smaller than elephants, is to add on a dayroom for the winter months.

President Ballard asked the Committee for their thoughts on this matter.

Ms. Shelton expressed the desire to make sure that the elephants are able to live in a healthy environment. If that meant that we needed to find them another home, she was in favor because the welfare of the animals should come first.

Mr. Maranda inquired if there would be any fees that the zoo would incur for the care of the elephants at another facility or sanctuary because of the health issues.

Mr. Heinzman stated that there would likely be a transportation fee but that there is not likely to be an ongoing fee if the elephants are sent to another facility or to a sanctuary.

President Ballard stated that he would like to see some firm options in the next 30 to 60 days.

Ms. Palmer suggested that advertising that this is to be the last year for the elephants may help to bring people out to the zoo.

Ms. Shelton suggested having a farewell party for Sophie and Babe, when the plan is finalized for the new home for the elephants, could also help to bring in extra revenues for the zoo.

Mr. Heinzman stated that the zoo has been very proactive regarding the elephants and possible new exhibits. The zoo has spoken to some architects regarding a remodel. Providing the elephants have found a new home by the end of the season, they could do the remodel and be ready to take on Rhinos shortly after next year's season begins.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve Mr. Heinzman's report.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve Mr. Heinzman's report. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called on Mr. Craver for the Loud Thunder report.

Mr. Craver reported that staff has been performing routine work and getting ready for the park to open. Mr. Mills has sold the tractor that was discussed at the previous meeting for \$8,500.00. Mr. Mills has also provided a quote on the John Deere 825i gator he would like to purchase. Mr. Craver further stated that since there are cash flow issues he was certain that the gator could wait if necessary.

Ms. Palmer suggested using the purchasing cards to purchase the gator in May. Using the purchasing card would postpone the actual pay out of monies and would help to earn cash back rewards that are provided in the purchasing card agreement.

President Ballard called for a motion for purchase of gator in May with the purchasing card.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to purchase gator in May with purchasing card. Ms. Shelton seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called on Mr. Mark Parr to address the Committee with his concerns.

Mr. Parr stated that he would like to the Committee to consider allowing motor boats on Lake George. If the Committee would set a speed limit to the motor boats of idle speed only, Mr. Parr did not believe that there would be many violations of that policy. Allowing motor boats would increase activity on the lake. Mr. Parr went on to state that motors nowadays are very quiet and efficient, so there shouldn't be any concerns on pollution or noise. In talking with some of the bait shop owners and other fishermen in the area, the fishermen community is interested in being able to use motor boats out on Lake George. Lake George is a prime spot for Musky fishing. When the wind picks up it is nearly impossible to get back to shore.

President Ballard stated that he would discuss the situation with Mr. Mills, and have Mr. Mills do some research into this possibility.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve the Loud Thunder report.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the Loud Thunder report. Ms. Shelton seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called on Jeff Craver for the Director's report.

Mr. Craver reported that there was nothing he had to add to the reports from the parks.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve Mr. Craver's report.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve Mr. Craver's report. Ms. Shelton seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called on Mr. Maranda for his inspection reports for Niabi Zoo and Illiniwek.

Mr. Maranda reported that both Niabi Zoo and Illiniwek looked good. The zoo may need some help with the gators, and the staff has been doing overtime.

President Ballard called for motion to approve Mr. Maranda's inspection reports.

MOTION: Ms. Shelton moved to approve Mr. Maranda's inspection reports. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called on Mr. Burns for his inspection reports.

Mr. Burns stated that the both parks look great. The only exception is the Snack Shack at Indian Bluff. The roof leaks very badly. There was water on the counters from the night before. Mr. Wells is aware of the situation.

The Committee felt it would probably not cost much to fix the roof, and asked Mr. Craver to discuss the issue with Mr. Wells and come up with a plan of action to address that problem.

President Ballard called for a motion to approve Mr. Burns's inspection reports.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve Mr. Burns's inspection reports. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Ballard called the meeting adjourned.

Adjourned the meeting at 4:17 PM.

Submitted by:

Cassie Sullivan