

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
MARCH 13, 2018**

PRESENT: Committee members - K. Swanson, K. Maranda, D. Cremeens, E. Sowards, C. O'Brien, R. Simmer.

ABSENT: L. Moreno.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Craver, District Director; Lee Jackson, Zoo Director; Mike Petersen, Illiniwek Ranger; Ben Mills, Loud Thunder Ranger; Todd Collins, Club House Manager; Jay Verstraete, Golf Course Superintendent; April Palmer, County Auditor; Louisa Ewert, County Treasurer; Carrie Kerr, Treasurer's Office.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 3:30 PM on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, in the County Board Office on the second floor of the County Building, Rock Island, Illinois.

President Swanson called for a motion approving the February Committee meeting minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve the February Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Cremeens seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

No request for public comment was submitted.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the claims for the Forest Preserve General Fund in the amount of \$165,131.59, Niabi Zoo Fund claims in the amount of \$200,162.83, Loud Thunder Spillway & Camping Improvements Fund claims in the amount of \$5,000.00, and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$43,248.88.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements. Mr. Maranda seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the transfers of appropriation in the General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund.

MOTION: Ms. O'Brien moved to approve the transfers of appropriation in the General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called on Mr. Bill Nelson, Chairman of the Community Advisory Board.

Mr. Nelson stated that a few of the things that had been gone through and discussed at the Community Advisory Board [CAB] meetings were the various marketing issues, which were reviewed with MindFire. The biggest thing that has been discussed is the need to raise funds for the zoo with activities that are not necessarily within the Niabi budget itself. At the most recent CAB meeting we centered on getting funds from entities that only give to 501c3 organizations. We learned that there hasn't been any progress on the part of the Society to raise funds or transfer the money that's been raised previously for Niabi, which lead us to the need for a fundraising support group for Niabi. The two options are thus: 1) The CAB could develop a brand new 501c3 organization, with all the expense that it entails; 2) The CAB could take over an existing 501c3 organization, which will still have expense, but there would be a cost savings. There is already a 501c3 organization in Indiana that is a possibility for taking over. Each option would require creating bylaws for the organization, and formalizing with the State of Illinois requirements. The CAB would still function as an Advisory Board, while the foundation would function as a fundraising entity that supports over all plans of Niabi with advice from the CAB and approval from the District Commission. Unless there is objection from the Commission, the CAB will further look into the possibility of developing a 501c3.

Ms. O'Brien asked if the legal costs of developing the 501c3 would be covered.

Mr. Nelson stated that the CAB had not gotten that far into the process. They wanted to make sure that this was something the Commission might be interested in first before looking into the specifics of the process and the cost.

President Swanson stated that there was a mitigating factor concerning this issue. There was a meeting with the Society back in January. At this meeting the Society stated their willingness to put a substantial portion of the money in their possession into an endowed account, which would earn significantly more interest than the simple savings account that the money is currently in. What's frustrating is that we haven't heard from them since that meeting to know if steps are being taken toward this. The reason I bring this up is that if the Society does go forward with this, then developing a 501c3 may not be necessary. What happens if the Society goes through with that plan?

Mr. Nelson stated that he had also attended that meeting, and that the Society also stated that they had no intentions of fundraising for the next couple of years. The Society stated that they were kind of taking a "wait and see" attitude. I'm not sure what exactly a "wait and see" attitude is; it was the Society words. The concern is that there are people willing to donate money to Niabi, but the Society is not actively fundraising right now, and doesn't intend to for quite some time.

Dr. Simmer stated that he has tried to get in contact and get some information from the Society as well, and hasn't heard anything back. I support developing the 501c3.

Mr. Jackson stated that the lack of communication coming from the Society has not been for lack of trying on Niabi staff's part. We've tried contacting them, and haven't heard anything from them.

Mr. Cremeens asked if the District would be inheriting any liability from the Indiana group if we took over the existing 501c3.

Mr. Nelson stated that he didn't believe there was anything out there to open up the District for that, but it would be thoroughly checked out before any agreement was entered into.

Ms. O'Brien asked if anyone was familiar with the Society's bylaws to know if the Society has been violating their own bylaws by not spending the money they've raised.

No one was familiar with the Society's bylaws.

Mr. Jackson reminded the Committee that the money that is currently with the Society was not gained by outside fundraising, it was raised at the zoo from the gift shop, memberships, and carousal. In the past couple years those things have been taken over by zoo staff as is appropriate due to the fact that those are inside Niabi, and part of the regular operations of the zoo.

President Swanson stated that he was in favor of the CAB looking deeper into this possibility, and called for a motion of support.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to endorse the CAB proposal regarding the development of a 501c3. Ms. O'Brien seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Forest Preserve Organizational Chart.

MOTION: Ms. O'Brien moved to approve the Forest Preserve Organizational Chart. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Mr. Craver briefly went through the organizational chart, and stated that an annual review of the organizational chart was a part of the recommended best practices of the IAPD.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the changes to the Forest Preserve Commission General Policy and Procedures.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve the changes to the Forest Preserve Commission General Policy and Procedures. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Mr. Craver stated that he included some of the OMA information. Much of the language is very similar to what is in the statute or what's in the County's policies.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called on Ms. Palmer for the Auditor's reports.

Ms. Palmer stated that the District is two thirds through their fiscal year. Some of the drops that you'll notice are due to the cost study being paid to the County.

President Swanson asked Mr. Verstraete and Mr. Collins if there was anything he'd like to bring attention to in their Indian Bluff reports.

Mr. Verstraete reported that staff took advantage of some rebates that MidAmerican was offering, that would soon be ending, by up grading the lights in the shop. Staff has continued to work on preparations to open the golf course, and we're waiting for the weather.

Mr. Collins reported that preparations continue in the Club House for the opening as well. Had to replace a thirty-seven year old beer cooler. Outings are getting lined up for the season. The water softener is in at the Club House, so hopefully we'll see improvements with the water.

President Swanson asked Mr. Mills if there was anything he'd like to bring attention to in his Loud Thunder report.

Mr. Mills reported that staff has been doing a lot of work in the woods. There are preparations for an oak planting in the spring. A lot of work is getting done on the trail system mapping, and working with MindFire to update the brochures. The park is ready to open, and the gate to Lake George will be opened tomorrow.

President Swanson asked Mr. Petersen if there was anything he'd like to bring attention to in his Illiniwek report.

Mr. Petersen reported that staff has been concentrating on removing invasive species, and getting ready to open on March 30th. URICRA was able to secure a \$25,000.00 grant for the lighting project at Dorrance Park.

President Swanson asked Mr. Jackson if there was anything he'd like to bring attention to in his Niabi Zoo report.

Mr. Jackson reported that staff has been busy getting ready for the opening. There have been a lot of repairs, some unexpected. The conservation speaker series is going well. The speakers are donating their time.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver if there was anything he'd like to bring attention to in his director's report.

Mr. Craver stated that the websites are being upgraded, and staff is working on updating brochures. Hopefully we'll have some good weather this season.

President Swanson then called for a motion approving the routine reports of the District.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve the routine reports of the District. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson reminded the Committee that the next four meetings of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee will be located at the Preserves, then called the meeting adjourn.

Adjourned the meeting at 4:18 PM.

Submitted by:
Cassie Sullivan
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant