

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES  
JANUARY 8, 2019**

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

**ABSENT:**

**ALSO PRESENT:** Jeff Craver, District Director; Mike Petersen, Illiniwek Ranger; Lee Jackson, Zoo Director; Todd Collins, Club House Manager; Jay Verstraete, Golf Course Superintendent; Ben Mills, Loud Thunder Ranger; April Palmer, Auditor; Louisa Ewert, County Treasurer; Jim Uribe; Scott Lohman.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 3:32 PM on Tuesday, January 8, 2019, in the Rock Island County Building on the second floor Rock Island, Illinois.

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

**MOTION:** Mr. Maranda moved to approve the December Committee meeting minutes. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

No request for public comment was submitted.

President Swanson appointed Dr. Rod Simmer as President Pro Tem. For those instances where I am not able to attend a meeting.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Forest Preserve General Fund claims in the amount of \$27,847.74, Niabi Zoo Fund claims in the amount of \$80,712.47, Golf Course Improvement fund claims in the amount of \$2,501.35, Loud Thunder Spillway & Improvements Fund claims in the amount of \$107,034.47, Marvin Martin Fund claims in the amount of \$80.80, and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$19,847.51.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the claims and Treasurer's Disbursements. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Semi-Annual Review of Closed Session Minutes Resolution as presented.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve the Semi-Annual Review of Closed Session Minutes Resolution as presented. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried, with Mr. Cremeens voting nay.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve Fiscal Year 2019 Grant Appropriation Amendment for the General Fund for River Action Grant.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve Fiscal Year 2019 Grant Appropriation Amendment for the General Fund for River Action Grant. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Mr. Craver briefly explained that the grants would be used for additional prairie restoration for Illiniwek and put in some trail bridges at Loud Thunder. The amount being shown on the resolution is for the Illiniwek portion. The Loud Thunder portion will go into the Marvin Martin Endowment Fund, which doesn't need a resolution.

Ms. Palmer explained that the reason the Marvin Martin Endowment Fund did not need a resolution was because it is not a budgeted fund.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2019 General Fund Resolution Loaning the Zoo Fund \$241,777.00.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2019 General Fund Resolution Loaning the Zoo Fund \$241,777.00. Mr. Maranda seconded the motion.

Dr. Moreno asked for an explanation of the reasoning for the loan.

Mr. Craver stated that perhaps a better word would be transfer. This is due to the fact that the zoo doesn't meet the required five-month reserve that is the District's policy. This would increase the zoo's fund balance to the required amount. The zoo would need to have a balanced budget to keep it where it needs to be for that reserve. This and one other option is something to consider. As has been mentioned last month, the wet, hot weather of the 2018 season hit the regional zoos pretty hard, and revenues were not where they were predicted to be. There has been a lot of expense in trying to regain the AZA accreditation, and more expense is needed. The Commission needs to decide whether or not the District continues to prioritize that goal. With the transfer coming from the General, realize that it will decrease the General Fund's fund balance to right around that five-month reserve number. The General Fund is doing ok, but it is projected that the zoo will have a deficit of approximately \$70,000.00. Mr. Jackson and I are looking for some direction on if the Commission is still putting priority on the accreditation, or if that should be slowed down. The rest of the parks also experienced that drop in revenues due to the weather, so the General Fund did not bring in the expected revenues either.

President Swanson stated this particular resolution is just about bring it up to the five-month reserve standard. Addressing where priorities are placed, is another step along the path. The AZA team said that all zoos in the upper Midwest were hit with those revenue losses. The Commission knew that reaching the goal of reaccreditation would mean a few deficit years. Commitment to the strategic goal of reaccreditation was made by this body. A strategic discussion does need to happen, but switching from goals that have been set and are close to achievement may not be the wisest course of action. A small adjustment of course could help, but to completely throw the accreditation goal out is not wise.

Ms. Palmer stated that the loan of money will only increase the cash balance. A transfer would move money as an expense out of the General Fund and a revenue into the zoo fund. That would put the General Fund below the five-month reserve. Having the General Fund meet the five-month reserve is very good when talking about the District's credit rating, and is what helped to get the rate for the bonds. While the issues that Mr. Craver mentioned are separate, they are related. The zoo's performance last fiscal year dropped the fund balance only \$91,000.00, which is due to the overall short fall of the revenue. The total short fall of the revenue was \$167,128.00, but because the zoo kept their expenses low, the deficit was only \$91,000.00 instead of having a deficit of \$91,000.00.

Dr. Simmer stated that he was willing to amend the motion to state the money is a transfer and not a loan, if the Committee would prefer.

Mr. Craver stated that, as Ms. Palmer said, the General Fund would be affected. Perhaps it is not a good idea to do the transfer or the loan at this time as it could create two problems where there is currently only one. Using the Development Fund can be looked into as well. Really this is to get people thinking and talking about what the options are to address this issue.

Ms. Palmer suggested tabling the resolution due to the affect it would have on the District's bond rating.

Mr. Craver agreed that tabling the resolution would be for the best. However, the discussion on whether or not to continue to pursue the AZA accreditation at this time should happen.

Ms. O'Brien asked what the resolution was actually for.

Mr. Craver stated that it was only meant to adjust the fund balance, and to start the conversation on goals and priorities.

Mr. Maranda stated that he was in favor of tabling the resolution.

President Swanson agreed that tabling the resolution was the best, and recommended that the District look at the goals and priorities set for the zoo.

Mr. Craver stated that he did not see the dollars adding up in favor of pushing toward accreditation.

Mr. Jackson stated that the issue becomes a catch 22 situation. In order to grow the zoo, increase attendance, and pull it out of the deficit, it needs the resources that accreditation provides. It might not hurt to take things slower.

Dr. Simmer withdrew the motion on the resolution, and there was consensus to withdraw the motion.

Motion withdrawn.

President Swanson called for a discussion on the withdrawal of full available amount of Loud Thunder Forest Preserve Endowment funds for 2019.

Mr. Craver stated that included in the packet was a statement of the Endowment for Loud Thunder. Each year the District can withdraw a percentage of the interest based on how the endowment has performed in the last year. This is available in February, and I'm asking for authorization to withdraw the full amount that will be available. There is also a list of the projects at Loud Thunder that the money would go towards included in the packet.

**MOTION:** Ms. O'Brien moved to approve withdrawal of full available amount of Loud Thunder Forest Preserve Endowment funds for 2019. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a discussion on the golf cart bids.

Mr. Craver stated that some of the carts that were included in the bid were for Illiniwek and Loud Thunder. Those carts will come out of the General Fund, and the remaining carts for Indian Bluff would come out of the Golf Course Improvement Fund. Staff is recommending that the District accept the Harris bid number one for the QuieTech Golf Carts.

**MOTION:** Mr. Maranda moved to approve the Harris bid number one golf cart bid. Ms. O'Brien seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the 2019 District Fees.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the 2019 District Fees. Ms. O'Brien seconded the motion.

Mr. Collins pointed out that the Senior weekday rate was supposed to be \$16.00 not the \$15.00 listed.

**AMEND MOTION:** Mr. Maranda moved to approve the 2019 District Fees with the edit of increasing the senior weekday rate at \$16.00. Ms. O'Brien seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

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

Ms. Palmer stated that half the fiscal year is over. Budgetary spending on the Trail Balance Report looks good. On the remaining reports, other than the issues previously discussed, there are no concerns.

President Swanson called on Mr. Collins and Mr. Verstraete for their Indian Bluff reports.

Mr. Verstraete stated that with the mild weather staff has been able to go out and do work on the Forest Management Plan for Indian Bluff. Sometimes it's hard to remember that Indian Bluff isn't just a golf course. It's a Forest Preserve that has a golf course on it. Staff has been concentrating on removing Ash trees that have been affected by the Emerald Ash Bore.

Mr. Collins stated that December saw some revenue from the sale promotions that went on. The process of touch ups and getting things ready for the 2019 season has begun.

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

Mr. Petersen stated that the ninth street restoration project has begun, and there are major changes in the landscape coming up. There is a lot Ash and non-native invasive species in that area. Those trees will be removed, and the area will be restored to prairie.

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

Mr. Mills stated that there was a summary of use and some stuff staff is working on. The biggest priority at the moment is removal of hazard trees from around the campgrounds. Forty deer have been harvested from the preserve so far this year.

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

Mr. Jackson stated that there was a genetically valuable Colobus monkey born in December. The speaker series continues with whales.

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

Mr. Craver stated that there is a lot of valuable information included in the packet this month regard the use of the preserves in 2018. Please take a look at that at your convenience. Revenue was down District wide due to the weather, but good strides were made in 2018. Working on getting out bids for the Loud Thunder improvements. There has been concern on the price of the cabins, and another good option would be a shower building.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve all routine reports for the District.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve all routine reports for the District. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson asked if there was any other business.

Mr. Maranda stated that he had brought a proposed "Responsible Bidder" resolution, which he wanted put on the agenda for the January Commission. [The draft resolution was handed out.]

President Swanson stated that the professional staff of the District would recommend, under the paragraph defining "responsible bidder," that language be added right after it talks about the \$25,000.00 reading thus, "But excluding certain specialized projects at the District's Niabi Zoo, Indian Bluff Golf Course, or parks or preserves being as such by the Commission." Then

the rest is pretty much the same. What that language means is that the Commission would have to vote and say that it suspends the rules for something like a big cat structure. We know that cat house out there now is substandard, and when we have the resources to put in a new cat structure we would like the best that we can possibly afford based on people who do nothing but build structures for zoos because they will know exactly how to do it, and will have the best experience in building those projects. It provides the flexibility to do things right, but also commits us to the language of the "responsible bidder." Please let me know if you would like to see the language on that, and I'll be happy to email that to you.

Ms. O'Brien stated that she would like to see the language.

Mr. Maranda stated that he took that language out of the draft being presented here. The District should spend extra money to have the specifics in the bid.

Ms. O'Brien stated that last month, the incident that sparked this document, was because the most qualified, and lowest, bidder was not based in Illinois.

President Swanson stated that the company had been based in Arizona, and was renowned all over the world for their work on cat doors and zoo projects, and the company is an AZA approved vendor. The only reason that people were against them was because they were based in Arizona, which is why that language is proposed and recommended by staff.

Ms. O'Brien asked to confirm that the language would allow the Commission to choose the best company for the job no matter if they were registered in the state of Illinois.

President Swanson stated that another thing that we discovered in the last month since that initial discussion is that there is a lot of difference of opinion as to what meets that mark. Also, the fiduciary responsibility ultimately falls to the Commission. If there is a political cost to following the recommendations of the professional staff as to the right course of action, even if it is a little different than what has taken place in other context, that's part of what we're charged to do. Ultimately it would come down to a vote of the Commission to accept the recommendation of staff, or ignore the professionals and just settle with lowest local bidder.

Dr. Simmer agreed that specialized projects need specialized firms.

Dr. Moreno pointed out that bids coming from vendors can also be affected by the whatever the current economy is. It's important to look at the finances of the District also.

President Swanson stated that it's also important to keep in mind that when we sit here on Commission, our loyalty and first priority should be to the District, and not to any other outside entity. That's part our fiduciary responsibility to the tax payer as well. I wholeheartedly agreed that the responsible bidder resolution should be adopted, because much of the work done within the District can be done by the local general contractors, but there are going to be special cases choosing those local people is irresponsible.

President Swanson wrapped up stating that the draft that is in front of the Committee right now is what will be what is voted on at the January Commission meeting. The language, which I will be happy to send to anyone who cares to see it, would need to be brought up as an

amendment to the presented resolution. Staff and myself would encourage you think on that language.

Adjourned the meeting at 4:50 PM.

Submitted by:  
Cassie Sullivan  
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant