

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES  
MAY 14, 2019**

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

**ABSENT:**

**ALSO PRESENT:** Jeff Craver, District Director; Jay Verstraete, Golf Course Superintendent; Todd Collins, Club House Manager; Lee Jackson, Niabi Zoo Director; April Palmer, Auditor; Louisa Ewert, Treasurer; Bill Nelson, CAB Chairman.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 3:31 PM on Tuesday, May 14, 2019, in the Club House at Indian Bluff Golf Course in Milan, Illinois.

President Swanson called on Mr. Nelson for an update on the Community Advisory Board.

Mr. Nelson stated that a survey was conducted by Western Illinois University, and a follow-up was done also. Valuable information came from those surveys. Some of the information, which was particularly interesting, was that the income level of people who come to the zoo is higher than expected. On average, annual household income is in the \$80,000.00 or higher category. There's always concern about what people can and cannot afford. With that information we can see that in terms of actual customers, that affordability is not an issue. Of course, we do want to make sure that Niabi is accessible to all people regardless of income level, but there are already programs in place for that. The free days, and passes that are available at the local libraries, ensure that admission is not the issue. As long as they can get there, they can get in and enjoy Niabi. What that shows is that we need to address that from a different angle.

President Swanson expressed concern regarding sample bias.

Mr. Nelson stated that, while that is a concern with any survey, the numbers received were substantial enough that it was clear that the information was a good representation, and that the fees are not the way to address that low income level accessibility concern. It needs to be addressed from a different angle. Fees are not the problem, and it's important to make sure that Niabi is able to function with the revenues that are brought in. The Community Advisory Board has also been discussing a policy for gifts and donations. Templates have been submitted to Mr. Jackson and Mr. Craver for them to refine. The main reason I wanted to address the Committee today was to ask for new member suggestions. The final say as to who is on the CAB is up to the Committee, and we've lost several members recently. We're down to seven members, and it is difficult to get a quorum at the meetings. It will not be possible to move forward with the formation of a new 501c3 without more members.

Ms. O'Brien asked what qualities and skills Mr. Nelson was looking for in members.

Mr. Nelson stated that people who are interested in Niabi and in conservation would be the best fit. Some earlier members seemed to have a misconception of the mission that needed fulfilled, and did not grasp the amount of time that this responsibility required. To be blunt, anyone who is interested in using the board as a stepping stone to run for a political office should not be on the board. That isn't what this group is about, and it will only hinder progress.

President Swanson encouraged the Committee to look at people from both sides of the river.

Mr. Nelson stated that it was a good idea to pull in from Iowa as well as surrounding Illinois counties. People see Niabi as a Quad Cities facility, and not just a Rock Island County facility.

President Swanson also mentioned the need to look for people who have contacts and resources that can help Niabi financially as well.

Mr. Nelson stated that, for the CAB, the focus should be to look for people who are committed to Niabi, and are willing to commit their time to share opinions and brainstorm for the zoo. For the 501c3, what we're looking for is people with contacts and resources who want to help raise money for Niabi's mission of conservation and education.

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

**MOTION:** Mr. Maranda moved to approve the April 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 Forest Preserve General Fund claims in the amount of \$33,170.10, Niabi Zoo Fund claims in the amount of \$155,704.30, Golf Course Improvement Fund claims in the amount of \$208.46, Loud Thunder Spillway & Improvements Fund claims in the amount of \$5,807.12, Marvin Martin Fund claims in the amount of \$5,550.94, Development of Forests and Construction Fund claims in the amount of \$8,999.71, and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$6,926.72.

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

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the bid for the Niabi Zoo Perimeter Fence Project.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve the bid for the Niabi Zoo Perimeter Fence Project. Ms. O'Brien seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

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

Mr. Verstraete stated that the course has taken the amount of rain the area has had pretty well. Staff had to work through the rainy weather, but everything got done.

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

Mr. Collins stated that the rain and chilly weather has affected people coming out to golf. It's lucky that the rain hasn't affected the outings. Today has been the first normal day we've had this year.

President Swanson asked Ms. Palmer for the Auditor's Reports.

Ms. Palmer stated that on the trial balance report the purchase orders for the primate exhibit project and the cat house doors project are double counted because of the timing in approval of the purchase orders and the entry of the first billing. The unappropriated balance on the fund balance report is higher than it has been in previous months for the same reason. General Fund revenues are lower than they have been in years past, but so are the expenses.

President Swanson asked Ms. Ewert if there was anything she'd like to bring to the Committee's attention.

Ms. Ewert stated that the first tax distribution will be on June twentieth. Revenue receipts have been coming in from the parks.

Mr. Craver stated that there needed to be an updated resolution with Blackhawk Bank & Trust for authorized people. Would like to put that directly on the Commission agenda, since it wasn't ready to be put on the Committee agenda.

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

Mr. Jackson stated that the rain has missed the weekends for the most part. Niabi got in a young male Amur Leopard, and there should be a female coming from Brookfield to breed with him later in the year. Zoos are more and more becoming conservation and education centers. It's less the stationary circuses that they were in the forties and fifties. Niabi has been trying to set a positive example of conservation in the community. Niabi is now spearheading a conservation program. In talks with other organizations for a project in Paraguay. The trip to South America is not costing the tax payer anything. Those costs are being taken care of from outside the District. Currently in discussions with ZCOG, Zoo Conservation Outreach Group, for funding for this program.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver if there was anything from his report that he wanted to bring attention to.

Mr. Craver stated that weather has been a major topic of conversation all around the area. It was the twelve wettest months on record. This has affected revenue, but staff has been watching expenses to try and compensate for that. There is some fence work and drain work needed at Dorrance, and Illiniwek has still got flooding. Blackhawk College is finishing up at Loud Thunder. The sluice gate has been closed, and the lake will be filling up. It shouldn't take long for the lake to fill up. Loud Thunder is purchasing a couple new docks. Have spoken to HR about getting a monthly report on workers' comp. Still working on specs for cabins that will work with the codes that are now in place. The cabins are secondary to the other campground improvements, but we are still waiting on the state for the paperwork. It is hard to say when construction will be able to start, but hopefully it will be no later than August. However, that is all dependent on when the District is able to get the paperwork from the state.

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

**MOTION:** Mr. Maranda moved to approve all routine reports for the District. Mr. Cremeens seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Adjourned the meeting at 4:29 PM.

Submitted by:  
Cassie Sullivan  
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant