

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
MAY 12, 2020**

PRESENT: Committee members - L. Moreno, K. Swanson, D. Cremeens, A. Normoyle, R. Simmer, K. Maranda, E. Sowards.

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Craver, District Director; Ben Mills, Loud Thunder Ranger; Mike Petersen, Illiniwek Ranger; Lee Jackson, Niabi Zoo Director; Todd Collins, Club House Manager; April Palmer, Auditor; Louisa Ewert, Treasurer; Kurt Davis, Information Systems.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 3:34 PM on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, via teleconference.

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

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

Motion carried.

No request for public comment was submitted.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Forest Preserve claims and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$716,921.75.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve the claims and Treasurer's Disbursements. Ms. Normoyle seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

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

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve the transfers of appropriation in the General Fund and the Niabi Zoo Fund. Ms. Normoyle seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Resolution pertaining to a loan to the Niabi Zoo Fund.

MOTION: Mr. Maranda moved to approve the Resolution pertaining to a loan to the Niabi zoo fund. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Ordinance establishing the compensation of members and officers of the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission.

MOTION: Dr. Moreno moved to approve the Ordinance establishing the compensation of members and officers of the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission. Mr. Maranda seconded the motion.

President Swanson asked if there were any changes to the amounts in the ordinance.

There was no response.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the amendment to the Zoo Director Employment Agreement – temporary salary decrease of twenty percent.

MOTION: Ms. Normoyle moved to approve the amendment to the Zoo Director Employment Agreement – temporary salary decrease of twenty percent. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson stated that the staff has continued to do an amazing job in handling the COVID19 situation.

President Swanson called on Mr. Craver for a discussion on alternative revenue sources.

Mr. Craver apologized as he had his phone on mute during the previous business, and stated that there were some small increases on the stipends in the compensation ordinance. The stipend for the auditor has not been increased for the past twenty years, so that one was increased. There were also smaller increases provided to the Secretary and Treasurer. Will send out specifics on those increases. In regards to the alternative revenue sources, the cash available to the zoo is not sufficient to carry them through to the tax distribution in June. That is why the resolution to loan Niabi money from the Development of Forests and Construction of Improvements Fund was put forth. There is a very strict budget, and staff has taken salary decreases. Even with the loan and tax distributions, it is anticipated that the zoo will run out of cash by the end of the year. At the moment there is nothing available from the state or feds to supplement. Options for alternative revenue sources are limited. Could do Anticipated Tax Notes, though would have to adjust the levies in the fall to try and build a fund balance for Niabi. The tax notes may not be sufficient because there needs to be a surplus due to depleting all the reserves that they have. The District would be looking at a cycle of about four to six years of attempting to put together a surplus budget for Niabi. Another option is to take out a bond, which would come all at once. Money would have to be managed accordingly, and

payment plan established. The bond process would take approximately three months before the funds would be available. There would not be a pre-payoff option for the bonds.

Ms. Normoyle asked for clarification that normally the District goes out for bonds for large capital improvement projects, but this would be solely for operational expenses?

Mr. Craver answered that, yes, this would incorporate general obligation bonds that could be used for any need throughout the District.

Ms. Palmer stated that a few things that had already been discussed with Mr. Craver were that going out for bonds would affect the credit rating of both the District and the County. Many Counties are shying away from this option because of the long term affects it would have on the entity. Also, with the bonds, if you have money and want to save on interest and pay it off early, there are penalties the District would have to pay. If the District were to receive money in the future from the state or feds, the District would not be able to use it to pay on the bonds. However, with the tax anticipation notes/warrants, the District would be able to put the money toward paying back that money without penalty. These are all things that I brought up with Mr. Craver via email earlier this week to keep in mind when making these difficult decisions.

President Swanson stated that this was not something that needed to be decided on right now, but Mr. Craver is very proactive and prudent in giving us this information. That gives the Committee time to consider all the options and how it might affect future boards as we have seen firsthand. These will not be easy decisions, and I appreciate that Mr. Craver and the other leadership of the District are presenting options early so the Committee has time to give full consideration to these decisions.

Mr. Craver stated that the bonds would definitely limit options in the future more so than the tax anticipation notes/warrants. There would likely be a couple months of preparation for the notes.

Mr. Cremeens asked, to verify, that the District had not yet made any commitments regarding the cabins.

Mr. Craver confirmed that the cabins were currently on hold.

President Swanson asked Ms. Ewert if there was anything she would like to bring attention to from the report.

Ms. Ewert stated that staff was still trying to balance out April. There are a couple hiccups with the new system importing to New World, but that is getting close to balancing. The Tax Anticipation Notes/Warrants would indeed take around two months before money would be available. Interest rates have dropped significantly.

There was a brief discussion on the issues with the import files from the new POS system.

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

Ms. Palmer stated that the general fund was only under the five month reserve by a small amount, and that fund will only need to dip into that reserve for two months until the June tax distribution. General Fund will likely be ok for the next six months, and possibly a bit longer. Cash is down from this time last year, which is not surprising given the situation. Niabi is definitely in need of funds to make it through until it can reopen and start bringing in the normal amount of revenue. In regards to getting money from the feds, many counties have been in contact in an attempt to make visible the issues that many county and districts are facing in the COVID-19 situation. There are some programs for relief of costs directly related to dealing with COVID, but the District may not qualify for those funds.

President Swanson asked Mr. Collins if there was anything to bring attention to in the Indian Bluff reports.

Mr. Collins stated that the golf course was able to open to very tightly restricted play. Only two people to a group, and the amount of groups that are able to be on the course at a time is limited. The maximum amount of plays that can go through the course in a day is eight-four. That being said, there are still people coming out and golfing, and we are having people pre-pay online to minimize the contact that everyone is having with each other. Most June outings have rescheduled to later this year.

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

Mr. Petersen stated that Illiniwek staff has been working on maintaining the grounds and invasive species removal. Illiniwek has received two grants for pollinator prairie plantings.

President Swanson asked if there were many people taking advantage of the trails at Illiniwek.

Mr. Petersen stated that there were.

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

Mr. Mills stated that work at Loud Thunder has been similar to Illiniwek. There are lots of people coming out to use the lake and the trails. The new campground project is on schedule. There is a group wanting to have a hiking event in September at Loud Thunder.

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

Mr. Jackson stated that there wasn't much to add to the report. Have been in talks with the Society, and they have agreed to give Niabi about \$20,000.00 for food for the animals over the next few months. Will be continuing discussion with them going forward since that is a significant part of Niabi's budget. Staff has developed some subscription education services to bring in revenue during this time, and there has been interest in those services.

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

Mr. Craver stated that staff has been doing an excellent job in handling this situation. Starting today, staff has been moving around to other facilities to help alleviate seasonal labor. Luckily, Illiniwek was not hit as hard by the flood as it was last year. There has been a bit of storm damage. Trying to keep costs down as much as possible. Staff is keeping on top of the Restore Illinois plan and seeing what adjustments will need to be made in order to open as soon as guidelines allow.

President Swanson stated that before opening up to questions for Mr. Craver, would like to congratulate him on his recent appointment to the Illinois Park and Recreation Association's Forest Preserve and Conservation Districts Task Force.

The Committee congratulated Mr. Craver. There were no questions from the Committee.

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. Ms. Normoyle and Mr. Cremeens seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Adjourned the meeting at 4:39 PM.

Submitted by:
Cassie Sullivan
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant