

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES  
JUNE 9, 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; Kurt Davis, Information Systems; Dan Ballard, Illiniwek Assistant Ranger.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 3:32 PM on Tuesday, June 9, 2020, via teleconference.

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

**MOTION:** Mr. Maranda moved to approve the May Committee meeting minutes. Dr. Simmer 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 \$609,291.92.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno 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 Liability Fund.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the transfers of appropriation in the General Fund and the Liability Fund. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

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

Mr. Craver stated that in continuing the conversation from last month on alternative revenue options for Niabi. The zoo is still closed. The earliest that it could open up would be the end June when phase four is anticipated to begin. Staff has taken steps to reduce expenditures as

much as possible, but it hasn't been sufficient to balance with the lost revenue. That has been chipping away at the reserves. Hopefully, once Niabi opens they can close the gap a significant amount. The fund balance that was built up may be completely depleted. When the other parks opened up, there was a surge of revenue. People are eager to get out and enjoy themselves. Last month there were options and materials provided for the Committee to review and consider. The two real options are the bonds, which will take about three months to secure, and the tax anticipation warrants/notes, which will take two months to secure. The notes may not be enough to get Niabi through the lean time.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver what he saw as the time line for a decision to be made by the Committee.

Mr. Craver stated that a decision should be made no later than September board.

President Swanson asked Mr. Jackson when he thought Niabi might be able to open.

Mr. Jackson stated that it was hard to predict when the state will begin phase four of the reopening. Staff has been coming up with plans as best they can without knowing for certain what the restrictions/guidelines will be. The assumption staff is operating under is that the end of June is when Niabi will be able to open.

Mr. Maranda asked if Pints would be able to happen, and if it was, if there was a possibility to double up on the event.

Mr. Jackson stated that he didn't anticipate Pints would happen at the usual end of August date, and possibly not at all this year depending on the amount of people who are allowed to gather at one time.

Dr. Simmer asked if a golf outing might be possible to raise funds for Niabi.

Mr. Collins stated that it would depend on if the golf course is able to have outings. Currently, the major hindrance to outings are a lack of carts.

Ms. Normoyle asked if renting carts was an option.

Mr. Collins stated that the price of renting carts made it cost prohibitive.

President Swanson commended the staff for finding ways to generate revenues right now, and called on Ms. Palmer for the Auditor's Reports.

Ms. Palmer stated that there is nothing new to report. The cash is in a dire situation, so talking about the alternative revenue sources should be done sooner rather than later. Otherwise, Niabi will need to borrow from within the District again. The prediction for the first tax distribution, which will take place this month, is that less than thirty percent of the taxes for the year. Normally it would be a little over thirty percent collected by June, but it is anticipated that

this year people will need to wait due to money constraints because of COVID. That will affect all funds that are supported by tax levies.

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 is still unable to do leagues or outings because of the number of carts there are and the restrictions surrounding them. Hopefully, that will change in July when phase four is anticipated. The snack shack is now up and running.

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

Mr. Petersen stated that the campground opened at the end of May, and has since been busy.

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

Mr. Mills stated that Loud Thunder was also quite busy since the camp grounds opened on May twenty-ninth. The three campgrounds that are currently open were completely full, and there were several times where all the boats were out at once. A grant was received for lifejackets for the boat rental. Grading is done in the new Deer Haven sites, so seeding can now be done. Once there is grass, the sites will be able to be rented.

President Swanson stated that some rental facilities have begun to charge a cleaning fee to help mitigate the extra cleaning expenses. The facilities are needing to cleaning more frequently now. Especially with things like boat rentals, cart rentals, and the train. If staff wanted to consider this, and bring it to the Committee, it would be given true consideration.

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

Mr. Jackson stated that there was nothing additional from the report in the packet. The highlight has been that staff are working on plans for how to handle the opening in phase four when it happens. There's not a lot that can be put in place until the guidelines are provided, but staff is doing its best to anticipate what will be needed.

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

Mr. Craver stated thanked the District staff for getting the camp grounds open and ready in such a short amount of time. The guidelines came out on May 27<sup>th</sup>, and the campgrounds opened two days later. Hopefully, zoos will get more warning. Luckily the campground adjustments weren't severe. The parks have been very busy since the opening, and staff has been handling things well. With any luck people will stay local in their vacations, and come out to enjoy local attractions.

Ms. Normoyle asked what the map at the end of the packet was about.

Mr. Craver stated that someone who lived near the golf course had passed away recently, and their estate contacted the District to see if there was interest in acquiring the land. It is possible to apply for grants, and there is the Loud Thunder Endowment that's for acquiring lands for the District.

There was a brief discussion asking about what the land might be used for, and Mr. Craver was directed to get more information, and keep the conversation open on purchase of the land.

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. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for members of the public who wished to make public comment.

Mr. Dan Ballard was recognized, and stated that the Peoria Zoo had opened to the public May 30<sup>th</sup>, and perhaps Niabi could see how they were doing it.

President Swanson asked Mr. Jackson if he was aware of this.

Mr. Jackson stated that he was aware of it, and have been in contact with them. Staff has not been given permission to do that. Peoria Zoo was able to get permission from their county to open.

Adjourned the meeting at 4:25 PM.

Submitted by:  
Cassie Sullivan  
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant