

NIABI ZOO COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD – MARCH 2018 MEETING

IN ATTENDANCE

Bill Nelson – Chair	Kat Broughton	Luke VanLandegen
Liz Dierolf – Vice Chair	Dr. Laura Crowe	
Gerald Correthers - Secretary	Mik Holgersson	
Lee Jackson – Niabi Director	Kathy Matherly	

MEETING MINUTES

1. Guest: Joel Vanderbush – Niabi Zoo Education staff; Amy Behning – MindFire Communications
2. February meeting minutes – Due to short timeframe to review minutes, approval postponed until April meeting
3. Completing Open Meeting required training: each member of CAB needs to complete 45 min. online training to be in compliance with IL requirements for public entities. Need to complete and print certificate by April meeting so Forest Preserve can keep on file. Link: <https://foia.ilattorneygeneral.net/CreateAccount.aspx>
4. Lead-in to marketing presentation: discussion on current marketing, ways to get more education, information, and advertisement to visitors
 - a. Questions to ask in survey form to visitors:
 - i. How many times do you typically visit the Zoo each season? What would bring you back more often?
 - ii. What information or education would you like to have at each exhibit? (wanting to assess which aspect is more meaningful – animal educational information, more “fun” information, more conservation call-to-action or information available, more experiential exhibits)
 - iii. When to ask questions – possible volunteers stationed throughout Zoo or at exit
 - b. Themes – using exhibits to create “interpretive theme” that rotates every few months
 - i. Ex: pollinators – use existing pollinator exhibit and tie messaging, informative signage, activities/events, marketing for all other exhibits to how they relate to pollinators
 - ii. Ex: nocturnal animals – twilight hours open at the Zoo one night, an Owl Walk, feature the Bats exhibit, etc.
 - c. Coordinating technology to create experiences

- i. Lee connected with Augustana College class who can create a mobile app for the Zoo, can create theme-focused features that can change throughout the season, offer extra information about exhibits, hold calendar of Zoo events, etc.
 - ii. Social media – videos of animals doing extremely well, can keep using social to promote education and conservation and connect people to upcoming Zoo events
- 5. MindFire presentation – taking results from broad Forest Preserve survey (done around 2 years ago), MindFire has updated marketing/communications recommendations: see MindFire handout
- 6. Master Planning – team doing preliminary work, consultants returning Apr. 11 & 12; CAB welcome to attend and meet with master plan team
- 7. Additional CAB members
 - a. CAB currently at eight members, Forest Preserve could appoint replacements for those who have had to step down due to workload or scheduling conflicts
 - b. CAB will take nominations from members and past members each month until slots filled, recommend individuals to Forest Preserve to vet
- 8. 501(c)3 Application for CAB
 - a. What is it? An IRS determination for an organized group formed with the intent to raise money for a cause, which allows the group to collect and distribute funds without paying federal and state income and sales taxes. 501(c)3 or other nonprofit, tax-exempt status is required by an entity to be able to fund raise, accept donations, or apply for grant funding on behalf of Niabi Zoo.
 - b. Reasoning: Niabi Zoological Society has failed to follow through on agreed-upon action to transfer funds raised for Niabi to the zoo director to pay for needed repairs and new projects. Without an active 501(c)3 status, the Zoo will have difficulty soliciting for monetary support or applying for grants to transform and enhance the attraction for the community. Niabi Zoo needs a regulated, active, compliant Foundation to raise necessary funds and generate individual and business community support for the long-term planning goals of the Zoo – Lee Jackson
 - c. Options:
 - i. The CAB can apply for new 501(c)3 status – involves 4-6 month processing period, application fees (approx. \$800), possible creation of new bi-laws and policies for finances
 - ii. The CAB can assume 'ownership' of existing, compliant 501(c)3 federal ID of organization Joel Vanderbush previously worked with in Indiana: Animalia – name, contact information, address of operation, and other information can all change to reflect Niabi Zoo; Animalia's current board voted to transfer the federal ID to Niabi at February meeting; involves no processing time, no application fees, and bi-laws/policies can be adjusted from what is already in existence – Joel Vanderbush
 - d. Discussion:
 - i. Without Niabi Zoological Society actively collaborating with the Zoo to distribute funds and to raise additional dollars, the Zoo needs a long-term

alternative solution; another group could develop a 501(c)3 but the Zoo cannot because it is managed by a governmental entity; CAB is the logical group to assume this role at this point in time – Bill Nelson

- ii. CAB members will discuss at a future meeting whether a separate, elected or appointed group should serve as the Board of Directors for the new 501(c)3 versus current CAB group; Mik Holgersson, Luke VanLandegen question whether public will have perception issue given CAB members are appointed by Forest Preserve; Bill, Lee determine need is there and CAB can field questions and work on public perception once transfer is completed
- iii. Motion to send recommendation to Forest Preserve March meeting that CAB form 501(c)3 for purpose of establishing fund raising and donation collection on behalf of Niabi Zoo – Kathy motion, Luke 2nd; unanimous decision

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm

Report to the Rock Island Forest Preserve

February 20, 2018

Hello. I am pleased to represent the Community Advisory Board as its Chairman, and to report to the Rock Island Forest Preserve our activities to date.

First of all, I want to thank the Forest Preserve Commission for enabling a group of citizens, who you selected; to study, discuss, and recommend direction on items of interest that pertain to Niabi Zoo.

We understand that we serve to support the Forest Preserve District, and Niabi Zoo in particular. It is our intent to serve as a community support group for the Zoo and the Forest Preserve Commission.

It is also an opportunity for the Forest Preserve Commission to enable a group of citizens to become the "experts" on the operations of the Zoo. Through the use of the CAB; ideas, plans, expansions, and fundraising can be vetted before coming to a vote for the Forest Preserve Commission.

It is an opportunity for the Commission to request a recommendation from the CAB on issues that pertain to the Zoo with the understanding that all final actions are determined by the Forest Preserve Commission.

With the desire for Government to be more open in its actions, this is a good model to include citizen input.

I also wish to commend the Commission on the selection of CAB members. It is a diverse group that comes from several walks of life and includes a good representation of our citizens.

Now on with our report.

Our first meeting was held on November 13th of 2017, when officers were selected, and a range of topics were discussed plus a report from the Zoo Director. One of the very first topics of interest were the fees for the Zoo and a recommendation that we supported the report of the Zoo Director for the increase in fees. The Chairman of the Forest Preserve also provided us with some background on how and why the CAB was formed, and what our purpose was.

The first few meetings helped us to get our feet under us. We identified who could attend meetings and in the case of some, find that the purpose of the CAB and their understanding of CAB did not match up for them. As a result, there are some vacancies on the Board that could be filled. The CAB will have met a total of four times as of this report, so direction is becoming more focused as we move along in a fairly short time.

As noted earlier, fees were an early topic with quite a bit of discussion. While there is a desire for the zoo to be affordable, it is equally important that the fees are competitive with other recreational outlets, and pay the bills of the Zoo.

There is recognition that there are several opportunities for economically disadvantaged to have access to the Zoo, but the greater issue is transportation, and personal adult desire to attend the Zoo with children. Future discussion will be on how to target those individuals who do not have the resources to get to the Zoo, and find ways to get that experience into their "wheelhouse".

The vast majority of the individuals who would come to the zoo, have the resources to pay the entry fee that supports the operations of the zoo.

Another topic that was discussed and had general agreement was a Vision and Mission statement for the CAB. These are not final, but helped us to move along in our meetings.

Vision: It is the Vision of the Niabi Zoo Community Advisory Board to assist in developing an outstanding Zoological Park Attraction.

Mission: The Mission of the Niabi Zoo Community Advisory Board is to support and advise the Rock Island Forest Preserve District in an effort to provide a first class experience for visitors and quality care for the collections.

While we are still in our infancy as a Board, some of the topics on our current and future agendas cover the following:

- Options for increasing revenue or attendance which results in improved operational funds
- Review of the Forest Preserve Survey provided by Mindfire, and how it relates to the Zoo.
- Discussion and Review of the Master Plan for the Zoo.
- Possible additional surveys that pertain to the Zoo and the community desires.
- Reports from the Zoo Director and Staff on operations of the Zoo.

As a manner of communication, we will provide the minutes of our meetings with the Forest Preserve Commission, and we encourage the Commission to send us matters of concern that you have with the future of the Zoo.

Our purpose is to be the sounding board and promoters of Niabi Zoo as a group of citizens. Thank you for that opportunity.

Please let me know if you have any questions.