

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
AUGUST 14, 2018**

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

ABSENT: K. Maranda.

ALSO PRESENT: L. Burns, District five Commissioner; J. Deppe, District nine Commissioner; R. Brunk, District thirteen Commissioner; Jeff Craver, District Director; Mike Petersen, Illiniwek Ranger; Jay Verstraete, Golf Course Superintendent; Ben Mills, Loud Thunder Ranger; Lee Jackson, Zoo Director; April Palmer, Auditor; Louisa Ewert, Treasurer; Carrie Kerr, Treasurer's Office; John Fellman, IMEG Representative; Jim Snider, County Administrator; Scott Lohman.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 3:30 PM on Tuesday, August 14, 2018, in the County Board Office on the second floor of the County Building, Rock Island, Illinois.

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

MOTION: Mr. Cremeens moved to approve the July Committee meeting minutes. Ms. O'Brien seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

No request for public comment was submitted.

President Swanson called on Mr. Verstraete for his report due to needing to get back to the golf course.

Mr. Verstraete stated that since the second week of May the weather has required that staff watch the course very carefully. The Bluff has been very busy. Staff has been working on new tees and those have opened up. Identification of places to expand and work on preservation as well. Yesterday saved about twenty-five baby snapping turtles.

President Swanson called on Mr. Petersen for his report due to needing to get back to Illiniwek.

Mr. Petersen stated that it has been a typical summer, and numbers have been up from last year. Four events were held in July. Lighting project at Dorrance is underway.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the fiscal year 2018 claims for the Forest Preserve General Fund claims in the amount of \$15,953.70, Niabi Zoo Fund claims in the amount of \$80,929.55, Loud Thunder Spillway and Camping

Improvements Fund claims in the amount of \$25,870.00, and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$38,819.02.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the old year claims. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the fiscal year 2019 Forest Preserve General Fund claims in the amount of \$37,114.79, Niabi Zoo Fund claims in the amount of \$51,917.52, Marvin Martin Fund claims in the amount of \$65,156.52, and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$177,241.00.

MOTION: Ms. O'Brien moved to approve the new year claims. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the fiscal year 2018 transfers of appropriation in the General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund.

MOTION: Dr. Moreno moved to approve the fiscal year 2018 transfers of appropriation in the General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund. Dr. O'Brien seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the fiscal year 2019 transfers of appropriation in the General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund.

MOTION: Ms. O'Brien moved to approve the fiscal year 2019 transfers of appropriation in the General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the fiscal year 2019 Appropriation Amendment Resolution for the General Fund.

MOTION: Dr. Moreno moved to approve the fiscal year 2019 Appropriation Amendment Resolution for the General Fund. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to lay on display for thirty days Schedule A of the fiscal year 2020 Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinances for the General Fund of the District, Niabi Zoological Preserve Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, Liability Fund, FISSA Fund, and Development of Forests & Construction of Improvements Fund.

MOTION: Ms. O'Brien moved to lay on display for thirty days Schedule A of the fiscal year 2020 Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinances for the General Fund of the District, Niabi Zoological Preserve Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, Liability Fund, FISSA Fund, and Development of Forests & Construction of Improvements Fund. Mr. Cremeens seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the fiscal year 2018 Appropriation Amendment Resolution for the Niabi Zoo Fund.

MOTION: Ms. O'Brien moved to approve the fiscal year 2018 Appropriation Amendment Resolution for the Niabi Zoo Fund. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the low bid for the Lake George Dam and Spillway repairs.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the low bid for the Lake George Dam and Spillway repairs. Ms. Sowards and Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Mr. Craver stated that Mr. Fellman of IMEG is here to answer any questions the Committee may have, and also to present a Construction and Observation Agreement for the work on the Spillway and Dam repairs.

Mr. Fellman stated that the agreement is for supervising the company making repairs to the specifications that were laid out and to document progress. The inspector would spend, on average, six hours a day through Autumn. In the Spring there would be some clean up and finalization with seedings, which is estimated at an average of four hours a day. The documentation would be in the form of photos and weekly reports.

Mr. Craver stated that the estimate is not to exceeding \$85,000.00. This is not on the agenda for this meeting; it is requested that it be put on the Commission agenda for Tuesday night's meeting. This is a common practice when doing work like this.

There was consensus to put the agreement on the August Commission agenda.

Dr. Simmer asked if Mr. Fellman has ever worked with Phoenix Corporation of the Quad Cities before.

Mr. Fellman stated that he had, though not on a Dam and Spillway project. Phoenix Corporation is a qualified company, and they have done very similar work in the past.

President Swanson called for a motion to lay on display for thirty days the District's Comprehensive Park Plan.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to lay on display for thirty days the District's Comprehensive Park Plan. Ms. O'Brien and Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

President Swanson thanked the staff for all the hard work that went into the planning for the preserves. The District has a dedicated staff with many years of experience, and that shows in the Comprehensive Park Plan.

Motion carried.

Mr. Craver stated that this plan presented is an update of the 2013 Park Plan.

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

Ms. Ewert stated that the framed pictures of the District's Preserves that was provided by Mr. Craver is proudly displayed in the Treasurer's Office, and there have many compliments on it.

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

Ms. Palmer stated that in the packet this month are old fiscal year close-out reports in addition to the current year reports. Trial Balances for the new year look good. Almost all funds are able to meet the five-month reserve for the Fund Balances report. The audited numbers may be even better than what is currently seen. There are still a couple weeks to back date expenses and revenues into the old year as appropriate. The external auditors will be in the office for field work on September 14th through 17th. Are there any questions regarding fiscal year 2018?

There were no questions.

Ms. Palmer stated that the current year reports look good, and there is nothing of note on the Trial Balance or Fund Balances reports. On the cash balances report, it is of note that the District as a whole is up half a million dollars from this time last year, and that is without taking into account the bond money for the Dam repairs and camping improvements at Loud Thunder. Also worth mentioning is that the District qualifies for a \$15,000.00 per year discount on the IPARKS payment for the next three years.

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

Mr. Mills stated that Niabi and Illiniwek staff assisted Loud Thunder staff in putting together the new playground, which is located at the Riverview campground. There is

still some leveling of the ground surrounding the playground that needs to be done before the playground can be opened up for use. Staff will be planting more prairie in December, and while the lake is drained down staff will be doing some habitat work. Able to secure a matching grant from River Action for installing bridges on the trail system.

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

Mr. Jackson stated that the American Badgers have arrived and are in quarantine as per procedure. The Education Department has been excelling and growing this year. Three electric scooters are now available for our guests with special needs. Members night was up from last, and was a great success. The application for AZA accreditation, and will be submitted tomorrow morning. Staff continues to respond to media inquiries regarding the memorials at Niabi, and have concept drawings in the works for the memorial garden.

Dr. Moreno expressed concern with the memorials. Are those plaques going to be replaced? It's concerning to see how this was handled. While we don't want to micromanage the operations at the facilities, a heads up would have been nice and gone a long way when Commissioners are getting contacted regarding the issue. When moving a memorial that has been paid for, it is insensitive not to contact the person who paid for the memorial. You've done a great job with Niabi, and this is not personal attack, but felt the need to express the concern in how the project is starting off.

Mr. Jackson stated that he agreed that the initial step of the project could have been handle much better. If I could go back, it would be done differently.

Dr. Moreno stated that he was in favor of creating a memorial garden, but did not agree with moving the current memorials at Niabi.

Mr. Jackson stated that as exhibits at Niabi change and improve, those things can't stay where they are because space is needed to bring in those new features. I have talked to people who said that they only got a bench because they wanted to sit in front of a certain exhibit because it was their favorite. I completely understand that view. However, the collection changes, the facility changes, and the layout of the zoo changes, and we can't guarantee where the plaque will be.

Mr. Brunk stated that he understands that some of the plaques and benches may have been defaced or damaged, and I can understand needing to get those replaced or move their location. However, as Mr. Moreno stated, if these families have purchased this specifically to go on a bench, since the records exist...

President Swanson and Mr. Jackson stated that the records did not exist, and that was misrepresented in the media.

Mr. Brunk continued by stating that reaching out to families should have occurred before removing the plaques. This is a matter of acting with sympathy towards the people who purchased the memorial. The situation has blown up on social media, and I have yet to hear an explanation to justify the full action here. Feel that staff needs to work with the people who purchased the item, and find a solution to the issue.

Ms. O'Brien stated that she has noticed there were large stone monuments around some of the exhibits. Are those still in place?

Mr. Jackson stated that those were not memorials. Those stones are sponsorships for those specific exhibits, so they are still in place.

Ms. O'Brien asked Mr. Jackson what he felt was the best way to reach out to the families affected, and soothing hurt feelings.

Mr. Jackson stated that staff is in the process of collecting contact information for the seventy-seven memorial plaques that were moved. So far staff has been able to get fifteen contact names. Thursday I'm meeting with a family, and I've been discussing this with other families also.

President Swanson stated that he appreciated Mr. Jackson being so candid in this, and take this opportunity to go through some of the governance changes that the District is trying to make. It should not come as a great shock to anyone that prior to 2015/2016 the policies and procedures at Niabi were nowhere near industry standard. That's why the AZA accreditation was lost. The most important step that the District took to correct that is taking the advice of an internationally recognized consulting firm, and hired Mr. Jackson. Other steps are that the District is pivoting to a different style of governance, and that is to avoid micromanagement. While currently we are in the middle of a social media maelstrom, and the Commissioners have experience with that, there needs to be a focus on is that our policies on philanthropy, memorials, legacies, and endowments are far below industry standard. Industry standard is for the memorial to be three times the cost of the actual item, and to only be set in place for a specific amount of time. This is because the idea behind giving a memorial donation is not to create a cemetery space, but to support the institution. What I'd like to encourage the Commission and Committee to do is to charge the Community Advisory Board, which has been put in place to assist Niabi in areas like this, to do some research and put together a policy regarding legacies and endowed gifts that is industry standard. A mistake is only a failure if you refuse to learn from it.

Mr. Brunk stated that he agreed that better policies needed to be put in place to meet industry standards going forward, but did not think that changes should be made to existing memorials as a consideration of the purchaser's feelings.

President Swanson stated that without knowing what representation were made to the purchasers, the District cannot realistically just keep the plaques in perpetuity. That isn't how memorials work. An example of how things like that usually work is the WWII

Museum in New Orleans where three local men have memorial bricks. I was working with one of the family members when they bought those bricks. There is a contract that's signed, and that's a memorial that is in place and guaranteed for, I believe, a period of twenty to twenty-five years. I agree wholeheartedly that we have to consider the purchaser's feelings when we respond, but Niabi can't guarantee that the plaques will be there forever.

Mr. Brunk asked what stipulations and time limit were being put in place for the memorial garden.

Mr. Jackson stated that because the staff has no idea what stipulations were agreed upon originally, that the memorial garden would be a permanent structure to honor the people who got memorials at Niabi.

Ms. Sowards asked what the reaction of the families who have been contacted have been.

Mr. Jackson stated that part of the issue was that only part of the information was put in front of the eyes of the general public. Once things were fully explained that the name and plaque would still have a place in Niabi, they were very happy.

Ms. Sowards asked if the plaques that were damaged are being replaced.

Mr. Jackson stated that they were going to be replaced. Currently, due to some of the plaques being damaged, we do not have all the plaques, but we do have all the names so that the damaged ones can be replaced.

Ms. O'Brien suggested that the CAB could also help in coming up a filing system to gather and keep track of current memorials, so this doesn't happen again. I would be happy to volunteer my personal time to assist in this endeavor.

President Swanson pointed out that it is important for Commissioners to respond instead of react to comments from the public. If you don't know an answer off the top of your head, tell them that you'll find out and get back to them.

Mr. Craver stated that while it is important to ensure that there's a policy in place for Niabi, it is equally important to have a policy for the District as a whole. While the other preserves don't receive donations as frequently as Niabi, they do receive them from time to time. There is one individual requested a return of their item. As the money was not given to the District, staff feels that we do not have the authorization to make that decision. It's up to the Committee if they want to allow the return.

President Swanson called for a motion to allow this individual request to take possession of their item.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to allow this individual request to take possession of their item. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Mr. Brunk felt that the decision was premature as the family may change their mind in a month or so down the line depending on what policies and decisions were made regarding this issue.

President Swanson felt that honoring the family's request in a timely manner was of more importance. Staff is on the front lines of this issue, and if the family is not appeased with the plans that the staff is making, then we should honor the family's wishes.

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

Mr. Craver stated that in the packet is an Intergovernmental Agreement between the District and the Sheriff's Office formally stating what has been the practice regarding the EMA Building at Indian Bluff. There are several things that staff going to be addressing that were brought to light in the annual risk assessment that is done by IPARKS for the District's liability coverage. One of which is removing the playground at Indian Bluff Golf Course. It is never used. Also included in the packet is an update on the camping improvement plans for Loud Thunder. Some of those plans needed to be reworked due to logistics. Septic for the Equestrian only sites have been added in. Staff believes that the plans should be finalized in the near future. The cabins are being rethought and reconsidered also. Originally it was planned to do four modular home layouts, but now staff is looking into giving each cabin a unique theme. The shade structures for the giraffes should be getting installed in the next few weeks.

Adjourned the meeting at 5:07 PM.

Submitted by:
Cassie Sullivan
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant