

## NIABI ZOO OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 16, 2016

**PRESENT:** Committee members . T. Brahm, M. Byrne, J. Taylor.

**ABSENT:** J. Craver, T. Jarrett.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Dan Meates, Interim Zoo Director; Jill Roderick, Education and Conservation Curator; Scott Hesselberg, Maintenance Superintendent; Scarlet Behrens, Guest Services Manager; Dr. Lauren Hughes, Animal Family Veterinary Care; John Ferrell; Niabi Zoological Society; Mr. Biddle, Schultz & Williams(via phone); Catherine Grace, Schultz & Williams(via phone); four members of zoo keeper staff; Scott Lohman.

Chairman Taylor called the meeting of the Niabi Zoo Committee to order at 5:03 PM on Tuesday, February 16, 2016, in the Education Room of the Administration Building at Niabi Zoo in Coal Valley, Illinois.

Chairman Taylor stated that since there was no quorum yet the agenda would be taken a bit out of order. Discussion items could be discussed, but items that required action would wait until a third member arrived. Then called on Mr. Biddle and Ms. Grace for an update on the director search.

Mr. Biddle stated that each day a few more applications are received. We skyped with another candidate today. In the first weeks of March, which will hopefully coincide with an Oversight Committee meeting, we'd like to bring out some of the candidates to meet the staff and tour the zoo. Currently there have been 26 or 27 people who have applied, and each have been talked to. The posting will be closed officially on February 19<sup>th</sup>. If the Oversight Committee decides to go ahead with the meeting scheduled next week, that would be an excellent time to present the final list of the people we'd like to bring in for meeting the staff and the tour. Very happy to hear that the MOU is nearly finalize. Believe it is being officially approved by the Commission tonight. We will be having a conversation with Mr. Ferrell on Thursday looking at the case for support and use that to identify some revenue within the Quad Cities. The other thing that's important from the Mindfire stand point is that we start to get the story out about the progress that's being made. The MOU, the case for support, and maybe start to talk about what's going to be happening in the spring at Niabi Zoo. The Quarters for Conservation story that went out is good, and we want to make sure to see more of that.

Mr. Meates stated that staff would be meeting with Mindfire tomorrow, and Mindfire will also be at the next meeting of the Oversight Committee.

Mr. Biddle stated that it will be good to get Mindfire in now that they've had a few weeks on the job, and talk about what's coming in the spring for Niabi Zoo. Ms. Grace and I have a couple of ideas that we'd like to share with Mindfire.

Chairman Taylor stated that the Oversight Committee will go ahead and keep the scheduled meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, since there seems to be several things that need discussed.

Mr. Biddle stated that Schultz & Williams will have a document ready to present to the Oversight Committee regarding the Director search in time for that meeting. It will be a list of candidates and their qualifications that Schultz & Williams believe should be considered and be brought out to the zoo for the tour and to meet with staff and, hopefully the Oversight Committee.

Chairman Taylor stated that the dates in March that the Oversight Committee is anticipating the visit is March 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. The Oversight Committee is scheduled to meet March 8<sup>th</sup>, so that should work out well. Then asked if there was anything else that Mr. Biddle would like to discuss.

Mr. Biddle stated that the Code of Conduct was provided. Felt it was important in light of the progress being made that the Oversight Committee get a Code of Conduct that would match up with the District's. Now that the MOU is pretty much done, the next big step is hiring the Director. After the Director is hired, the next big step will be putting together the management agreement.

Chairman Taylor thanked Mr. Biddle for the update, and called on Mr. Meates for his report.

Mr. Meates reported that things were moving forward toward opening day. The 3<sup>rd</sup> version of the Project Matrix is nearly complete and will be ready to present to the Oversight Committee. The Meerkat and Porcupine integration is going well. It looks like next week I'll be heading to pick up the Amur Leopard, which is the rarest cat in the world. It's been discussed in previous meetings. The next press release will be on the care of the zoo's geriatric cats.

Mr. Brahm asked Mr. Meates if he had been working with Mr. Biddle on the Project Matrix.

Mr. Meates answered that he had.

Mr. Brahm asked to confirm that the plan is then to go to the Society for funding.

Mr. Meates confirmed that that was the plan.

Mr. Brahm stated that on page two of Mr. Meates report it states that money for the x-ray equipment has been requested. More information was requested before the Oversight Committee was willing to make a final determination on that purchase.

Dr. Hughes stated that the brochures were here for the equipment that had been demonstrated to the Clinic. There is a time limit to the discounted price. The Committee can look through those brochures, and ask any further questions that come to mind.

Chairman Taylor called on Mr. Ferrell for an update from the Society.

Mr. Ferrell stated that the Society had been working on events. Golf Outing will either be June 10<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> at Oakwood. We're just waiting for their board of directors to get back to us on that. Things are still up in the air on Zoofari. The Society doesn't really have anything to hang its hat on yet. It might be a welcome to the new director, but nothing's been decided on the Zoofari event. The Society does have 25,000 from the RDA, but we were talking and maybe splitting it up or transferring it to a different event. Zoofari is something I'd like to discuss with Mr. Biddle on Thursday.

Chairman Taylor stated that he and Mr. Ferrell had discussed getting in front of the RDA board and talking with them to bring them up to date on what's happening with the zoo and the Society. Not necessarily asking for money, but giving an update and trying to be ahead of the curve on presenting information before they ask questions.

Mr. Brahm stated that with the events coming up, Mindfire will have to be involved. Is that being done already, or is that being coordinated?

Mr. Ferrell answered that dialogue had just begun last night. I brought samples of banners and signs that have gone on the golf holes that we've had in the past. It would probably be better if we get assigned somebody, because in the past someone from Pear has always been on those planning boards and so communication took place at those meetings. We're also looking for some true costs. Those will likely be more than in years past because of the retainer that was paid to Pear.

Ms. Behrens stated that she would talk to Mindfire tomorrow at the meeting.

At this point a third Committee member arrived.

Roll was called:

T. Brahm, M. Byrne, J. Taylor.

**Total Present        3**

J. Craver, T. Jarrett.

**Total Absent        2**

Chairman Taylor called for a motion to approve the consent items.

Mr. Byrne asked that Mr. Meates report be removed from the consent items, because there were a few questions he had regarding the report.

Chairman Taylor called for a motion to approve the consent items, minus Mr. Meates report.

**MOTION:** Mr. Byrne moved to approve the consent items, minus Mr. Meates report. Mr. Brahm seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Chairman Taylor called for a motion to approve the January 26<sup>th</sup> and February 4<sup>th</sup> Oversight Committee meeting minutes.

**MOTION:** Mr. Brahm moved to approve the January 26<sup>th</sup> and February 4<sup>th</sup> Oversight Committee meeting minutes with the correction to the headings on each minutes. Mr. Byrne seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Chairman Taylor called on Mr. Meates to go over his report for Mr. Byrne.

Mr. Meates went over the information, and asked if Mr. Byrne had any questions.

Mr. Byrne stated that the Committee had discussed getting ideas from the staff regarding what could go into the empty elephant exhibit and the Australian exhibit. Are there any ideas on that?

Mr. Meates stated that that would be in the Project Matrix, which will be presented next week.

Chairman Taylor stated that the next item on the agenda was the Code of Conduct proposed for the Oversight Committee. The purpose for this is to match up with the District's policies. The plan is to review and ask questions, then next week take action. First, let's finish up the items under old business. Dr. Hughes is here to answer any further questions on the requested purchase of new x-ray equipment.

Dr. Hughes stated that, based on the discussions from last meeting, she had brought some brochures on the portable unit for the Committee to look over. One of the companies came to the Clinic to demonstrate the new equipment, and the technology is quite amazing. There is really no room for human error. There's a scale based on weights instead of using calipers. The image is ready in eight seconds. The \$70,000.00 price includes the unit, installation, lifetime warranty, software updates and training. The timeframe that the clinic is looking at is three to four weeks, so the clinic and the zoo can get that price. If we wait longer than that, the cost is going to be over \$100,000.00.

Chairman Taylor asked if Dr. Hughes was looking for a decision from the Oversight Committee in that timeframe of three to four weeks.

Dr. Hughes confirmed that that was what was needed.

Chairman Taylor stated that the March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting fell within that time. Where are these funds anticipated to come from?

Dr. Hughes stated that the intent was to ask the Society for the funds for purchase. This purchase would be a big help both for the health care of the animals and for

reaccreditation from AZA. It's also a necessity for the Rhinos that the zoo is wanting bring in.

Mr. Byrne asked if this unit was ordered, when the money would be due.

Dr. Hughes answered that it would be due two weeks after the order was placed.

Mr. Byrne stated that the Committee should have a list of things that we'd be requesting the Society to pay for, because if given enough notice, the Society may be able to find a sponsor for the funds for the requested project or piece of equipment.

Dr. Hughes agreed, and stated that this opportunity came about very suddenly. The clinic was purchasing a unit, and I asked if there could be a discount for a dual purchase. Then we came to the Committee right away for the authorization to purchase the equipment.

Mr. Byrne stated that in one of Mr. Meates reports it had mentioned doing a digital radiography for an animal.

Mr. Meates stated that that was correct. Staff had to take the animal to the equipment because the x-ray machine on zoo grounds does not work at all. Moving the animals can be very dangerous and time consuming. Since we have a hospital on zoo grounds, it is best for both the health of the animals and the zoo keeping staff if the x-rays can be taken on-site.

Mr. Byrne asked if the clinic used their digital radiography equipment all day long.

Dr. Hughes stated that they did. The machine that the clinic has now is CR technology, and the technology the clinic is purchasing is DR. We use the CR machine hourly six days a week. It has lasted for twelve years, and the technology is simply outdated. The DR unit that the clinic is purchasing will last longer than that. The unit the clinic is purchasing is the stationary unit.

Mr. Meates stated that he could not emphasize enough that this piece of equipment is critical to the zoo. If we wait, we're just going to be spending more money.

Mr. Brahm asked if the zoo finds itself with need of another unit, and the money to purchase it, is the system expandable.

Dr. Hughes stated that the option of buying another unit is always a possibility if you find the need. For a second unit you may consider purchasing a stationary unit to keep in the hospital. The portable units can be temporarily mounted to act as a stationary unit, so they are the more versatile. That is why the portable unit is being recommended now.

Mr. Byrne expressed interest in seeing the purchase order or proposal with whatever terms and conditions are included.

Dr. Hughes stated that that should not be a problem. Should have them in a few days, and will email it to the Committee members.

Mr. Ferrell expressed his concern on expending money right now, since there is quite a long list of things to purchase. I believe the deferred maintenance list is something in the neighborhood of two million dollars. The Society has \$300,000.00 of loose cash, and could release \$70,000.00 of it. The concern is that we'd nickel and dime ourselves and not have the funds for something down the road. This is something that the Society will definitely be waiting on Oversight approval for the priorities on these purchases. At \$70,000.00 purchase points, it would be long until that \$300,000.00 is gone.

Mr. Meates stated that this purchase is in the Project Matrix at a high priority, and it is absolutely necessary. If it isn't purchased now then the price will be closer to \$130,000.00 for a single unit. If staff could get a monthly budget of money were allowed to spend on the important purchases, then that would be a great help.

Dr. Hughes stated that, from the standpoint of getting people through the gate, the images can be accessed from anywhere on zoo grounds. The possibility of using it to bring in visitors as an education tool is there.

Ms. Roderick agreed, and stated that it was something the volunteers could use as education tools.

Mr. Ferrell asked where the images are stored.

Dr. Hughes answered that they are stored both on and off site. There are multiple locations for backup.

Chairman Taylor stated that on March 8<sup>th</sup> this will be an action item. Just a reminder that Committee members do need to get their OMA and FOIA training done before March 15<sup>th</sup> and get that to the HR department. Is there any other questions or things that the Committee members would like to discuss?

Mr. Byrne stated that he believed a closed session was warranted to discuss potential litigation.

Mr. Brahm stated that there was something he'd like to discuss and ask questions on from the Forest Preserve Committee meeting that he had attended last week.

Chairman Taylor stated that the closed session could be done after the questions because staff did need to get going to the Commission meeting at the County Building.

Mr. Brahm stated that the first thing he wanted to bring up was the concessions. The Committee took action on a recommendation from zoo staff for going with Sunshine Sammi Inc. The Oversight Committee hasn't seen any pricing, or information on what's coming back to the zoo. How are we supposed to build a budget without those things?

Ms. Behrens stated that the agreed amount was 10% of gross sales.

Mr. Meates stated that the contract was for a year, and staff had seen the pricing. It does including the vending machines.

Mr. Byrne asked why it included the vending machines?

Mr. Meates stated that it was simpler that way to include vending with the concessions agreement. There is still some information that staff is waiting on, and that's why it hasn't been brought to the table yet.

Mr. Byrne asked how it got to the Forest Preserve Committee before it came to the Oversight Committee.

Chairman Taylor stated that it was his understanding that normally it would have come to this Committee before moving onto the Forest Preserve Committee. Unfortunately, since the Oversight Committee meetings were shifted around and this meeting is happening a week after the Forest Preserve Committee, there wasn't time enough to wait until March to make this decision.

There was brief discussion of the Forest Preserve Committee and Commission meeting days and times, and how it lined up with the Oversight Committee meetings days and times.

Mr. Brahm stated that the other matter that had come up at the Forest Preserve Committee meeting was the possibility of annexing the zoo into the Village of Coal Valley. The Village has applied for a low interest loan from the State to put in a water tower out this area, which would present the opportunity of getting the zoo on city water as opposed to the well system it's currently on. Right now the zoo is hooked into the sewer of the Village. The rates will be going up from what they been, and depending on whether the zoo is within Village limits or not will dictate how much they go up. This seems like something that should be discussed by the Oversight Committee before a decision is made. My concern is how much water the zoo uses. That could be a big increase in expense. It's something that should be looked at from every angle and pros and cons weighed before a final decision is made.

Chairman Taylor asked if that came with a time frame.

Ms. Sullivan answered that the rates will increase April 1<sup>st</sup>, but many of these questions would be better answered by Mr. Craver.

Chairman Taylor called for a motion to go into closed session to discuss potential litigation.

**MOTION:** Mr. Byrne moved to go into closed session to discuss potential litigation. Mr. Brahm seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken.

T. Brahm, M. Byrne, J. Taylor.

**TOTAL YES 3**

**TOTAL NO 0**

Motion carried.

Closed session began 6:04pm

Return to open session 6:16pm

Chairman Taylor called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**MOTION:** Mr. Brahm moved to adjourn. Mr. Byrne seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Adjourned the meeting at 6:17 PM.

Submitted by:

Cassie Sullivan, Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant