

NIABI ZOO OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES FROM MAY 10, 2016

PRESENT: Committee members . J. Taylor, T. Brahm, T. Jarrett(via phone), L. Jackson(via phone).

ABSENT: M. Byrne, J. Craver.

ALSO PRESENT: Dewayne Cremeens, Forest Preserve Committee Member; Rodney Simmer, Forest Preserve Committee Member; Dan Meates, Interim Zoo Director; Jill Roderick, Curator of Conservation & Education; Amy Behning, MindFire; Catherine Grace, Schultz & Williams(via phone); Scott Lohman.

Chairman Taylor called the meeting of the Niabi Zoo Oversight Committee to order at 5:01 PM on Tuesday, May 10, 2016, in the Education Room of the Administration Building at Niabi Zoo in Coal Valley, Illinois.

Chairman Taylor stated that as only two members were physically present there was no quorum. Therefore, no action could be taken tonight. However, those present can discuss the agenda items. Then called on Ms. Behning of MindFire for an update of the contract status and progress so far.

Ms. Behning stated that MindFire initiated approximately ninety days prior to opening with a two part program. One was a retainer for public relations and consultative services. That included getting press awareness, managing crisis communications from some of the issues with the aging animals to other elements. Establishing a relationship channel with the media so the staff could use time efficiently, and boosting the social media presence. That was done under a \$7,500.00 per month retainer. The details of which were set out in the work plan that was provided to the Committee. When additional work was required MindFire would send out individual estimates. One of the challenges, for better or worse, and it certainly had some pros and cons to it, is with the arrangement with the previous marketing firm, while there may have been lower costs, the zoo did not retain rights to any of the materials. No native files, no assets, no communications, no plans, and no record keeping was maintained. Therefore, we have to think of this year as a building year. Meaning that MindFire has had to redo everything as we go. The good news is that after the building year a lot of things will be templated. Part of what MindFire has been doing for Niabi, within the consultative agreement, is doing some very meticulous record keeping on the zoo's behalf. From sizing specs to production costs. That is in case something would happen to the marketing team at MindFire, there is a work plan for all the work and information that MindFire has done. That way staff doesn't have to start from scratch again. With the really strong efforts of the zoo staff we saw an excellent opening, and I know the Committee knows that. What's going on now, especially with Mr. Jackson coming on, is that MindFire is continuing that record keeping on Niabi's behalf. That's so there can be an entire season of record keeping to understand what needs done even from the Zoological Society standpoint. MindFire is keeping that all together under a shortened retainer for this month, which is \$3,500.00. We then submitted a list of needs that had been provided by Ms. Roderick and Mr. Meates with estimates in a separate working document. As of a conference call today, MindFire is in the process of coding those

things that we're moving forward with through Mr. Craver and others. That will be a great launching pad for a long-term conversation with Mr. Jackson onboard in terms of a first things first priority. The summary then would be that MindFire loves working with the zoo. We think good things are happening, and that there's ROI. Beyond the marketing, the tactical implementation, which the zoo has always had but did not have ownership of, this is a little more about being a marketing arm for the zoo and having a consultative approach so we can help set those priorities in a way that makes sense. That includes the efficiency building record keeping. An example is that none of the zoo's print jobs have been specified anything other than custom or dye cut, so MindFire is keeping a running tab of those. Moving into budgeting, staff will know what was spent on the actual hard costs of printing, and be able to categorize those costs. Whether it's fundraising, awareness or crisis management, or a fourth category MindFire develops called way finding, there will be hard data on what's spent.

Chairman Taylor asked to clarify that the shortened retainer went through May 31st.

Ms. Behning confirmed that was correct.

Chairman Taylor stated that Mr. Jackson will be onboard shortly thereafter. The plan is to have the discussion of what needs to occur with Mr. Jackson a few others?

Ms. Behning confirmed that was the plan, and stated that in the meantime what MindFire has done to aid that process is made sure that anything we did as a ramp-up the zoo actually has a history of. I'm emphasizing that again because, candidly, it's very important to have that information, and Niabi did not have that information before.

Mr. Brahm asked if the zoo would own that material.

Ms. Behning confirmed that was correct, and reiterated that that information is essential to a non-profit. All the material that MindFire has retooled for the zoo is owned by the zoo.

At this point everyone in the room went around and introduced themselves to Mr. Jackson.

Chairman Taylor called on Ms. Grace for the update from Schultz & Williams.

Ms. Grace stated that work with the Society to strengthen their short-term fund raising efforts continues. There is a call scheduled tomorrow with Mr. Ferrell where the draft for the Case for Support will be reviewed. There will also be a discussion of introducing Mr. Jackson to the Community. Hope to have the Case for Support finalized in the coming week. Also, in the next week I'd like to schedule individual phone calls with each of the Oversight Committee members to touch base. At this point the Oversight Committee has been around for about six months. Would also like to discuss the next visit from Mr. Biddle and me, looking at some time in July. That will give Mr. Jackson some time to get his feet wet.

Chairman Taylor stated that July would be a good time to get together a meet and greet for Mr. Jackson to meet some members of the business community. It would not necessarily be at the zoo, and definitely would not overshadow what the Society is hoping to do with Zoofari.

Mr. Brahm asked Ms. Grace for an outline with bullets that could assist the Committee in knowing what steps need to be taken in reaching the goal of a Private/Public Partnership.

Ms. Grace stated that the upcoming phone conversations would help to shape that list, and that the outline could be used to frame the discussions in July.

Chairman Taylor asked Mr. Jackson if there was anything he would like to share with the Committee.

Mr. Jackson stated that he had been getting caught up on the various information regarding the zoo, such as the collection plan and other documents. Still working on absorbing everything.

Chairman Taylor called on Mr. Meates for an update.

Mr. Meates stated that the zoo has had a great open to the season, as the Committee has seen from the emails and updates. The old playground has been removed, ground leveled, and construction of the new playground is tentatively set for June 20th. Three new French Loop Rabbits have just finish quarantine and will be joining the petting zoo soon along with some of the African Weaver species. Both gift shops are doing very well. There is a possible leak in the Koi pond that was discovered this week. Staff has had an engineer look at that, and more information will be given as it comes in. Ms. Roderick has some information on the educational programs and how they're going this season.

Ms. Roderick stated that there has been a huge increase in interest in the educational programming for the zoo this year. Due to staffing, the zoo has had to turn away over \$7,000.00 worth of revenue. There is definitely some benefit in looking into expanding the education department to accommodate all the interest. Staff is very excited that everything is filling up and the public is very excited about the zoo camps that are starting next month.

Ms. Behning added that this is an area where analysis is key. For the first time there is actually data on social feeds, posts, events, boost a post to use and see where interest is gauged. The backend of that can be used to say, What's sparking people out of the gate? So as the zoo and Committee move into 2017 feel free to ask for that data because that will put a first things first priority. It will show how long people are staying, what their interested in, what they're sharing, liking and retweeting, etc.

Mr. Brahm asked if there was updated information on the train repairs that are needed.

Mr. Meates stated that the engineers have looked at the train and infrastructures for the train. It is safe for the season, and once the zoo closes that project can come underway. The train will be operational for the season.

Chairman Taylor stated that since Mr. Ferrell could not be here tonight, he sent an email update. Golf outing is going full force. Recruiting new members to the board, and they have removed one board member as of now. Working with Schultz & Williams on short-term funding list and guidelines for new board members. Continuing to work on finding funding for new carousel animals, new playground and x-ray machine. Then asked Mr. Jarrett if there was anything he wanted to share.

Mr. Jarrett stated that the order for the four gators was put in last week, and to expect a three week delivery date for those. As soon as I get an update I'll talk to Mr. Meates. The gators should be there in the next thirty days.

Chairman Taylor stated that emails would go out to setup a next meeting date.

Adjourned at 5:24 PM.

Submitted by:
Cassie Sullivan
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant