

NIABI ZOO OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 21, 2015

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

ABSENT: T. Jarrett.

ALSO PRESENT: Dan Meates, Interim Zoo Director; Jill Roderick, Education and Conservation Curator; Scott Hesselberg, Maintenance Superintendent; Hannah Frenell, Field Office Manager; Scarlet Behrens, Society Business Manager; John Ferrell; Niabi Zoological Society; Mr. Rick Biddle, Schultz & Williams (via phone); the zoo keeper staff; Scott Lohman.

Mr. Craver called the meeting of the Niabi Zoo Committee to order at 5:00 PM on Monday, December 21, 2015, in the Education Room of the Administration Building at Niabi Zoo in Coal Valley, Illinois.

Roll was called:

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

Total Present 4

T. Jarrett.

Total Absent 1

Mr. Craver brought to the Committee's attention that he had sent out an email informing everyone that the reports from staff and the financial reports would be provided at the first meeting of the month. Is everyone ok with that?

There was a general consensus that that would be fine. The Committee had confidence that staff would bring anything of importance to the Committee's attention at the meetings regardless of whether or not it was time for the reports.

Mr. Craver called for a motion to approve the December 8th Oversight Committee meeting minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Taylor moved to approve the December 8th Oversight Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Byrne seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

The election of a Chairperson was tabled again.

Mr. Craver called on Mr. Meates for an update on the visitor/animal experience.

Mr. Meates stated that staff was still moving forward with the leopard process. We are in discussions with the facility to move one out here. Once the pre-shipping examination has been done a crate will be sent. There are some other species that are being sourced. Weavers are a bird from Africa, and will go in with the Hyrax. There is one

Hyrax right now, and another arriving on Wednesday, which we're very excited for. The meerkats are out of quarantine. Staff is also moving forward with the update of the Point of Sale update.

Mr. Brahm asked what the quarantine period was.

Mr. Meates answered that the quarantine period for each animal coming into the zoo is thirty days. Since the red wolves and meerkats have finished their quarantines, we can get another animal in and start that quarantine time.

Mr. Byrne asked if the zoo was slowing down in bringing in new animals, and if so, was it because of this interim timeframe since the District hasn't gotten in a new zoo director yet.

Mr. Meates confirmed that the process has slowed down on increasing the zoo's animal collection. However, the reason for that is more from the need to set a foundation. Building and refurbishing exhibits. If the zoo doesn't have an exhibit to put an animal in, then staff can't bring in animals. The money has to be there to build exhibit, and the process of properly designing, building and sourcing the animal is a long process. The visitor/animal experience the zoo needs to build isn't just bringing in new animals. There are also non-animal experiences that should be looked into to bring families out here and keep them here for a longer period of time. There are traveling animal attractions, but the zoo doesn't have the indoor space to accommodate those attraction. Staff can look into bringing in things like a zipline ride to draw in visitors.

Mr. Craver brought up the playground that is very outdated, and needs replacing. Then moved on to inform the Committee that Mr. Biddle has confirmed that he will be in town on January 11th, 12th and 13th. He will be at the meeting on the 12th as will the marketing companies to do a presentation on their proposals.

Mr. Meates stated that the marketing companies would be given a half hour each for marketing team presentation and to answer any questions the Committee may have, then a half hour has been allotted for discussion on the presentations. So far Mindfire and Pear have replied for the meeting. Mr. Biddle will be calling in tonight, and we can ask any questions at that time.

Mr. Taylor asked if Mr. Biddle would have time for face to face with the Committee members outside the meeting on the 12th.

Mr. Meates stated that Mr. Biddle would have a very tight schedule, but is putting together an outline and making as much time as possible to talk to as many people as possible. Tonight when he calls in is the time for questions.

Mr. Craver asked Mr. Ferrell for an update with what the Zoological Society has been working on.

Mr. Ferrell stated that the Society's last meeting changes to the structure of the meeting and the board had begun. The Society will be sending out a packet, much like the

District does, the Friday before the meeting. Will be shifting the expenses that accompany the revenue sources that are being handed over to the District. As well as the inventory and assets that go with those operations.

Mr. Byrne asked, in regards to the inventory and assets, is there going to be a problem handing those over to the private entity that we're moving towards?

Mr. Craver stated that he wasn't sure, but that would be looked into as this Committee moves towards that goal and puts together the management agreement. That's definitely something that will have to be addressed in the next several months in accordance with the schedule that's included in the packet. Though the assets would remain with the District, but the inventory would revert to the PPP.

Mr. Ferrell went on to report that there were a few minor edits and changes to the MOU that had been sent to the Society by Mr. Craver. If we could get a form, that would help in communications. It just needs to say that this group has decided to spend x amount on something and requests funds from the Society. The Society is still meeting monthly, on the third Monday of the month 4pm to 5:30p. There are a lot of things that we can do email voting on. There was also discussion of having a member at these meetings to assist in increasing communication. The Society feels that we can get some donations for the transition period if there is a short, concise list of things that need funding in order to get through the transition. Approval of the Guidance Proposal happened. The Society will only be signing contracts for a period up to July, then going with a month by month basis in anticipation for the new PPP. The reason for this being a concern with the ability to transfer those contracts. We simply felt it would be more prudent to do it this way. Though there won't be very many of those due to many of the contracts being handed over to the District. The Society is working on recruiting new members and transitioning out most of the current members between now and July. We definitely want some guidance from Mr. Biddle on the size of the board before we get very far into this process. There had been discussion of the proposed standing weekly check-in via conference call, and we were hoping for some more information on that. Communication is of huge importance.

Mr. Taylor offered use of some conferencing equipment for that purpose.

Mr. Brahm asked where the Society holds its meeting.

Mr. Ferrell answered that the meetings were held here in the Education Room at the zoo. They shouldn't be as long as they have been in the past because the Society will only be concentrating on fund raising. The Society also requests being in the loop in regards to things that happen with the animals such as changes in inventory, just so we're not caught off guard. Will be putting together the dates for the events by the end of January. The Society is wanting to use the Zoofari event as the kick off for a capital campaign. We're hopeful that perhaps five to seven million is a reachable number.

Mr. Craver called for a motion to approve the reports from Mr. Meates and Mr. Ferrell.

MOTION: Mr. Byrne moved to approve the reports from Mr. Meates and Mr. Ferrell. Mr. Brahm seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

After a brief discussion it was decided that the Oversight Committee would meet on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month at 5:00pm for the next three months.

Mr. Craver moved on to the approval of Zoo Passes and uses for 2016. Then drew the Committee's attention to the papers in the packet and the sheet that outlines the Donation Policy for the zoo that Ms. Behrens passed out. Are there any questions?

Mr. Taylor asked if this policy is an improvement over previous years.

Ms. Behrens answered yes.

Mr. Meates elaborated that this plan is going to be a lot better at tracking how the passes are used and being able to have definite numbers for what passes are being used and how many are being used.

Mr. Ferrell asked if the Society would need to pay for the passes that they gave out at the John Deere Classic this year as they had in the past two years.

Mr. Byrne pointed out that the donation policy only specified 501c3 organizations. That's very limiting since there are other types of charitable organizations such as a 501c4.

A brief history was given on the issues over the years with the requests for donations of passes.

Mr. Craver called for a motion amending the second bullet of the Donation Policy.

MOTION: Mr. Byrne moved to amend the second bullet on the Donation Policy to say, "An established 501c3 or other non-profit, tax exempt organization". Mr. Brahm seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Mr. Byrne asked what "Comp" meant?

Ms. Behrens stated that that was for poor customer service.

Mr. Craver, after a discussion on the history of other various issues that have arisen with the passes, called for a motion to approve the Zoo Passes and uses for the 2016 season.

MOTION: Mr. Taylor moved to approve the Zoo Passes and uses for the 2016 season as amended. Mr. Byrne seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

There was a consensus to give the Society the passes for the John Deere Classic free of charge.

Mr. Craver stated that once he got the edits and changes back from the Society he would forward the document onto the Oversight Committee members. The Committee will also need to update the organization chart to reflect the changes that occurred when this Committee was formed.

Mr. Biddle joined the meeting via phone at 5:51pm.

Mr. Craver brought Mr. Biddle up to speed on where the Committee was on the agenda, then asked Mr. Biddle if he had any input on the MOU or the update of the organizational chart.

Mr. Biddle answered that he had only seen the original that Mr. Craver had sent to the Society, but the Society needs to put in their edits so it can be looked at. The MOU can ultimately become the basis for the management agreement. Then perhaps it can be approved in January, if not sooner. Regarding the Organizational Chart, the 11th would be a good time to talk about that with all parties including staff. There does need to be a current Organizational Chart and a proposed Organizational Chart for what the structure should be when the PPP is established. Ultimately, the zoo will go to one organization; just need to figure out how those pieces will fall into place.

Mr. Craver informed Mr. Biddle that the Committee had determined that the meeting schedule for the next three months would be the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Then asked if Mr. Biddle wanted to discuss availability for the weekly check-in that was discussed at the last meeting.

Mr. Biddle asked if the Committee meetings would also be at the same times.

Mr. Craver confirmed that they would. 5:00pm on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

Mr. Biddle suggested that the weekly check-in should include Mr. Craver and Mr. Meates, but with the holidays those check-ins can be scheduled at the meeting on January 12th.

Mr. Taylor asked Mr. Biddle if he would be wanting any face time with the Oversight Committee members outside of the Committee.

Mr. Biddle stated that his team was making an outline for the trip to the zoo, and was hoping to get at least some one on one or two on one face time with the members. We'll try to be flexible. Time will be tight, but we want to make sure we make the most out of the time we're there.

Mr. Craver asked in regards to the food RFP, if Mr. Biddle had any comments or suggestions.

Mr. Biddle stated that the copy he got looked good. Though he would suggest asking a couple questions to see what the reaction of the companies were. I'm definitely in favor of a percentage opposed to a fixed amount. Ask the companies if they would guarantee a minimum number on a six month contract. That should show how confident they are in their numbers.

Mr. Craver moved along to the six month plan for key deliverables.

Mr. Biddle stated that this plan should be revisited every month to adjust and add goals as needed. This list is likely to get longer. The operating plan and the visitor/animal experience plan is something that Mr. Meates and his staff have been working on. In regards to the Organizational Chart, concentrate on updating to the current structure, then develop the Chart that you want to move towards. Don't leave the RFP open for too long. That's something that will need to be in place sooner than later. On the 12th we'll go through the marketing proposals and presentations. My team is developing questions to ask the marketing companies. I've been able to look at two of the three proposals so far.

Mr. Taylor requested that those questions be sent to the Committee members before the presentations so that there was no overlap in questions.

Mr. Biddle stated that he would send those out prior to the meeting the Committee members. The plan is to send those questions out on January 4th, and I'd suggest sending those questions to the companies in advance.

There were no other question or comments regarding the marketing proposals.

Mr. Biddle moved on to discuss the concept plan. The concept plan should not be confused with the facility plan. Use the data that Mr. Meates and his staff have gathered, and look at what could be improved for the visitor experience. After that the Facility Plan can be developed.

Mr. Craver asked approximately how much money the Committee could expect to spend on that project.

Mr. Biddle stated that he felt under \$30,000.00 was a safe number, and in all likelihood it would be considerably less than that. More will be known after the visit in January. In regards to the Society's ability to raise funds, timing should be carefully considered. It should be clearly organized. After developing the management agreement the real operating costs of the zoo will be known, and everything is transparent. There will be several things to look at in regards to the Society also. Look at the structure, their bylaws and a few other needs. New members need to be cultivated, and a fund raising platform found (the case for support). The Society is always going to be raising money, but without a plan and knowing what they're funding, donors won't donate. There are

possibilities for donations for the transition, but that will have to be after the plans are made.

Mr. Ferrell asked Mr. Biddle if they should have some face time before getting too far on recruiting new members. To make sure that those new members strategically fit.

Mr. Biddle answered that it would be best to have a small working group to start with. Use those people to get a strategic direction for the board. Perhaps the Oversight Committee could provide some guidance along those lines. If you can find two or three people who want to help in the transition that have the right mind set, I think that's fine.

There were no other questions regarding the Guidance Plan.

Mr. Biddle stated that he hoped the timeline for the director was self-explanatory. That timeline will also be revisited as time passes in order to update it according to progress. The goal is to have someone identified by April, but there's no guarantee of that. The new job description will be shared in January.

Mr. Meates asked to touch base, and reiterate on the time frame for the director search, clarifying that this was not an exact timeframe. Since there are so many openings in the zoo field this search could easily take significantly longer than the timeline indicates.

Mr. Biddle confirmed that that was correct. The director search could take several months instead of only a few. There is a high importance in that regard to moving forward and getting things decided. The Committee shouldn't be waiting on the new director before taking action and making decisions to move forward with the opening for 2016. A new director will be looking for indications that the zoo is moving forward in the right direction, and evidence that there is a commitment to change.

Mr. Meates stated that the reason he brought it up was that in past Oversight meetings he had tried to make it clear that there were decisions that would have to be made before the new director was hired.

Mr. Biddle stated that finding the right director for Niabi would take time. It could take a month, it could take longer. Before the end of the year, the team will get that outline/schedule to everyone for the visit in January. In the future we'll coordinate to be in the meetings from the beginning.

Mr. Craver asked Mr. Biddle to filter the schedule through Mr. Meates.

Mr. Biddle stated that he would.

Mr. Biddle left the meeting at 6:28pm.

Mr. Craver revisited the topic of the food RFP, and asked if the Committee had any thoughts or suggestions on the minimum percentage that Mr. Biddle had suggested.

Mr. Meates pointed out that there would only be a year's worth of data to provide to the companies putting in proposals. In years past there hadn't been a Point of Sale system, so there's no data from before Lancer.

Mr. Ferrell stated that when the Society was taking care of it, there was just a flat fee of \$15,000.00.

Mr. Craver stated that he felt there didn't necessarily need to be a monthly minimum, but just as long as it's a reasonable number.

Mr. Meates agreed, and stated that he would look at the numbers from last year again.

Mr. Craver stated that it seemed staff had a good handle and realistic expectation of sales for the RFP, then asked if the Committee had any other questions or things that they would like to discuss.

The Committee did not.

Mr. Craver called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Brahm moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Taylor seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Adjourned the meeting at 6:33 PM.

Submitted by:

Cassie Sullivan, Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant