

**ROCK ISLAND COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 19, 2019 – 6:22 PM
PRESIDENT KAI SWANSON PRESIDING**

1. Karen Kinney, County Clerk, called the roll: (Record)

D. Beck, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl, K. Swanson

TOTAL PRESENT 23

D. Adams, L. Moreno

TOTAL ABSENT 2

2. President Swanson introduced Mike Petersen, Illiniwek Ranger, who addressed the Commission regarding the upcoming events and improvements at Illiniwek and Dorrance Parks."

Mr. Petersen stated, "Good evening, my name is Mike Petersen and I am the Park Ranger at Illiniwek Park. I am just going to take a few minutes to go over some things that we have been concentrating on in the last year. The first one is the conservation activities that we have been doing at Illiniwek and Dorrance. We are continuing to work on our forest management plan, which consists mainly of invasive species such as honeysuckle, buckthorn and garlic mustard. We do have a few volunteer opportunities when we announce to the public that we are doing invasive species removal such as garlic mustard. We have a lot of interest in that to help eliminate these invasive species and it's nice to see the community involvement in that. We are also continuing to expand upon the prairie that we have established in spring of 2019. We are planting about 2 acres more of prairie and we are also going to be planting about 2 acres of savanna mix, which is another project that we've been working on here over the last few years. And, it will be nice to see the seed get planted in the spring and in a few years, we will have a youthful area along the south trail loop. We are also working on the 9 Street restoration project, which is an area on the north side of Route 84 along the river where we have a terrible amount of invasive species. There is about 8 different invasive species in there along with a lot of ash tree. We are going in and removing all of it because invasive species are not supposed to be there and all of the ash trees are infested with emerald ash borer. So, this area is about three acres and we are pretty much doing a clear cut and it's pretty messy right now. Once we get it all cleaned up, we will be replanting the area with some new hardwoods this spring, which will be a nice addition to the area. Other areas that we have been working on include partnerships. We have been in a partnership for 5 years with Living Lands and Waters, which has been a great partnership. They sponsor honeysuckle removal at the park. Today, they have

done about 8 acres of honeysuckle removal utilizing about 600 volunteers. Every May, they do the last two years and this year will be the third year. They do educational workshops in the whole month of May. They come down to Illiniwek with High School groups and the Rangers and I will talk to the High School students about prairie and forest ecology. We've helped them out with the I80 project, which is an area where the Interstate Bridge was hit by the tornado about three years ago. And, we have helped them with planting trees and initial site clearing and preparation. It's been a great partnership and we enjoy them very much. Another really good partnership is (FORC) Friends with Off Road Cycling. They do an excellent job of maintaining trails at Illiniwek and Dorrance. In the fall of 2018, they were able to finish phase three of trail construction up at Dorrance preserve...and that completes all of the trail construction up there. It's a very nice addition to Port Byron and Dorrance Park. There are 3 ½ miles of trails up there...they are multi-use trails for biking, hiking etc. Another partnership we have been working on is with Rock Island and Moline Parks Departments. They want to convert some of these mowed areas into natural areas like prairie. Prairie management is with fire, so we are offering technical support to the park districts of Moline and Rock Island on writing plans and implementation of fire and in return at Longview Park Rock Island has a greenhouse and they are growing prairie plugs for us. So, we are purchasing the seed for them and they are growing the prairie plugs in an effort to diversify what we have in our prairies...because the more diverse we are, the healthier we are in the prairie. The last thing is the events that we are sponsoring at the park. We tried a number of events but the three that are the most popular are Summer Solstice Celebration, Tee Pee gathering and Halloween at Illiniwek. As long as the weather cooperates, these three events seem to be really popular with a lot of support and a lot of people come out and enjoy them for the day. That's all I have for you unless you have any questions."

Commissioner O'Brien was recognized.

Ms. O'Brien stated, "Mike, the Eagle Scout project was briefly mentioned. If you could just give a little outline of what the Eagle Scout did at Illiniwek Park. I would be curious to know more about it."

Mr. Petersen stated, "Yeah, there were two Eagle Scout projects this past year. One was Ga-Ga ball pit, which was something I wasn't familiar with until an Eagle Scout approached me and it's just a game kind of like dodge ball inside an octagon shaped pit. It's extremely popular with the younger kids. It's a nice addition to the playground. The other one was the removal of the scenic overlook steps, which was in bad need of repair. It was made of railroad ties and falling apart. It was put in about 40 years ago. He came in and removed all of that...all of the stairs and hauled all of that material away. He also raised about \$1,200 to build a pergola over in the ball diamond conversion area. This is where the old ball diamonds used to be and is now planted prairie. Right in the middle

of it is a pergola made of cedar. He did a good job constructing it and raising the funds for it."

Commissioner Cremeens was recognized.

Mr. Cremeens stated, "I wanted to thank you for all you do out there."

Mr. Petersen answered, "Thank you, I appreciate it."

Commissioner Burns asked, "If he removed the steps, there are no steps now or did he put them back in, rebuild them or what?"

Mr. Petersen answered, "We removed them permanently because since those steps were built, a new trail system was constructed. It is a little bit longer route up to the scenic overlook, but there is a trail that is still there and that was a part of the trail system that FORC planned to build about 5 or 6 years ago."

President Swanson stated, "Any other questions or comments? Friends, I hope that you will join me in thanking Mr. Petersen for his leadership."

(Group Applause)

3. Commissioner Maranda moved to approve the January 15, 2019, Forest Preserve Commission minutes, as presented. Commissioner O'Brien seconded.

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS: (None)**

5. **PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS:**

President Swanson stated, "If you have not already or have not received any or a document from Mr. Craver referred to as his 'talking points'...and just to give you a little bit of context as to where this came from, I was grateful to talk to Commissioner Deppe about these...as Monroe said, 'If people wish to be their own government, then they need to arm themselves with the power that knowledge brings. And these talking points raised some critical questions, specifically about the zoo. When there are discussions about the zoo or privatizing the zoo, or turning the zoo over to a private management entity, there are a number of questions, which we as stewards of that facility, must address to our satisfaction before we would take any move forward. So, I encourage you to take a look at that set of questions. And also note that it includes a very key data point. The national firm, Schultz and Williams takes a look at all manner of

public/private partnerships whether its solely run by a public entity, solely private or any hybrid in between...that's where ours fall, in the in between category. And, it finds that in a privately managed setting, there is still a public subsidy from public tax dollars that equates to approximately 30-35%. That is the national average. So, even when you turn things over to a private handler, the public body is still on the hook for about a 30-35% subsidy unless you want to have ticket prices about \$50 a person and \$25 per kid...and that's something we don't want to do or at least haven't to date. So, note that the current public subsidy from the levy, the responsibility of taxpayer money that is assigned for the support of the zoo is in that range. It's favorable. And, as we know from hearing from Mr. Jackson and his leadership team, all indicators are, its moving in the right direction. So, I encourage you to look into the 'talking points' document as public discourse as your constituents come to you with ideas and questions, please be sure that...as our former President indicates to always arm yourself with the power that knowledge brings. Secondly, in your packets, I will hope you'll take some time to look at the survey that was done regarding Niabi Zoo. You'll find some very heartwarming results in there. And, I am thankful to Cassie for supplying us with a color version so that we can see what the results are because black and white was illegible to me. But, you'll see that people come from around our region to visit Niabi Zoo. People, of course, come from across our community and a huge attractor is simply to spend some time with families. If our Forest Preserve District work is providing families time and space to come together, I think we are doing pretty well. It's also encouraging to see how far away that people come to the park...am especially pointing out to Ms. Hayden Zovik who came as far away as Hessen, Germany to visit Niabi. Those are the extent of my comments."

Commissioner Simmer was recognized.

Mr. Simmer stated, "I would also like to say that also our German exchange student tried to get out there if it wasn't for the rainy days that we have suffered so much from this year. She would love to have been there and she is also from Germany."

President Swanson stated, "Oh yes, the lovely rainy days of last summer were the ones with the letter 'A' in them..."

Mr. Simmer added, "...it is one of the places she wanted to get to while she was here, but wasn't able to."

Commissioner Brunk was recognized.

Mr. Brunk stated, "I just had a comment that Niabi Zoo is part of a bigger picture. I believe that anyone from the Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau would point out that this area doesn't have one big item or place to visit, we have several small items. We have the FIGGE, the Putnam, the Tax slayer Center...and

Niabi Zoo and the Forest Preserves are a part of that package. That is something that needs to be considered when we look at that."

Commissioner Mielke was recognized.

Mr. Mielke stated, "I am going to send a Coal Valley newsletter to all of the Commissioners. I have availed myself of the press release that was just in on the Eastern Black and White Colo...Colobus Monkey..."

President Swanson assisted, "Colobus Monkey."

Mr. Mielke added, "Thank you!"

President Swanson stated, "And isn't he adorable?"

Mr. Mielke stated, "Yes! Very! He is the cutest thing ever!! Although it's a county facility, it is inside of Coal Valley and so, we should be promoting it in our newsletter this month. So, I will send it to everybody. If you see a Coal Valley newsletter, you'll know why...it's on the last page. So, just flip to the last page, you don't have to read the whole thing."

President Swanson stated, "Thank you, Mr. Mielke for bringing that up. I appreciate your input on that friend. We'll move on to our agenda for tonight."

6. Commissioner Simmer moved to approve the Forest Preserve Fund claims in the amount of \$25,403.03, Niabi Zoo Fund claims in the amount of \$70,592.45, Liability Fund claims in the amount of \$4,528.00, Development of Forest & Construction claims in the amount of \$755.69, Loud Thunder Spillway & Improvement Fund claims in the amount of \$35,626.21, and the Marvin Martin Fund claims in the amount of \$17,056.75. Commissioners Deppe and O'Brien seconded. (Record)

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Beck, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 22

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

7. Commissioner O'Brien moved to approve the Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$19,048.53. Commissioner Langdon seconded. (Record)

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Beck, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 22

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

8. Commissioner Brunk moved to waive the reading and approve the Transfers of Appropriation in the General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund, as presented. Commissioner O'Brien seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Beck, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 22

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

9. Commissioner O'Brien moved to approve the FY19 Appropriation Amendment for the Niabi Zoo Fund regarding Robert & Florence A. Ruhnow Trust, as presented. Commissioner Vyncke seconded.

Commissioner Reagan was recognized.

Mr. Reagan stated, "Just if you could expand on it, please?"

President Swanson stated, "This was an estate bequest given by the Ruhnow's and is something we had been aware but is now come to fruition. And so we are very grateful to the family for thinking of these incredible irreplaceable resources as they did their estate planning."

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Beck, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 22

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

10. Commissioner O'Brien moved to waive the reading and approve the Financial Certification Statement for the Recreational Trails Program (Grant) for Grand Illinois Trail Restroom and Support Facility. Commissioners Morthland and Sowards seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Beck, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 22

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

11. Commissioner Maranda moved to approve the Food Service Concessions Agreement with Sunshine Sammi Inc. for Niabi Zoo, as presented. Commissioners Simmer and Beck seconded.

Commissioner Oelke asked, "Are there any changes in the agreement?"

Mr. Jackson stated, "There are no substantial changes. The only changes were to our emergency planning."

President Swanson stated, "Oh, that's fantastic. Are there any other questions?"

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Beck, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 22

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

12. Commissioner Simmer moved to approve the Zoo Primate Enclosure Project, as presented. Commissioner Deppe seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Beck, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 22

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

13. Commissioner Simmer moved to approve the low bid for the Zoo Cathouse Transfer Doors Project, as presented. Commissioners Deppe, Maranda and O'Brien seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Beck, L. Boswell-Loftin, R. Brunk, L. Burns, D. Cremeens, J. Deppe, D. Johnston, E. Langdon, K. Maranda, M. Mayberry, D. Mielke, P. Moreno, R. Morthland, A. Normoyle, S. Noyd, C. O'Brien, R. Oelke, R. Reagan, R. Simmer, E. Sowards, B. Vyncke, J.R. Westpfahl

TOTAL YES 22

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

14. **Comments from Commissioners (One)**

Commissioner Noyd was recognized.

Mr. Noyd asked, "Have we had any badger sightings or anything?"

(Group laughter)

President Swanson stated, "Mr. Jackson, you knew that was coming. Except on the hardwood courts against the Illini, I don't know that there have been any successful badger sightings."

Mr. Noyd stated, "I thought maybe the cold weather might have brought them back looking for food or something."

President Swanson stated, "That's still the hope. The saving grace is that is a species that this is a native habitat so in Star Trek terms, we are not messing with the prime directives. There are a couple of badgers in northern Illinois."

Mr. Oelke asked, "Do they travel far?"

President Swanson stated, "No, they don't tend to be very transient."

Mr. Jackson stated, "...(inaudible)

Ms. Kinney stated, "We can't hear you."

President Swanson stated, "Sorry, Mr. Jackson, they can't hear you without a microphone."

Mr. Jackson repeated, "No, I imagine they have not moved that far away."

President Swanson stated, "Thank you, Mr. Oelke and Mr. Jackson for that response."

15. Commissioner Langdon moved to approve all the Routine Reports from the Director and Department Heads of the Forest Preserve Commission. Commissioner Noyd seconded. (Record)

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

President Swanson stated, "Believe me, I will be brief because I want to get over to the Carver Center to see the Augustana Vikings Women's basketball team in the playing tonight against North Park Conference Tournament. I will take a moment and pause to celebrate the receipt of a \$400,000 OSLAD Grant from the

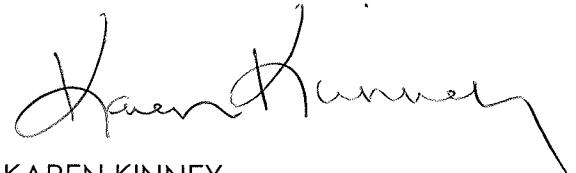
Illinois Department of Natural Resources that will go towards improvements at Loud Thunder. Grants like this don't just happen. It was my privilege to have a very close observation point to watch Mr. Craver and the Bi-State staff...Denise Bulat and her team work together on this endeavor. That is going to be a very big game changer for the improvements that this board has in oversight and already approved at Loud Thunder. This is an exciting time for what's going on for your Forest Preserve District. I hope you will all take some pride in what's going on in these resources and join me in thanking Mr. Craver and his team in securing a nearly half million dollar grant for this project."

(Group Applause)

The next meeting of the Forest Preserve Commission is Tuesday, March 19, 2019, immediately following the meeting of the Rock Island County Board.

President Swanson declared the Forest Preserve Meeting recessed.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,



KAREN KINNEY
COUNTY CLERK AND SECRETARY
OF THE FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION

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