

**ROCK ISLAND COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION  
APRIL 21, 2020 – 6:12 PM  
PRESIDENT KAI SWANSON PRESIDING**

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

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

**TOTAL PRESENT 22**

D. Cremeens, D. Johnston, P. Moreno

**TOTAL ABSENT 3**

2. Commissioner Maranda moved to approve the March 24, 2020, Forest Preserve Commission minutes, as presented. Commissioner L. Moreno seconded.

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS: (None) Three calls were made to the public for comments.**

4. **PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS:**

President Swanson stated, "I want to salute the entire staff of the Forest Preserve District. They are doing an amazing job given the situation we have and our revenues have been affected. The staff has been doing an outstanding job coming up with creative ways to reckon these, these are very huge challenges. I want you to know that we are online and trying to do all we can to avoid layoffs and the solutions include a ramp up of some philanthropy and reductions are being discussed by salaried staff to implement for themselves. I think that shows the type of people we have...and especially to lift up our particular challenge which is Niabi. It's a good thing that this commission has incurred fiscal prudence and has reserves, that virtually all the funds that Niabi has which 2/3 of the budget are based on user revenue and philanthropy. And that's a good thing. There are people that say we should privatize the Zoo across the country and those privately run still require a 34-35% public subsidy just to keep their doors open. And we've gotten Niabi down to 32% public subsidy and what that means is that more than 2/3 of our budget comes from admission, concessions, activities and that kind of thing. I appreciate all of those Members of the Commission who have donated gifts and renewed their memberships. I would encourage all Members of the Commission and the public to be generous in supporting Niabi so that when we can open up again and start seeing those revenues come back in."

5. Commissioner Boswell-Loftin moved to approve the Forest Preserve Fund claims and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$730,016.82, as presented. Commissioner Beck seconded.

Commissioner L. Moreno moved to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Sowards seconded.

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**TOTAL YES 21**

**TOTAL NO 0**

Motion carried.

6. Commissioner L. Moreno moved to waive the reading and approve the Transfers of Appropriation in the General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund, as presented. Commissioner Langdon seconded.

Commissioner Normoyle moved to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Deppe seconded.

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**TOTAL YES 21**

**TOTAL NO 0**

Motion carried.

7. Commissioner Vyncke moved to approve the bid for fire rings and picnic tables in the amount of \$75,920.94 for Loud Thunder Campground Improvement Project, as presented. Commissioner Maranda seconded.

Commissioner Deppe moved to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Normoyle seconded.

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**TOTAL YES 21**

**TOTAL NO 0**

Motion carried.

8. **Comments from Commissioners: (1)**

Commissioner Maranda was recognized.

Mr. Maranda asked, "I was just thinking here, is the Society or have you talked to John or...where is the Society on this? Are they chipping in or what?"

President Swanson answered, "Thank you, Mr. Maranda. I will advise you that Mr. Craver had a meeting with the Niabi Zoo Director, Mr. Jackson, and he has been very persistent in reaching out at the leadership of the Society. We have received one communication back from the President that he was off from the Membership of the Board. That was a week ago and he has not heard definitively unless Mr. Craver's work goes further than what I am aware of. We have not heard anything. Jeff, is there anything further that you can add to that topic?"

Mr. Craver stated, "Uh, nothing other than what you've provided."

President Swanson stated, "Thank you, and Thank you, Mr. Maranda for that question. As you know, a couple of years ago we had a commitment from the Society to deposit those funds that were given by Pat Bremen (Inaudible) for the advancement and support of the animals at Niabi Zoo into a retro-foundation where it might earn a better return and we have not yet received confirmation that that has happened as of yet from the State (Inaudible). That said, we continue to work with the Society's leadership and hope that we can find ways that we can leverage those dollars so that it's better for the animals. And I want you to know on a side note, that we are indebted to our County Treasurer, Louisa Ewert and Auditor, April Palmer, for working very religiously in identifying what we can do and the options that we have and as we know those options will become more and more difficult as we move forward and we will search for solutions to those problems...(inaudible). I thank you for that question. Are there any other comments from Commissioners?"

Commissioner Beck was recognized.

Ms. Beck asked, "Are...is Niabi Zoo and the other zoo's in the country already working together on...is there any way that those different zoos, um, are doing once the current situation is resolved, not completely resolved but once they are open again?"

President Swanson answered, "I can imagine...I imagine that's already happening just in the conversations that I have been a witness to. Uh, all of the leaders within the District have a very creative plan for a partial opening. Uh, of course, any plan of opening will be strictly driven by PPE guidelines and I do know that when we come to a partial opening, we will take a look at what those

guidelines are and do accordingly. I do know that Mr. (Inaudible) has been in communication and has a PPE survival plan that we hope to continue to move forward with even if we can't have the public. Uh, but there are some ideas I have been in touch with the golf course leaders and they are looking at ways to partially open the golf course. If individual commissioners have ideas, I would encourage you to send those to Mr. Craver and his professional staff . I have to imagine that Mr. Jackson, being so well-connected with his profession that these conversations are probably going on through the ZAA and AZA."

Ms. Beck stated, "Okay, Thank you."

President Swanson stated, "Thank you. Are there any other comments or questions?"

9. Commissioner Brunk moved to approve all Routine Reports from the Director and Departments Heads of the Forest Preserve Commission. Commissioner Boswell-Loftin seconded.

President Swanson stated, "I would like to offer Mr. Craver an opportunity to offer up anything he would like to add with this report and the reports of staff."

Mr. Craver stated, "Uh, at this point in time I think President Swanson indicated some...indicated that there were obviously some, that we would be affected by a loss of revenues here at the District. We are looking at the scenarios of what the possibilities may be. Uh, there may be most likely there will be some cash assistance. The cash flow is hurting a little bit and if the zoo is not able to open come May 1<sup>st</sup>, um we are looking at opportunities and avenues of which to support the zoo and to reduce expenses. As you know, it might be necessary to furlough or reduce some of our individuals' salaries to make ends meet. Um, but we are trying to be optimistic, um, and let you know that staff are looking into opportunities to ways that we can take advantage of in easing our extended home order when the time comes about."

President Swanson stated, "Thank you, Mr. Craver. Are there any other comments from Commissioners?"

Commissioner Deppe was recognized.

Mr. Deppe stated, "I have a question for you and Mr. Craver. At Illiniwek and out at Lake George out there, the asphalt roads are rotten. Is there a way that we can look to get some State money to send somebody to overlay those or something? Did you get that?"

President Swanson stated, "Yes, I did. I would refer this to Mr. Craver."

Mr. Craver stated, "Yes, that's one of the reasons why we do close our roads much like a lot of the Road Commissioners out in the rural areas because they are chip and fill. The campground road out at Loud Thunder has taken a significant amount of damage due to construction of the campground project. Um, we will work with Valley to remedy any damage they have done to that road. That was something that was brought up at the very beginning of the project that they are aware of their responsibility to that. Some of the other areas throughout such as Illiniwek and the other roads out at Loud Thunder, um, we are going to address the ones that are the most significant and in need of repair, uh Wild (Inaudible) most recently was a nice stretch along the Cedar area was addressed. Uh, we continue to try to utilize whatever capital funds to improve those roads to them someday overlaid and up to IDOT road standards."

President Swanson stated, "Thank you. I know Mr. Petersen, at Illiniwek has sent a reminder that had some minor flooding there and also has a campground road, so that's a very good question, Mr. Deppe, and I will have the staff get you quotes on that (Inaudible)."

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

The next meeting of the Forest Preserve Commission is Tuesday, May 19, 2020, 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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