

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**SEPTEMBER 15, 2020**

**PRESENT:** Committee members - L. Moreno, K. Swanson, D. Cremeens(via phone), A. Normoyle, R. Simmer, K. Maranda, E. Sowards.

**ABSENT:**

**ALSO PRESENT:** Jeff Craver, District Director; Mike Petersen, Illiniwek Ranger; Lee Jackson, Zoo Director; Kurt Davis, IT; Ben Mills, Loud Thunder Ranger(via phone); April Palmer, Auditor(via phone); Louisa Ewert, Treasurer.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 9:32 AM on Tuesday, September 15, 2020, in the Rock Island County Building in the third floor chambers, Rock Island, Illinois.

President Swanson called for a motion approving the August Committee and Budget meeting minutes.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve the August Committee and Budget meeting minutes. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken.

A. Normoyle, K. Maranda, D. Cremeens, L. Moreno, K. Swanson, E. Sowards, R. Simmer.

<b>TOTAL YES</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TOTAL NO</b>	<b>0</b>

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2020 treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$9,896.44; the Fiscal Year 2021 claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$551,047.71.

**MOTION:** Mr. Maranda moved to approve the Fiscal year 2020 treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$9,896.44; the fiscal year 2021 claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$551,047.71. Ms. Normoyle seconded the motion.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to adopt the previous roll call. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2020 transfers of appropriation in the General Fund, Niabi Zoo Fund, and DFCI Fund; and the Fiscal Year 2021 transfers of appropriation in the General Fund, and Niabi Zoo Fund.

**MOTION:** Mr. Maranda moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2020 transfers of appropriation in the General Fund, Niabi Zoo Fund, and DFCI Fund; and the Fiscal Year 2021 transfers of appropriation in the General Fund, and Niabi Zoo Fund. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the previous roll call. Ms. Normoyle seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Resolution regarding the General Fund receipt of Grant Funds.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve the Resolution regarding the General Fund receipt of Grant Funds. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to adopt the previous roll call. Ms. Normoyle seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve to remove from display and approve the revised Schedule A and revised Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinances for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Preserve Fund, IMRF Fund, Liability Fund, FISSA Fund, and Development of Forests and Construction of Improvements Fund.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve to remove from display and approve the revised Schedule A and revised Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinances for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Preserve Fund, IMRF Fund, Liability Fund, FISSA Fund, and Development of Forests and Construction of Improvements Fund. Mr. Maranda seconded the motion.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to adopt previous roll call. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a discussion of the Executive Committee meeting dates and times.

Mr. Craver stated that earlier this year the time for the meeting was switched to 8:00am. Then later it was switched to 9:30am due to the one of the County's Committee meetings starting at 8:30am. Is the Committee wanting to stick with the current time, or is there a better time for people's schedules?

There was consensus to remain at the current time through November.

No request for public comment was submitted.

President Swanson asked Ms. Palmer if there was anything from the Auditor's reports that she would like to bring attention to.

Ms. Palmer stated that the trial balance report reflects the ERI payoff that was approved last month. Therefore, the IMRF fund looks like it's overspent, but it's not. It was great to find out that the District will see those savings immediately, and not have to wait until next year as was originally thought. On the fund balances report, the only fund that is not able to meet the five-month reserve is the Niabi Zoo fund. Some reports have already been forwarded to the new external auditors.

President Swanson asked Mr. Mills if there was anything from the Loud Thunder report that he wanted to bring attention to.

Mr. Mills stated that, as always, there was a thorough report included in the packet. Something of particular note was that it only took three days for the new Deer Haven campground to fill up with reservations for the holiday weekend. That campground has been very well received by the public. The only other thing of note is that the boat rental has closed for the season due to a lack of staff to run it.

President Swanson asked Mr. Petersen if there was anything from the Illiniwek report that he wanted to bring attention to.

Mr. Petersen stated that August was a record setting month for people coming out to use the park. There was a lot of damage to trees from the storm, but that has been cleaned up by staff.

President Swanson asked Mr. Jackson if there was anything from the Niabi Zoo report.

Mr. Jackson stated that Niabi received a \$2,000.00 grant for COVID relief to go towards animal food. Niabi has begun its shortened hours for the season.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver if there was anything from the Director's report that he wanted to bring attention to.

Mr. Craver stated that the savings from paying off the ERI accounted for the minor adjustments that were seen in the Appropriations Ordinances. The Alternative revenue source for the zoo that was brought up initially a few months ago is at the point where a decision needs to be made. Because of the pandemic, the zoo has lost revenue, and will need cash to continue operating. Even with the salary decreases taken by management, and the other cuts that were made, we estimate that the zoo will run out of cash in late December, or early January at the latest. Looking at the cash balance report, there is \$640,214.52 left in Niabi's fund. Last year at this time, the cash balance was 1,217,325.09. That's a difference of about \$577,000.00. Looking at the trends, it's likely that next year will be much the same as this year in regards to revenues. Staff is also looking at strategies to bring more people in to visit Niabi.

There are some zoos that are looking to shed some of their collection in order to save on costs, so there is opportunity to bring in some interesting species to the Niabi collection.

President Swanson asked what the time table was on the alternative revenue source decision.

Ms. Ewert stated that before anything else could be done an ordinance would need to be passed through the Commission allowing the tax anticipation warrants. Once the discussion is initiated with the bank, it will take approximately two months before the money is accessible for Niabi. If the ordinance is passed at September's Commission meeting, then the District should have the money by the end of November. If the Commission waits until the October Commission meeting, then it would be the end of December.

**MOTION:** Mr. Maranda moved to place the tax anticipation warrant ordinance on the September Commission agenda. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

President Swanson stated that he was concerned with bringing in new species that would add to the operating costs.

Mr. Craver stated that Mr. Jackson has taken that into account. There are also species that would likely be leaving the collection to help balance that out. While that will not be a one in, one out scenario. Mr. Jackson is looking at cost and staffing in making those decisions. People want to see something new, and Niabi needs to boost interest and attendance in order to bring in revenues. That being said, it is almost guaranteed that phase four of the state's reopening plan will still be in effect, at the very least, for the first few months of the season next year.

Mr. Jackson stated that in considering additions to Niabi's collection, careful attention is being paid regarding revenues that the species in question typically brings in, and the cost and time associated with caring for that species.

Dr. Simmer stated that, while he supported the initial tax anticipation warrants in order to get Niabi through this challenging time, the District should keep in mind the cautionary tale of Hope Creek. The last thing the District needs is to get in so far over its head with debt that there's no way of getting out.

Ms. Palmer stated that, tying into what Dr. Simmer was saying, something to keep in forefront of the Committee's mind should be that if the District went out for a bond to get the cash for Niabi, it would negatively affect the District's credit score, and by extension, the County's. The tax anticipation notes are a far better option than a bond.

A roll call vote was taken.

K. Maranda, D. Cremeens, L. Moreno, K. Swanson, E. Sowards, R. Simmer.

**TOTAL YES 6**

(A. Normoyle absent from room at time of vote.)

**TOTAL NO 0**

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve all routine reports for the District.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve all routine reports. Mr. Maranda seconded the motion.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to adopt previous roll call. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Adjourned the meeting at 10:14 AM.

Submitted by:  
Cassie Sullivan  
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant