

FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
JUNE 08, 2021

PRESENT: Committee members - K. Swanson, D. Cremeens, L. Moreno, E. Sowards, R. Simmer, J. Woods.

ABSENT: A. Normoyle.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Craver, District Director; Lee Jackson, Niabi Zoo Director; April Palmer, Auditor.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 3:33 PM on Tuesday, June 8, 2021, in the Administration Building at the Niabi Zoo in Coal Valley, Illinois.

D. Cremeens, K. Swanson, E. Sowards, R. Simmer, J. Woods. [L. Moreno joined at 3:37p]

TOTAL YES **6**

A. Normoyle

TOTAL ABSENT **1**

President Swanson called for a motion approving the May Committee minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Cremeens moved to approve the May Committee minutes. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$220,560.91.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$220,560.91. Mr. Cremeens seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the transfers of appropriation in the General Fund.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the transfers of appropriation in the General Fund. Mr. Cremeens seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the resolution regarding the Woodward Community Grant funds in the Niabi Zoo Fund.

MOTION: Mr. Cremeens moved to approve the resolution regarding the Woodward Community Grant funds in the Niabi Zoo Fund. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Mr. Jackson stated that this grant covers a little over half the cost of the graphics for the invertebrates' exhibit. The Woodward Community Grant offers about six local entities the opportunity to apply for grant monies.

Motion carried.

President Swanson asked if there was anyone from the public that wished to make public comment.

There were no requests for public comment.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver to speak on the available property at 5600 78th Ave, Milan, IL.

Mr. Craver stated that the land was adjacent to the south and eastern borders of Indian Bluff Golf Course. The property has been up for sale for a while, and the executor of the will has contacted the District to inquire if we have any interest in purchasing the property. While not premium conservation land, it is as good a quality of land for conservation as the properties that staff is looking into out near Illiniwek. Currently the 5600 78th property is listed for \$105,000.00 for the twenty-one acres, however, staff would like to see if negotiating the price down is an option. The property could likely be easily rezoned. Looking to offer a percentage of appraised value. At this point am looking for what percentage of value the Committee is comfortable with. Forty percent? Fifty percent? Sixty or Seventy? The money would come out of the Loud Thunder endowment which was bequeathed to the District many years ago for land acquisition.

President Swanson asked where that would leave the endowment principle balance.

Mr. Craver stated that there should be approximately \$1,550,000.00 left in the principle.

Dr. Simmer stated that fifty percent of the appraised value seemed fair, but definitely not full price.

MOTION: Dr. Moreno moved to forward to Commission authorization for Director Craver to offer a contingent sale at fifty percent of the appraised value for the property at 5600 78th Ave, Milan, IL. Ms. Woods seconded.

Motion carried.

President Swanson asked Mr. Jackson if there was anything from his report that he would like to bring attention to.

Mr. Jackson stated that a Rhino had finally arrived, and is a huge hit with visitors. He likes to be outside. On May 21st staff got word that Niabi would be receiving a female Amur Leopard to mate with the male that been at Niabi for the past few years. There are only fifty of these leopards living in the wild. They are native to a small region in Southern Russia. This is a very big deal for Niabi to be allowed to mate these two. They are both around two and a half years old. Also, for those who have not heard, the train broke down last Friday. Staff has it up at the shop right now to open it up and get a closer look at what needs repaired. The initial diagnosis is that the bands and fly wheel have been eaten away, and need replaced. The train is sixteen years old, and manufacturers stopped making replacement parts for it around twelve years ago. It has been become increasingly difficult to find replacement parts for the train.

President Swanson asked what the replacement cost for the train would be.

Mr. Jackson stated that a replacement for the train would be around \$260,000.00. The engine is reaching the end of its life. There are other parts on it that have been giving trouble as well.

Dr. Moreno asked if a new train was ordered to replace the current, how long it would take to get here.

Mr. Jackson stated that it would likely be at least eight weeks, and probably longer.

President Swanson asked if anything was needed from the Committee to look into that possibility.

Mr. Craver stated that it was not necessary at this time. Believe the transmission fly wheel can be sourced and shipped. However, it is important to bring the Committee and Commission's attention to the issue.

Mr. Jackson stated that the ideal would be to install a new engine and keep the current engine for parts.

Mr. Craver stated that if an excellent opportunity came around to replace the train, staff would certainly take it, but this train can be repaired. It's not an easy thing to repair, and it will be down for some time, but it can be repaired.

Dr. Moreno asked if, with the restrictions lifting on Friday, will the zoo be fully open.

Mr. Jackson stated that Niabi staff was unable to open that quickly, but were working on a plan. It is anticipated that by July 1st they would be able to open further.

Mr. Cremeens asked if there were any empty exhibits.

Mr. Jackson stated that he did not believe that there were any empty exhibits. Currently Niabi has sixty-two exhibits.

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

Ms. Palmer stated that there was nothing new regarding the budget or fund balances reports. Have just received part of the tax distribution yesterday, which is very helpful. That's something new this year. Last year there were some issues in transferring amounts over \$100,000,000.00, so this year the Treasurer's Office is doing the transfers in chunks to avoid running into those same issues. Things are looking up for revenues. Cash balances are good.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver if there was anything from his report that he would like to bring attention to.

Mr. Craver stated that, as is noted in the Treasurer's Report, the Treasurer's Office did not get the opportunity to reconcile the cash report before Committee this month. There were a few minor issues with the uploads this month. Indian Bluff had a good month in May. There were three outings over the weekend. With the easing of restrictions hopefully will see business picking up. Camping was also excellent in May. Revenues were strong. Staff at Loud Thunder have taken the concerns voiced by equestrians under advisement, and will be getting signs to post at the Horse Corral area and also educational material for the office. Safety is always very important to the staff at the preserves. URICRA is starting back up with baseball and softball at Dorrance park. There have been some repairs needed at Illiniwek in both restrooms and the ranger residence. The restroom toilets will be costly and need outside expertise. Received an email from a concerned citizen regarding the state of the roads at the preserves. As has been stated many times in the past, the vast majority of the roads at the preserves are chip and seal. They have certainly taken a beating over the past few years with the harsh weather. Staff does their best to keep the potholes under control, but repairs on a large scale for the roads are in great need. That's a big part of the reasons that the DFCI fund needs the loan to Niabi paid back so that these projects can go forward.

Ms. Palmer stated that it might be worthwhile to look at the Rebuild Illinois money for this project.

Mr. Craver stated that he has already spoken with Mr. Massa of the County Highway Department in regards to that. There are roads at Loud Thunder, Indian Bluff, and Illiniwek that need addressed. Would like to move this to the Commission just included in the Director's report. Also, regarding the potential purchase of land near Illiniwek, there is a private grant, The Clean Energy Grant, that offers 80% match. That was great to find, and will definitely be applying for that.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve all routine reports from the department heads in the District.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve routine reports. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Adjourned the meeting at 4:33 PM.

Submitted by:
Cassie Sullivan
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant