

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES  
OCTOBER 13, 2021**

**PRESENT:** Committee members - K. Swanson, E. Sowards(arrived 8:43am), D. Cremeens, R. Simmer(arrived via Zoom 8:40am), A. Normoyle, L. Moreno, J. Woods.

**ABSENT:**

**ALSO PRESENT:** Jeff Craver, District Director; Mike Petersen, Illiniwek Ranger; April Palmer, Auditor; Louisa Ewert, Treasurer; Kurt Davis, Information Systems Director.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 8:35 AM on Wednesday, October 13, 2021, in the third floor chambers at the Rock Island County Building in Rock Island, Illinois.

K. Swanson, D. Cremeens, A. Normoyle, J. Woods, L. Moreno. {E. Sowards, R. Simmer, arrived after roll was called.}

**TOTAL PRESENT 7**

**TOTAL ABSENT 0**

President Swanson called for a motion approving the September Public Hearing and Committee meeting minutes.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve the September Public Hearing and Committee meeting minutes. Ms. Normoyle seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$217,773.78.

**MOTION:** Ms. Normoyle moved to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$217,773.78. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

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

**MOTION:** Ms. Woods moved to approve the transfers of appropriation in the General Fund and Niabi Zoo Fund. Mr. Cremeens seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Resolution pertaining to the Niabi Zoo Fund revenues budget amendment.

**MOTION:** Ms. Woods moved to approve the Resolution pertaining to the Niabi Zoo Fund revenues budget amendment. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Ordinances providing for the levy assessment and collection of taxes for the Forest Preserve District of Rock Island County, Illinois for the Fiscal Year beginning the first day of July 2022 and ending the thirtieth day of June 2023 for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, Liability Fund, FISSA Fund, and Development of Forests & Construction of Improvements Fund.

**MOTION:** Ms. Normoyle moved to approve the Ordinances providing for the levy assessment and collection of taxes for the Forest Preserve District of Rock Island County, Illinois for the Fiscal Year beginning the first day of July 2022 and ending the thirtieth day of June 2023 for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, Liability Fund, FISSA Fund, and Development of Forests & Construction of Improvements Fund. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Mr. Craver stated that there is a small increase in tax revenue, but that the taxes remain neutral.

Motion carried.

President Swanson made three calls to the public for anyone wishes to make public comment.

There were no requests for public comment.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the background check procedures.

**MOTION:** Ms. Normoyle moved to approve the background check procedures. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Roll was called:

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

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

Motion carried.

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

Mr. Petersen stated that one of the assistant rangers had an accident while on a lawn mower. He went to the hospital, and was released. The Grand Illinois Bike Tour in June of 2023 is requesting to use Illiniwek. There was a stolen car that was set on fire in a parking area at Dorrance Park. The Sheriff's Department came out and took care of that.

Ms. Normoyle asked how the lawn mower accident happened, and if there would be any changes to prevent it from happening again.

Mr. Petersen stated that it happened while mowing a steep hill that was wet with morning dew, staff will no longer be mowing steep areas when the grass is damp.

President Swanson stated that in Mr. Jackson's report there is a request that the Committee consider a policy. Mr. Jackson wants to find a mechanism that is appropriate under the law to find out which of the staff are vaccinated and which are not as part of animal care. May have seen in the news recently that all of the big cats at the national zoo contracted COVID, and they nearly lost one of their lions. Their keepers weren't vaccinated, and infected the animals with COVID. This is a good discussion to have as there is precedence on some sensitive situations that there is a policy regarding vaccinations and testing. Obviously the policy would be run through the Civil Division to ensure that it was a legal policy. Considering that Niabi does have vulnerable species, this is a conversation that should take place.

Ms. Sowards asked if there were any government requirements for zoos for this issue right now?

Mr. Craver stated that Mr. Jackson would be better speaking to that, but it is my understanding that there are some recommendations. There's no mandate from the USDA, which is the licensing entity for zoos. OSHA is very likely to be coming out soon with rules and requirements similar to what the state has required of healthcare workers and educators.

President Swanson stated that the main concern is knowing which employees are at high risk of exposing our animal collection, and which ones are not at high risk of spreading to Niabi's collection. Not as concerned about HIPPA in this instance because there is precedent of a supervisor knowing as long as the information isn't spread around. Perhaps Mr. Jackson can put together a policy and present it to the Committee.

Mr. Craver stated that working with the County's Human Resources office in centralizing that information would be the most appropriate place to store that information. Am hoping that OSHA will come out with the ruling on vaccination and testing. The question then becomes, is the District wanting to preempt OSHA ruling and work that out with the union? There's also going to be an additional cost for weekly testing.

Ms. Normoyle stated that some places of employment had incentive policies instead of mandates to encourage employees to get vaccinated.

Dr. Moreno stated that at his place of work Human Resources holds that information. Those who aren't vaccinated are tested every week, and the costs for the testing comes out of the employee's pocket.

President Swanson stated that he had been told that cost for required testing could not be taken from the employee; it falls on the business or institute requiring the testing.

Mr. Cremeens stated that he did not believe that HIPPA permitted an employer to ask if an employee was vaccinated.

Dr. Simmer stated that whether or not an employee is vaccinated should be between that employee and their doctor.

Mr. Craver stated that it was good to take some preemptory/preventative action in this. As the species collection has changed at Niabi, the District has required TB testing and rabies vaccines. This is something that will continue to come down the line as life with COVID goes on. We all understand that there is a certain amount of privacy that individuals want to keep, but the individuals that choose to work in these types of fields understand that there will be requirements that don't exist in other fields. Mr. Petersen understood that accepting his position at Illiniwek meant that he would be working weekends, among other requirements. The staff at Niabi understands that there are going to be requirements to keep them, the public, and the collection safe. So it is good to have this conversation. It's coming one way or the other. Be it through OSHA, or as a best practice, or possibly a USDA requirement. It's also important to remember that not all the collection resides at Niabi belongs to Niabi. The zoo is not AZA accredited, and the few things that Niabi has are important to hold on to. For example, there are only a hundred or so Amur Leopards left on the Earth, and they are a big draw for Niabi. Having the Snow Leopards, Amur Leopards and other rare species are big draws for visitors. If the big draws start to disappear, then so will attendance and fundraising opportunities. Getting ahead of the OSHA and USDA putting out requirements is a good idea.

President Swanson stated that Mr. Craver has made some excellent points, and Mr. Jackson should keep an eye on what's going on in the zoo community and be prepared to offer policy recommendations in form of motions. Zoo staff has met with Union leaders, and the union indicated that they have no issues with the collecting of this information. Mr. Jackson and the union have also gone over HIPPA documents and determined that no HIPPA violations would occur with the collecting of this information.

President Swanson then called for a motion authorize Mr. Jackson to work with the Human Resources office to develop procedure to determine COVID-19 vaccination status of zoo employees interacting with sensitive species.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to authorize Mr. Jackson to work with the Human Resources office to develop procedure to determine COVID-19 vaccination status of zoo employees interacting with sensitive species. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Mr. Cremeens asked if staff is so worried about the animals, then why don't they vaccinate the animals?

President Swanson answered that the CDC has not authorized a vaccine for animals yet. However, there are three vaccines that have been approved safe for humans, and has shown that it reduces the risk of transmitting the disease to any species.

Dr. Simmer felted that this was a political thing, and we need to step carefully.

Roll was called:

K. Swanson, A. Normoyle, J. Woods, L. Moreno, E. Sowards.

**TOTAL YES 5**

D. Cremeens, R. Simmer.

**TOTAL NO 2**

Motion carried.

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

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

Roll was called:

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

**TOTAL YES 7**

**TOTAL NO 0**

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to go into closed session per ILCS 120/2 (c) (1) (c) Exceptions: (2) Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees.

**MOTION:** Ms. Normoyle moved to enter closed session. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken.

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

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

Motion carried.

Closed session began 9:16 AM

Closed session ended 9:31 AM

President Swanson called for a motion to return to open session.

**MOTION:** Ms. Normoyle moved to return to open session. Ms. Woods seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called the meeting adjourned at 9:31 AM.

Submitted by:  
Cassie Sullivan  
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant