

**ROCK ISLAND COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION
AUGUST 15, 2023 – 6:24PM
PRESIDENT KAI SWANSON - PRESIDING**

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

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL PRESENT 14

E. Dewith, T. Foster, M. Moreno-Baker, R. Morthland, R. Simmer

TOTAL ABSENT 5

2. President Swanson stated, "Thank you. At this time, I would like to invite Ranger, Ben Mills, who as you know is our Chief Steward for Loud Thunder to come forward and make our monthly presentation about all of the good news that's going on in our Forest Preserve District...and, with thanks for all of your leadership, Mr. Mills, the floor is all yours."

Mr. Mills stated, "Thanks, Kai. Well guys, it's a beautiful evening outside so, I will try to keep this short and brief here. I just kind of wanted to bring up some partnerships I have made throughout the years with the Forest Preserve and bring to your attention some of the projects we are working on out there and get you up to speed. And so, one thing we have been doing since I've been around is we have a Forest Preserve Management Plan out at the Preserve. I will give you a quick overview of that. What we are doing over there is we are taking out a lot of invasive species that keep shading out our Native Cold Creek trees from getting up in the timber, so we are doing a lot of that in the areas that are specified in the plan. We planted some Native trees in special areas where we have kind of harvested in the past where we don't get the Native seed source...those trees were bought with IDOT and we got those donated to the Preserve. So, that's been really good through the years. We have also made a lot of improvements on our trail system at the Park. We've mapped the trails and the staff have widened the trails and put some bridges in that's really nice for folks. The users are really liking them. We've put fiords in on some of the smaller creeks where applicable...that's a work in progress, but now I can mow up the trails for users and it's gotten a lot of reports that are favorable, people are really enjoying the trail systems out there. We are seeing a lot more younger people getting out on the trails and families getting out on the trails than I used to see out there. So, that's been really encouraging. Also, through the years, we have built a really big partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Service. They have provided Loud Thunder, specifically, with seed for over 60 acres of native prairie out there. And so, we are really re-establishing some of the prairies that have been diminishing and lost across the state. So, like I said, that's been great on my budget, they are taking a hit on the seed and I am doing the prep work and a lot of the staff is taking a lot of the man-

hours as an In-kind (contribution). Also, I know you guys have met with Paul Fessler with the Blackhawk HCCTP program. Some of those projects have been really awesome that have taken place out a Loud Thunder. If you are not familiar with that, that's a program where they are training people to get into the highway construction force. And, they need projects ...and I've got projects, so the District kind of wins because we buy the materials and they buy the labor and they have good journeymen who are retired that are teaching those students while they are doing the work. Some of the projects they have done at the park include, building a huge wave wall down at the boat rental; which I don't even want to estimate what the cost would have been without them doing that project. They have given me an ADA parking spot back and marked the pavilion; which from that parking spot, they gave me a sidewalk to access the bathroom down there and the building. And so, everybody can use that area and bring in more folks with mobility issues...and at their family picnics and things like that. They also updated that area and made my bathrooms ADA accessible; which weren't before. They put in park benches on the park for me and most recently, we made an ADA accessible campsite; which is really cool on the Preserve. There are not a lot of those in the state and I am proud that we can provide one at Loud Thunder. So, that's really cool. Another thing, we have worked a lot with David Wyffels who is our local fish biologist looking at Lake George and monitoring that. We touch base frequently throughout the year...even in the off-season when he is not fishing, he is out surveying. One thing...if you've read my reports, you've seen it, the Eurasian Milfoil is an invasive weed that gets in the lakes. We've been noticing that for a few years, we have had our eyes on it. It is basically at the boat rental and by the public boat launch. The reason it is in these two areas is whenever a prop or a paddle severs one of these branches...the weeds of this plant, that becomes a viable plant if it hits the ground, it will start growing again. And so, where we have the most turbulence...where our props are and things like that, we are seeing this. At this point in time, the DNR is not worried about this plant...it's kind of maintained these two areas. If it does become an issue, they come in and plan on treating the water for that. I definitely will let the Board know and the Commission know if that is in the future. Also, this summer, I noticed there was a lot of filamentous algae that was popping up on the lake. I don't know if anybody has been out to the lake and seen it? But, earlier in the summer if you looked at the lake, ya know...around the first five or ten feet from the shore line into the water, you see this...almost looks like a green mat all the way around the lake. And it's that filamentous algae. I...as soon as it got on my radar, I gave the biologist a call and David and I talked about it and he was saying that with the droughts we have been experiencing this year, the algae's and the booms are just off the charts and this doesn't necessarily mean that we are going to need to treat anything at this point in time...we are going to monitor it and see as we get rain and what happens with it. That's what we are doing is monitoring it...it's on our radar. So, if anybody is asking you guys what is being done about it, it's on our radar and we are keeping an eye on that. Also, a cool, new partnership that we are kind of working on is the QC Illinois Native Plant Society. These folks have

identified an area on the north side of Loud Thunder Road, across from my maintenance shop. It's a woodland prairie. We've been putting some man hours out there along with them trying to hold on to what we have and encourage a little bit more grown in that native woodland prairie because not a lot of those are documented prairies. So, we are working on that, that is pretty exciting. Our new campgrounds have been extremely popular. Folks are really enjoying those...we are getting a lot of good feedback on those. The one thing that we are kind of lacking in some of the feedback that has been negative is that when we designed and built these new campgrounds, we were really hoping that folks would use our sewer hookups and use them for showering and those kinds of things. Well, it turns out that showering in your own RV is not as desirable as using an onsite facility for some folks. And, it seems to be trending that way at Loud Thunder. Just to put it into perspective, I have six showers in my shower building and I've got eleven commodes and eight sinks that is servicing a little over 100 campsites. So, you can imagine if you just average two people per campsite, that's a lot of people for six showers. I have been looking into...err I've been talking to Strand, the engineers who designed this campground, we are looking into adding new shower facilities and bathing facilities in this area to accommodate our upgrades. It's not deterring people from camping, at this point, but our septic systems are really taking a hit. I am working with them a lot more than I normally would, just trying to stay ahead of this. That's on our radar for sure. As far as Loud Thunder is going currently, the camping season started out great...it was doing really well. I don't know if it was because Illiniwek wasn't open in the spring, but we did get a lot of Illiniwek folks over there. No offense for stealing them from Illiniwek and having them at Loud Thunder, but in all seriousness, we are doing great in the spring and things are slowing down now. Things are starting to get back into school. Sports are starting back up. And so, that has gone well this season. We are looking forward to great weather like tonight. And hopefully, that will bring people out on the weekends and bring more campers out to the Preserve. Other than that, I would just encourage everyone here tonight...the Fall colors are coming out sooner than typical with these...with the weather we've had this summer, the drought is a lot of stress on the trees. If anyone has any questions for me, I am more than happy to answer them."

Commissioner Enburg was recognized.

Ms. Enburg asked, "So, to understand...the campgrounds and the campsites do have full hookups?"

Mr. Mills answered, "That is correct, yes. I have 51 sites that have full hookups on them with our new addition on the Preserve."

President Swanson added, "And, they are state-of-the-art...they are pull-through and have amped up electricity because we really went with state-of-the-art on this. The unexpected development is that people are driving up with their very

fancy RV's with posh facilities, and they still want to go use the tent camping showers."

Mr. Vyncke stated, "There is something wrong...(chuckles) I can't..."

(Group laughter)

Mr. Vyncke added, "Oh yeah, I would definitely rather use my stuff than...nothing against it."

President Swanson added, "No, but...it's like, think about the people...I mean, I don't have an RV and so, when I go camping, it's tent camping. And, I go in there...and these guys are coming in there with their fuzzy slippers." (Chuckles)

(Group laughter)

Mr. Mills stated, "Well, as it turns out...you know, some of these RV's it is typical that they have a six-gallon water heater on them, and so that also has a...it dictates how people want to...we are really hoping that people would use the hookups."

Mr. Vyncke added, "It's not the Holiday Inn."

(Group laughter)

President Swanson asked, "Are there any other questions for Mr. Mills?"

Commissioner L. Moreno was recognized.

Mr. L. Moreno stated, "The Honey I bought there is delicious, by the way...if you want to pitch that!"

Mr. Mills answered, "Oh, yeah! I think we are down to our last quart. But, we've got three Hives and Mr. Craver and our Director of Harvest of Honey from our Bees are taken right out of our prairies that we have on the Preserve there. So, I have had anybody say that it wasn't...that it was anything but great!"

President Swanson added, "It's great! It's a great batch! When you are getting ready for another batch, right Mr. Craver?"

(Mr. Craver nodded yes.)

President Swanson added, "It's a real sweet way to support Loud Thunder. Get yourself a jar of honey. Are there any other questions for Mr. Mills? I would just like to say, while you are here with us...I mean, you mentioned some of the projects we've have with the HCCTP, but I have to say, I am very grateful for your

Leadership in terms of making Loud Thunder and all of our preserves I think more accessible than they have ever been. And, I think we are blowing the curve across the State of Illinois for making these accessible for people with a mobility issue."

Mr. Mills answered, "Sure!"

President Swanson added, "And so, I think that a lot of it is down to having a leader like you. So, I would like to publicly thank you for that leadership."

Mr. Mills stated, "Thank you."

President Swanson asked, "Are there any other questions for Mr. Mills? If not, I would enjoy you all helping me thank him and the whole team!"

(Group applause)

President Swanson added, "I appreciate it very, very much. Alright, next on our agenda would be a motion to approve the July Commission minutes."

3. Commissioner Adams moved to approve the July 18, 2023, minutes, as presented. Commissioner Woods seconded."

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS - (NONE)** (Three calls were made.)

5. **PRESIDENTS COMMENTS:**

President Swanson stated, "Under Presidents Comments, people are really getting out there and enjoying the Preserves. The heat was keeping some people away, uh, but on a personal note...in addition to getting out and seeing the Preserves, I was able to take some grandkids to the zoo over the weekend for Members Weekend and the place was packed. Probably, in part, because of the incentive...but, I hope you get a chance to get out there. The Painted Dogs are amazing to watch for the kids. The lions were great, but they were elderly and mostly slept. These dogs, they are up and looking at you, they are tracking you...it's just a great time to be out there. If you have little people in your life or if you don't have little people in your life, get out to the zoo as soon as you can. That's all I have to say. If you have questions, we'll have that later on."

6. Commissioner Mielke moved to approve the FY23 and FY24 Forest Preserve Claims and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$603,804.92, as presented. Commissioner Vyncke seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Adams, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

7. Commissioner L. Moreno moved to waive the reading and approve the FY23 and FY24 Transfers of Appropriations as enumerated in your packets. Commissioner Vyncke seconded.

Commissioner Adams moves to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioners Sowards and Perkins seconded.

D. Adams, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

8. Commissioner Vyncke moved to waive the reading and approve the Resolution RE: FY23 Illiniwek Recreation Trail Grant Appropriations, as presented. Commissioner L. Moreno seconded.

(Note** The Resolution is in .pdf format and begins on the next page)

RESOLUTION

RE: FY 23 Illiniwek Recreation Trail Grant Appropriations

WHEREAS, Illiniwek Forest Preserve was awarded \$200,000.00 from the Illinois Recreation Trail Grant program to construct a new restroom facility and make trail improvements, and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Recreation Trail Grant program is a reimbursable grant, and

WHEREAS, construction of phase 1 has begun and contractor's second application for payment is required, and

WHEREAS, the engineering firm is also responsible for construction observation services and work has been performed for the road and trail work required, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Forest Preserve Commission of Rock Island County, Rock Island, Illinois, as follows:

SECTION 1. An emergency exists as outlined above.

SECTION 2. Expenditures in the amount of \$7,204.09 shall be increased partially from grant revenue to be received & the balance from unencumbered funds to provide the required matching funds in the Development of Forests and Construction Improvement Fund to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$7,204.09	335-32-35 765 RTP 23	Construction in Progress

SECTION 3. This resolution to become effective immediately.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 15th day of August, 2023.



Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission



Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

Commissioner Adams moves to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Sowards seconded.

D. Adams, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

9. Commissioner Adams moved to waive the reading and approve the FY 23 Resolution RE: Niabi Zoo Fund Regional Development Authority Grant Appropriations, as presented. Commissioner Mielke seconded.

(Note** The Resolution is in .pdf format and begins on the next page)

RESOLUTION

FY 2023 Niabi Zoo Fund Regional Development Authority Grant Appropriations

WHEREAS, Niabi Zoo was awarded \$32,500.00 from the Regional Development Authority for Operational Support/Building Infrastructure, and

WHEREAS, the Regional Development Authority grant has been received in full, and

WHEREAS, the purchase of an aluminum feline restraint cage with guillotine doors, Discovery Center gallery renovation, & Biodiversity Hall guest railing installation is required at Niabi Zoo, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Forest Preserve Commission of Rock Island County, Rock Island, Illinois, as follows:

SECTION 1. An emergency exists as outlined above.

SECTION 2. Expenditures in the amount of \$1,415.38 shall be increased due to the guest railing costs being higher than estimated from unencumbered funds in the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$1,415.38	131-32-35 763 RDA23	Repairs & Maintenance

SECTION 3. This resolution to become effective immediately.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 15th day of August, 2023.



Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission



Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

Commissioner Layer moves to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Perkins seconded.

D. Adams, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

10. Commissioner Vyncke moved to waive the reading and approve the FY23 Resolution RE: Niabi Zoo Improvements ARPA Grant Appropriations, as presented. Commissioner Woods seconded.

(Note** The Resolution is in .pdf format and begins on the next page)

RESOLUTION

FY 2023 Niabi Zoo Improvements ARPA Grant Appropriations

WHEREAS, the Forest Preserve District was granted funds from Rock Island County for improvements at Niabi Zoo, and

WHEREAS, design and engineering for the improvement projects has been performed, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Forest Preserve Commission of Rock Island County, Rock Island, Illinois, as follows:

SECTION 1. An emergency exists as outlined above.

SECTION 2. Expenditures in the amount of \$2,400.00 shall be increased from grant revenue to be received in the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$2,400.00	131-32-35 765 ARPA24-60	Infrastructure over \$15,000

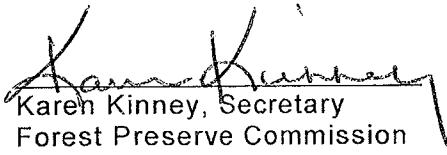
SECTION 3. Revenues in the amount of \$2,400.00 shall be increased from the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$2,400.00	131-32-35 331.10ARPA24-60	Federal Grants-General Government

SECTION 4. This resolution to become effective immediately.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 15th day of August, 2023.


Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission


Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

Commissioner Adams moves to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Enburg seconded.

D. Adams, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

11. Commissioner Layer moved to waive the reading and approve FY24 Resolution RE: the Niabi Zoo African Painted Dog Appropriations Amendment, as presented. Commissioner Mielke seconded.

(Note** The Resolution is in .pdf format and begins on the next page)

RESOLUTION

FY 2024 Niabi Zoo Fund African Painted Dog Grant Appropriations

WHEREAS, Niabi Zoo was awarded \$233,000.00 from the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity Tourism Grant program to construct a new African Painted Dog exhibit, and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity Tourism Grant program is a reimbursable grant, and

WHEREAS, construction document work has been performed, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Forest Preserve Commission of Rock Island County, Rock Island, Illinois, as follows:

SECTION 1. An emergency exists as outlined above.

SECTION 2. Expenditures in the amount of \$72.33 shall be increased partially from grant revenue to be received & the balance from unencumbered funds to provide the necessary funds to complete the project in the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$72.33	131-32-35 767 TAFGP23	Infrastructure over \$15,000

SECTION 3. This resolution to become effective immediately.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 15th day of August, 2023.



Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission



Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

Commissioner Adams moves to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Vyncke seconded.

D. Adams, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

(Commissioner Brunk is present)

12. Commissioner L. Moreno moved waive the reading and approve the FY24 Resolution RE: the Niabi Zoo Prairie Dog Grant Appropriations, as presented. Commissioner Perkins seconded.

(Note** The Resolution is in .pdf format and begins on the next page)

RESOLUTION
FY 2024 Niabi Zoo Fund Prairie Dog Grant Appropriations

WHEREAS, Niabi Zoo was awarded \$436,100.00 from the Illinois Public Museum Grant program to construct a new Prairie Dog exhibit, and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Public Museum Grant program is a reimbursable grant, and

WHEREAS, construction on the project has been performed, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Forest Preserve Commission of Rock Island County, Rock Island, Illinois, as follows:

SECTION 1. An emergency exists as outlined above.

SECTION 2. Expenditures in the amount of \$194,480.14 shall be increased partially from grant revenue to be received & the balance from unencumbered funds to provide the necessary funds to complete the project in the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$194,480.14	131-32-35 767 MCPD24	Infrastructure over \$15,000

SECTION 3. Revenues in the amount of \$160,653.34 shall be increased from the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$160,653.34	131-32-35 334.70 MCPD24	State Grants

SECTION 4. This resolution to become effective immediately.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 15th day of August, 2023.


Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission


Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 14

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

13. Commissioner Layer moved to approve the Harris Golf Cars bid #1 in the amount of \$211,128.00, as presented. Commissioner Woods seconded.

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

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, L. Moreno, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 14

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

14. Commissioner Adams moved to approve the low bid for Great River Trail/Mississippi River Trail Bridge Repair Bids from McClintock Trucking & Excavating at \$23,528.50, as presented. Commissioner L. Moreno seconded.

Commissioner Vyncke moved to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Layer seconded.

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 14

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

15. **Comments from Commissioners: (None)**

16. Commissioner McNeil moved to approve all Routine Reports from the Director and Departments Heads of the Forest Preserve Commission, as presented. Commissioner Brunk seconded.

President Swanson stated, "Before we go any further, Mr. Craver, if I can pick on you for a second...just if you could give us any updates? I understand we had to

pump the breaks a little bit on the Prairie Dogs at Niabi. Do you have any information on what the prognosis is there?"

(Mr. Craver's comments were not clear because he was not on a mic.)

Mr. Craver stated, "The contractor out there is getting a new sub-contractor and they are hoping for the middle of September for that exhibit to be done."

President Swanson stated, "I would say kudos to the team because even though it's on hold, there is great signage out there...it's working, I mean it's gonna be great when it's there, but keeping the excitement going. That's it. As you have gone through the reports, and I hope you've done...do you have any questions for Jeff on behalf of his team? Seeing none."

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

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, C. Layer, P. McNeil, L. Moreno, D. Mielke, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, B. Vyncke, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 14

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

The next meeting of the Forest Preserve Commission is Tuesday, September 19, 2023, at 5:30pm, immediately following the meeting of the Rock Island County Board. And we are very grateful for the Rock Island Police Department for hosting us while we are displaced. With that, friends...we are adjourned. Thank you very much."

President Swanson declared the Forest Preserve Meeting adjourned at 6:46pm.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,



KAREN KINNEY
COUNTY CLERK AND SECRETARY
OF THE FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION

KK:rw