

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 13, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Committee members –L. Moreno, D. Mielke, R. Simmer, C. Layer, K. Swanson, J. Woods.

**ABSENT:** E. Sowards.

**ALSO PRESENT:** B. Perkins, District 13 Commissioner; Jeff Craver, District Director; Lee Jackson, Niabi Zoo Director; April Palmer, Auditor; Nick Camlin, Treasurer.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 9:30 AM on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor chambers of the Rock Island County Building, Rock Island, Illinois.

L. Moreno, R. Simmer, C. Layer, D. Mielke, K. Swanson, J. Woods.

**TOTAL PRESENT 6**

E. Sowards.

**TOTAL ABSENT 1**

President Swanson called for a motion approving the January Committee meeting.

**MOTION:** Mr. Mielke moved to approve the January Committee meeting 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 \$428,615.03.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$428,615.03. Mr. Layer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

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

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve the transfers of appropriation. Mr. Mielke seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the resolution regarding the Execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Village of Rapid City.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the resolutions regarding the Execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Village of Rapid City. Mr. Layer seconded the motion.

Mr. Mielke asked if Illiniwek was in the Village of Rapid City.

Mr. Craver stated that it was not in Rapid City, but the infrastructure that the District is going to connect to is owned by Rapid City. Illiniwek is in Hampton, IL. This connection will allow improvements for years to come for Illiniwek.

Mr. Mielke asked if the District would be paying the resident rate or non-resident rate.

Mr. Craver stated that the billing would be going through the City of East Moline, and it will be the non-resident rate.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the resolutions regarding Audit Fund additional appropriations, Niabi Zoo Improvements – ARPA Grant Appropriations, and Illiniwek Recreation Trail Grant Appropriations.

**MOTION:** Ms. Woods moved to approve the corrected resolutions regarding Audit Fund additional appropriations, Niabi Zoo Improvements – ARPA Grant Appropriations, and Illiniwek Recreation Trail Grant Appropriations. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson made three calls for public comment. There was no request for public comment.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the amendment to the Regular Part-Time & Temporary Pay Policy.

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve the resolution regarding Regular Part-Time & Temporary Pay Policy. Ms. Woods seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson asked if the Committee had any questions regarding the routine reports of the District.

There were no questions.

President Swanson asked Mr. Jackson to thank zoo staff for all their extra hard work in the wake of all the storm damage at Niabi. Is there an update on the clean-up and repair?

Mr. Jackson stated that the big cat exhibit clean-up was started. That should take about a week. After that is cleared staff will be looking into what repairs are needed. Staff has reached out to the manufacturers of the smaller free standing exhibits, and are waiting to hear back from the companies about replacements. There are several building that need gutter and roof repair, and that work should be starting in a few weeks. Some of the exhibits had more damage than originally realized. The Aviary was hit harder than it seemed. It wasn't noticeable at first, but staff has noticed wild birds in the building, so that building is no longer bird-proof. That building will need more repairs than originally thought.

President Swanson stated that he and Mr. Mielke had been able to go out and see the rather extensive damage at Niabi, and asked how the process was moving along with the insurance.

Mr. Jackson stated that the adjuster had been out ten days ago, but have not heard from them since.

Mr. Craver stated that these are not usual claims from a zoo or preserve. The issue would be that they'd want to have quotes for the repairs, so the insurance may complicate the process.

President Swanson stated that there is a strategic question that doesn't need answered immediately, but would be worth thinking about. There is a replacement cost for what it would take to get the exhibits back online, but many of these exhibits are currently substandard. Building back to what we were working with in December may not be the wisest course when we know that these exhibits need redone already. If staff can breakdown what the repairs would cost, and what it would cost for Niabi to improve the exhibits as set forth in Niabi's Master Plan, then see what insurance will pay out, what funds the District can spare and what staff and other organizations can fundraise. I believe it would be a worthwhile endeavor to see if this can become a catalyst for reaching Niabi's goals earlier than perhaps we would have under normal circumstances.

Mr. Jackson stated that even with all the stress and horror of the situation, this is definitely an opportunity. Staff is already looking at plans and strategies to move forward. Some of the things we've lost should absolutely not go back to the way they were.

Dr. Moreno asked if the damage would be taken as all in one claim, or each structure would be its own claim. Also, what is the District's deductible?

Mr. Craver stated that it is most likely that they will count all the damage as one claim, and the deductible is \$5,000.00.

Mr. Jackson stated that there was no single enclosure that would be less than \$5,000.00 to repair. These repairs will need to be addressed within the next twelve months, or the zoo will not meet the standards set by the USDA. There was a surprise inspection by the USDA after the storm, but they understood the nature of the emergency. Since the animals had been removed from those structures, Niabi is consider not in non-compliance, which is good.

Mr. Mielke asked if there was a plan on opening late due to all the damage.

Mr. Jackson stated that there was a plan to open a few weeks late, and redo the fee structure. Those fees adjustments would come to the Commission for approval before opening.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver if there was anything he would like to lift up from the Director's report.

Mr. Craver stated that last week there was a meeting with Moody's rating services. They should be issuing an opinion later next week. I believe they are having a meeting with the County soon, and that will have a major impact the District's rating. There is still time to make adjustments to the District's fiscal year 2025 budget. The levy was already established, but there is some wiggle room within what was tentatively budgeted to see about addressing Niabi's storm damage needs. There is stuff popping out of the ground even though the weather has been goofy. Looking forward to the 2024 season.

Mr. Jackson added that the zoo would be host to the Illinois Zoo Director's meeting. There should be someone there from every institution.

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

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approved the routine reports of the District. Ms. Woods seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called the meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM.

Submitted by:  
Cassie Sullivan  
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant