

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**JUNE 11, 2024**

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

**ABSENT:** J. Woods.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Jeff Craver, District Director; Lee Jackson, Niabi Zoo Director; Amanda Van Daele, Chief Deputy Auditor.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 3:34 PM on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, in the Administration Building at Niabi Zoo in Coal Valley, Illinois.

L. Moreno, R. Simmer, D. Mielke, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, C. Layer.

**TOTAL PRESENT 6**

J. Woods.

**TOTAL ABSENT 1**

President Swanson called for a motion approving the May Committee meeting and the closed session minutes.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the May Committee meeting and the closed session minutes. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$687,741.93.

**MOTION:** Mr. Layer moved to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$687,741.93. Mr. Mielke seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

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

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

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the resolutions regarding Illiniwek Recreation Trail Grant Appropriations, Niabi Zoo Appropriation – Zoo Foundation Donation for

the Purchase of a scissor lift, Niabi Zoo Fund Receipt of Grant Funds – Woodward Community Grant Fund, Niabi Zoo Improvements ARPA Grant Appropriations, Liability Fund Additional Appropriations Due to Insurance Settlement, and DFCI Fund Loan from the Forest Preserve General Fund.

**MOTION:** Mr. Layer moved to approve the resolutions regarding Illiniwek Recreation Trail Grant Appropriations, Niabi Zoo Appropriation – Zoo Foundation Donation for the Purchase of a scissor lift, Niabi Zoo Fund Receipt of Grant Funds – Woodward Community Grant Fund, Niabi Zoo Improvements ARPA Grant Appropriations, Liability Fund Additional Appropriations Due to Insurance Settlement, and DFCI Fund Loan from the Forest Preserve General Fund. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the fiscal year 2025 Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinances for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Preserve Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, Liability Fund, FISSA Fund, Audit Fund, and Development of Forests & Construction of Improvement Fund.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the fiscal year 2025 Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinances for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Preserve Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, Liability Fund, FISSA Fund, Audit Fund, and Development of Forests & Construction of Improvement Fund. Mr. Layer 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 District's Regular Part-Time & Temporary Employee Pay Policy.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the amendment to the District's Regular Part-Time & Temporary Employee Pay Policy. Mr. Mielke seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Compensation Philosophy & Policy.

**MOTION:** Mr. Mielke moved to approve the Compensation Philosophy & Policy. Mr. Layer seconded the motion.

Mr. Craver stated that this policy incorporates the recommendations of the benchmarking report that was presented to you last week. HR Source sent a sample policy, and that was modified to suit the District's needs. This policy only applies to positions that are not in the bargaining unit or have an employment contract with the District. That covers management

employees, with the exception of Mr. Jackson who has an employment contract, and Ms. Sullivan's position. It was recommended in the report that the District follow up over the next couple years to see what the market does in terms of salaries.

Mr. Mielke brought a typo to Mr. Craver's attention.

Mr. Craver stated that it would be corrected for the Commission meeting and final action.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Zoo Director Employment Agreement Amendment 4.

**MOTION:** Mr. Layer moved to the Zoo Director Employment Amendment 4. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the MindFire Communications INC fiscal year 2025 Work Plan and Proposal at \$65,475.00.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the MindFire Communications INC fiscal year 2025 Work Plan and Proposal at \$65,475.00. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Dr. Moreno asked how much the District paid for the last contract.

Mr. Craver stated that he believed it was around \$58,000.00 or so. Amôwa has been added in to the current contract, along with ten miscellaneous posts. There have been times when the District needed to make announcements or put out a press release. That had not been in agreement, and therefore was extra cost. Those are now built into this agreement.

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 how the Prairie Dogs have been received.

Mr. Jackson stated that the Prairie Dogs have been very popular, and staff has heard a lot of compliments on them.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver if there was anything that needed brought to the Committee's attention.

Mr. Craver stated that there were a few things. At Illiniwek there was a tree that fell onto a campsite while there was a family camping on it. No one was injured, and the tree was on the right of way on the railway's property and not the District's. It was reported to the railroad, but there has been no response. There are a few sites closed at Illiniwek because of the incomplete water project. Hopefully, that will be completed soon. At the Bluff there have been many compliments on the new cart path. July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend is looking like it will be a hot scorcher. It's likely to be an extra busy weekend no matter what though.

Mr. Mielke asked how well the railroad does with maintaining its trees.

Mr. Craver answered that the railroad did a "so-so" job at maintaining the trees on their property. It tends to be handled much like utility companies. The railway doesn't send out people to assess the trees, but if something is reported to them, then they are usually pretty good about removing it if it looks like it might hit a train. Staff does not go onto the railway's property to address trees, but they do report something to the railroad if they see it.

Mr. Layer asked about the cicadas.

Mr. Craver stated that the cicadas were plentiful over the past week or so, but they are starting to quiet down now.

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

**MOTION:** Mr. Mielke moved to approved the routine reports of the District. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called the meeting adjourned at 3:58 PM.

Submitted by:  
Cassie Sullivan  
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant