

FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
OCTOBER 08, 2024

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

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT: 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, October 8, 2024, in the second floor conference room of the County Building in Rock Island, Illinois.

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

TOTAL PRESENT 7

TOTAL ABSENT 0

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

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the September Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Mielke seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$356,314.95.

MOTION: Dr. Moreno moved to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$356,314.95. Ms. Woods seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the resolutions regarding FY25 Niabi Zoo ARPA Grant Appropriations, FY24 Niabi Zoo Fund Appropriations.

MOTION: Mr. Mielke moved to approve the resolutions regarding FY25 Niabi Zoo ARPA Grant Appropriations, FY24 Niabi Zoo Fund Appropriations. Mr. Layer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson made three calls for public comment. There were no requests for public comment.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the 2024 Levy Ordinances for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Preserve Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, Liability Fund FISSA Fund, Audit Fund, and Development of Forests and Construction of Improvement Fund.

MOTION: Ms. Woods moved to approve the 2024 Levy Ordinances for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Preserve Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, Liability Fund FISSA Fund, Audit Fund, and Development of Forests and Construction of Improvement Fund. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson asked if there were any questions for staff regarding the routine reports.

There were no questions.

President Swanson stated that he was grateful to see the change in the zoo's reports that we can see year to year cash revenue now in addition to the numbers we see coming through the gates. Would like to ask Mr. Jackson, since he's with us this morning. Do you see any reason that the District would not go back to the previous year's (2023) fee structure?

Mr. Jackson stated that the plan has always been to go back to the regular fees in 2025.

President Swanson asked if there was a plan to raise them for the next year, since the Prairie Dogs have been so popular.

Mr. Jackson stated that it was not in the plan to raise admission fees. Don't believe Niabi has anything that would help the District justify the increase. It's very dependent on what the collection has. Fee increases do not necessarily happen every time something is added to the collection. That very much depends on the value of the experience when something gets added to the collection.

Dr. Simmer asked about the email that was sent out about the tax rate. Is the District dropping taxes down?

Mr. Craver stated that the District did increase the tax rate. Niabi is currently near its maximum tax rate. The insurance claim for the snow damages is now closed, and insurance only paid a couple hundred thousand dollars. The increase is needed because of the amount of remaining projects as has been discussed at previous meetings, and the Tax Anticipation Warrant (TAW) to get the zoo the cash it needs to get through the off season. The TAW will be up in front of the Commission next month.

The Committee briefly discussed raising the levy more than it was already levied, and Mr. Craver was directed to amend the levy ordinances to have a larger levy increase.

There was then a revisit to the parking fee for Niabi Zoo. Mr. Craver and Mr. Jackson were directed to work together on how best to capture admission revenue.

President Swanson stated that it was great to see that Loud Thunder was again working with Blackhawk College for the 48-foot trail bridge project. Are there any items in the reports that Mr. Carver would like to bring attention to?

Mr. Craver stated that a lawsuit has been filed against the District by a former Niabi seasonal employee that is claiming discrimination under ADA. There is also a workers' comp case that will likely be a significant payout for a shoulder surgery. Lastly, the taxing agreement that was discussed at last month's Commission closed session has been signed by all taxing bodies, and at the full amount.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve all routine reports from the Director and Department Heads as presented.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve all routine reports from the Director and Department Heads as presented. Ms. Woods seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called the meeting adjourned at 10:12 AM.

Submitted by:
Cassie Sullivan
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant