

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION
OCTOBER 15, 2024 – 6:04PM
PRESIDENT KAI SWANSON - PRESIDING

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

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

TOTAL PRESENT 17

M. Moreno-Baker, B. Perkins

TOTAL ABSENT 2

Madam Clerk Kinney stated, "We have a quorum."

2. President Swanson stated, "Thank you, Clerk Kinney, we are grateful for your service. At this time, friends, I always know it's going to be a great meeting when Amy Behning is here from MindFire to chat with us. So, I will direct your attention to the screen but also Amy will be at the podium for us. Amy Behning is from MindFire who is a tremendous partner for the Forest Preserve District partner and other facilities over all the resources here in the county. Ms. Behning, the floor is yours."

Ms. Behning stated, "Well, thank you all...we are always pleased to do this presentation every year because our goal is to help promote everything that is in the Forest Preserve, and this is one way that we do it. So, I just learned that because I have a .pdf, I am going to have to say, 'next slide'...so, next slide, please or maybe I just 'beep'. So, today, we are going to look at the social media metrics. It will give us a ton of insight in what resonates with the folks who use all of the facilities. (Next Slide...Beep.) So, when it comes to social media, the thing that I think is really important to remember is that there are lots of avenues within the channels for us to target and deploy. We make sure through editorial calendars, targeted ads, and ultimately some of the key performance indicators that you will see today is what is going through will stick. This gives us a really good insight to what is important and what really resonates with those that use the parks. (Beep) So, some digital terminology, just to put this in some context. So, I am going to say words like 'impressions'. When I say impressions...all you need to think is eyeballs. That's the number of people who are seeing something. 'Engagement'. That's a really important number because not only did they see it, but they acted on it. So, sometimes on the sales side, we call that consideration...we want to see higher and higher engagement. And then 'frequency'. How often did those status updates of that content get to people? And so, impressions = eyeballs, engagement means they did something, and frequency is how often did we get that message out. (Beep) Alright. So, let's take a look here at Indian Bluff first. So, we go ahead to the next slide. We run

something we call data box; which is a big fancy way of saying we connect all the data on the dashboards. So, as we are helping the folks that are boots on the ground at the parks make decisions, we are coaching based on what we see working. Here is what I would like to bring to your attention on this next slide. This is a really good story to tell. So, you'll see about 358,000 impressions; which means 358,000 eyeballs saw something around Indian Bluff. You'll also notice that is about 3% increase over the previous year. What's important is, that number will go up with engagement level that increased over 27%. What that is telling you is that every year we are getting a better and better handle on what we are going to get people to engage. When you see numbers like that, where the impressions are staying pretty steady and engagements are going up...what that tells you is that the content is working. And, that's what we like to see. So as a recap, if we go to the next slide...some big things that are take-a-ways from that data is, that I noted 358,000 impressions yielded just over 39,000 engagements. That's a pretty impressive jump of 27% engagements. Now, as we see things like that in real time, as we are working on it, being both on the creative side, the fire side and on the mind side...we are going to immediately ask why? Tell me what's working, because we want to do more of what's working. First of all, when we are funny, people go both fun and hard, apparently. Humor works for golf fun content, that is through the roof. Also, photo jumps; which is really information that people are sharing with us and talking about their positive experience that they had. And, then of course, we have focused on some hiring pieces as well. So, when it comes to Indian Bluff, the key take-a-ways are: That experience of engagement with the active golf thing in nature, photo dumps we are seeing the value of that course; which I think sometimes gets missed...the course itself, is beautiful. And, then of course, anything that we can do to engage with those who can be hired to keep it maintained. Those are really good key take-a-ways for Indian Bluff. And then, on the next slide...Beep. You will see just a little of what we have done in here; which is just a little preview of the things that are working...the hiring ads and then you can see in the middle the experience moments; where people are right there sort of hoping that they can be the next one on the horse. So, we move on to the next piece and that's Illiniwek. So, what you are going to see with Illiniwek when we look at the dashboard data what comes next are some similar trends, but some differences as well. And so, focusing on the impressions...we are actually without really increasing our post frequency that much; which is a good thing, again, we saw those impressions go up 31 percent. So, when you see those impressions going up at a rate greater than the post frequency, what that's telling you is that Meta is favoring new content...and, they favor new content when folks like it. Once, again, you can see the engagement rate is around 38% up over the previous year. And, it's probably worth noting that when you look at those charts, you can see you should really be following the post impressions too, but you can see the year over year versus your average below. So, our goal is to continually increase that, and what that takes is getting creative with content but also listening and watching the data to figure out what has the most value to everyone involved. So, taking a look at some of the summary on the next slide...those key

take-a-ways. Um...impressions, this is also worth noting that from May to October, impressions and engagements steadily increase up 31% and up 38% on engagements compared to the previous year. Here is what's important about that...we are the Rockstar. We have to delay opening because of renovations, the closures, the flood, it didn't matter, and so, that is a really good sign that there is a lot of loyalty with this park. Of course, that 14% increase plus frequency helped contribute to these gains, but the post frequency was still under what we saw as your gains; which means...hey, we gotta have the right content out there. So, when it comes to Illiniwek, when you are talking to people about Illiniwek, um...because social is nothing more than digital real-time conversations. So, when you are having those real-time conversations, sunsets, conservation and actual goals of conservation and the notion of camping and family time...that's what's standing out. Also, people love the flowers and the community. When they think about Illiniwek, those are the things that are resonating with the people throughout the county. And so, moving on. I am using my voice a lot here...and so, I will keep going. Just a good look at visually what performed for Illiniwek. You can see exactly what I am talking about...family experiences, conservation, sunsets, fishing and camping. Those are the key take-a-ways from that park. So, looking at our next park, Loud Thunder. If you move on to the next slide, you'll see, again, you really want to pay attention the big picture take-a-ways with impressions and engagements. Now, you are seeing them neck and neck. So, impressions are up over last year considerably and I'll give you a little insight as we move forward as to why. Even though, you see that the post frequency wasn't as high as the impressions, that is also a good thing. Engagement really interestingly sorted, tracks nose to nose with the impressions. So, it tells us, again, that when we have certain seasonality and you can see there are more significant spikes with Loud Thunder...so, seasonality around that and then also some content. So, if we look at the next slide...some of those key take-a-ways for what we saw in that data is, of course, a significant increase in year over year impressions. We did a lot of calling out to folks at Loud Thunder this year for what we call UGC. That's a fancy word for user generated content. Facebook is a two-way Meta, Instagram...all of these are two-way where people want to share their stories as much as we want to share ours. So, user generated content contributed to a massive number of engagements. That's a really good story for trying to create more to do with those parks. Also, boat rentals. I think that is also a key take-a-way and something that you should really sit on...79,000 impressions. We did go ahead...and you see that spike because we did more significant boosting around on that based on input from Jeff, Ben and others and it really did pay off. So, that boat differentiator is something that's strong for Loud Thunder. And, people like to talk about Lake George. The more we have to say about Lake George, the more recognition...in fact, what we are finding is Lake George is something that people can sort of speak to. It has as much name recognition as Loud Thunder itself. I think that is something key that we should take-a-way as we look to the next year what we could do to get more people out there to experience these things. So, new to the plate as we look at our next park...I'm sorry, I've got some photos too. So, again,

messages around boating really resonated...camping etc. And, of course, what you see in the user generated content...when you look to the right, with just over 2,000 engagements is, people like the grandeur. So, when we think about professional photography, and when we think about Illiniwek, we want to step in and show the beauty of the flower. When we think about Loud Thunder, we want to step back show the depth. And that seems to get people really interested in participating in park activities, or as we like to say...being outdoorsy. So, then moving on to our next one, our near and dear AMOWA...brand new baby on the scene. Let's show you what's happening. So, if we look here, obviously, we are not going to have the same year over year trend. But, here's what I want to point out to you...you can see that we were up 29% in impressions because we got momentum this year. Just like Loud Thunder, we are seeing a little higher engagement, but we are fine tuning that content because eventually, we want to see that engagement creeping up even higher than your impressions. But, to point out on this you can see the tip of the gray over the previous year in the month of July. Any ideas what that might have been about? Bees. Bees. So, we did an educational piece on bees...and it bumped us up sizably. And, I think that is just a powerful note as we think about that conservation message that goes in line with what we do with the parks. So, if we look at the next slide...I think the key take-away there is momentum. I think that as we see how people are using this park in a much more conservation type approach, we have done a lot of bee posts. Do not get me wrong, it really has connected with this particular audience. Um, we also saw engagement through UGC contact because people were excited to share that they had been there for the first time because it is not particularly explored in large pieces. We are looking into that for the next year. And, some work we did specific around the opening on Memorial Day also garnered, you can see...about 22,000 impressions that contributed to the spike. If anyone is interested in the nitty, gritty...the Bio Blitz was also, again, conservation driven. Um, what we learned from the previous year would be that we do want that nitty, gritty out. I pulled up the outdoor bee posts from last year because as soon as we were looking at this, something really popped. And so, it was bees. So, volunteer efforts I think are an opportunity...and where we can tag community partners in that is going to be very monumental moving forward. Because one of the things we always want to keep in mind is that whether you community is online or your community is the boots on the ground...the word is community. That means partnerships and that means hiring ourselves to all of the resources here. So, that was a fun one. People love bees. So, also moving on...we are going to show you kind of what kept, again, we are going to show you with some of the fresh new things, what's happening with signage. This active volunteerism is sort of an engagement because it is new in that way. And, while we know all of the parks could really benefit from this, it feels different in this environment because of the freshness of the facility and the property itself...and, again, grandeur. Backing up a bit...seems to be the photography and visuals that give people that serenity that they desire in ya know...hiking and being out in nature. So, moving on...and I do have a lot so, stop me if you have a specific question. Let's take a look at

Dorrance. Moving to the next slide, looking at some of the data we are looking at...I would like to see our engagement jumping here. I think we've learned a great deal of what's going to pop and what isn't going to pop. If you move to the next slide...when you compare, for example, what's happened some of the fine-tuning of the content, and remember the fine-tuning of content is what motivates people emotionally. There are so many points here that we can try. It's about creating a mix. It doesn't mean that there is any attribute that's changing...it's about driving the mix that works for a particular audience. So, we...as you look at the next slide. Moving forward...this is still a 5% increase in engagements and we started to actually get enough eyeballs on this this year...78% increase in impressions. One typically follows the other. So, we want to continue that momentum where I hope to do with you standing here dare I say 2025; which feels insane to think that's almost here...and showing you the same kind of results that we are seeing moving on those other pages moving into Dorrance. Consistent growth. We did have some inactivity in June. That did prod the stocks a little bit, but, again, that's the UGC rate we use to generate content that we will be looking for. So, keeping us moving forward...looking at the next set. You can see, again, biking and some of the...you can see with the controlled burn and doing education around that. Anything with video is always going to pop. And then, ultimately, it was the long view of just getting some escape that comes with Dorrance. So, looking at the next slide...let's look at Niabi. Now, we don't always present on Niabi because Niabi has staff who are managing a great deal of their own editorial content. We did decide to go forward with it to show you some of the numbers this year because there was a lot of special circumstances. We ran ad campaigns that we did not anticipate the amount of fundraising with the amount of snow damage and we also had some shifts in quantity of posts and content analysis. And I thought...when we looked at that against the ad campaign, it was worthwhile. So, I think there was some good stuff and some good take-a-ways because of that partnership between what Niabi Zoo staff is doing with the actual editorial that daily posting work and what's actually happening with the ad campaign space; which was unprecedented for a long, long time due to the snow damage. So, looking at the numbers...impressions actually still went down. Now, the reason your impressions went down 66%...there is a, I hate to always bring it up, but Facebook is a pay to play platform. So, when we put a boosting strategy in place; which is even \$5.00 or \$10.00 a boost...it makes dramatic differences to making all that content pop. So, what you will see in our key take-a-ways is that those editorial calendars' fantastic rich content. A boosting strategy deployed will greatly get the reach that you need with it. That's also why you see those engagement numbers dipping. One tends to follow the other and based on content, similar to what we saw with Loud Thunder...ad a boosting strategy with it, we would strongly recommend those editorial calendars. And you are talking about \$30.00 a month or \$40.00 a month can really do a lot to put that in play. You can also see, though, that the amount of content was very rich. The post frequency was up...my eyes are giving a little bit here, but I think it was like 914%. So, there is tons of posting. Tons of real good stuff. Putting a

boosting strategy to that will make all the difference moving forward. So, if you move on to the next slide...um, again, I should also bring up one of the reasons you saw that year over year drop in impressions and engagement, it's larger due to a paid campaign last fall that we ran. Um, to do that final push, again, pay versus organic...paid is always going to win the day, sadly. But we also had these two bio-posts last year that we generated; which, you guys...generated 11.87 million impressions together. That had to do with outlying posts that had to do with, I think...I should have looked both of these up. I think one of them was about the Prairie Dogs and then the other was a birth of a baby or maybe it was a pregnancy. It was worded just right and hit. So, you had two viral posts that, again, really impacted your year over year. That doesn't negate, though, that I think that the high-volume posts may have caused some people to have missed some important events or specials, and if we could put a boosting strategy behind some of those, I think you are just going to just yield more fun. There are a couple of other tools that can be used to pin to posts by creating some events so, that your events stand away from your editorial calendar. I think that will help with the momentum as well. And then last but not least, we did have two of our top performing posts were also event driven. So, people were looking for those event pieces. On the next slide...along with posts that expressed gratitude. So, the free admission days...um, gratitude for some of the improvements that were made. There was a lot of empathy in the community, obviously, with what happened with the snow damage and then, of course, the perennial event...PINTS for Preservation. Preservation, you could scratch it on a notepad and put it in one place and it's going to just sail you right through. So, looking at boosting strategies that help those posts that we want to have there on education...that's what we know some of the tribe and true that may need that kind of push. That's the balance we need to come into the next year. Last but not least on Niabi...we will look at those paid campaigns that were, again...there were a lot of outliers between now and the previous year, and, of course, dealing with the snow damage. We move to the next slide. What you'll see is that we did paid social...and these were done as ad campaigns around opening day and the outlier again was the snowstorm recovery fund. Let's not have to do that next year. So, I think...if we hit beep one more time here. Looking at the summary on paid social...so, yeah, just a delay in your editorial social calendars are those daily on go pieces that go on to the news feed. Your paid ad campaigns are targeted and run for a longer period of time around particular messaging that drives to a page for some sort of actions. So, the creative units on the opening day campaign, they did a lot. The cost per thousand was \$3.14; which is pretty low when you think about the number of folks that we were targeting. And so, what we would encourage is; whether it is gifting ad campaigns, snowstorm recovery, or whether it's something that we want to drive events, promotions or pieces that don't normally have that kind of name recognition. Those paid social ad campaigns can help with that balancing act. And, again, this was a great year to show that information just because it was at...um, what ya know, just between getting 11 million viral posts that we never thought was going to happen, and

then, of course, running additional ad campaigns based on the gravity of damage. So, the key take-a-ways there were recognizing (inaudible) piece. So, I believe...I don't know how I did on time, but I think that wraps me up. And, hopefully, there will be some time if there are questions."

President Swanson stated, "Well, we always appreciate the good information that you give us. If you want to hang on...Dr. Moreno. There ya go."

Commissioner L. Moreno was recognized.

Mr. L. Moreno stated, "Thank you very much. It's refreshing to know that you are very astute and you can tell that you were very confident. You have great comments and also you brought the things to the forefront that we need to work on and gave a reinforcement of things and concerns that all in all the zoo is headed in the right direction. I think you did a great job for us and continue to do so and thank you for that detailed report."

Ms. Behning stated, "Yes, thank you."

President Swanson added, "Thank you, Dr. Moreno. I think you should note that when you give these...you are not just giving these reports to us, but your team is working with our team all the time."

Ms. Behning stated, "All the time. Yeah...so, what we do for this is, we run it through October...I think this one ran through October 3rd. We typically try to run them as close to the end of the year as possible. We do our best because it is collective, but we do run these on real-time dashboards. So, what you are seeing are screen graphs. And so, our team is just constantly looking, sharing...and Jeff and his team are fantastic about getting us the content. So, we can then turn around and make sure we are using it. And, make sure we are using some of the insights to make sure we get it to as many people as possible."

President Swanson asked, "Are there any other questions or comments from Commissioners?"

Commissioner Simmer was recognized.

Mr. Simmer stated, "It's good to see you again."

Ms. Behning answered, "Yeah..."

Mr. Simmer added, "It's been a while. But, I think some of those were backward, also it's good to hear the down stuff that people did we appreciate, because we can't build it if we don't know whether it's a..."

Ms. Behning, stated, "Right."

Mr. Simmer added, "...because the bad feedback is every bit as good as the positive things; which are, ya know, great. So, it's nice to see...then okay fine, we will look at that too."

Ms. Behning stated, "Yeah. And, ya know...there was some research that was done in the previous year and we look at that qualitative and quantitative data, and then you can use what's happening in the social world as (inaudible) starts with that and there are positive similarities. So, it feels like we are on the right track in that way. Um, one thing I would add is that...and certainly...I could go through it if you like, but I would also put at the very end to this to generalize the key take-a-ways. So, as this report comes to you...I don't need to go back through what I did, but if you don't want to hear all of that data, just go to the very end and you will see some of those bigger pictures as well for a faster read."

Mr. Simmer stated, "Cliff notes."

Ms. Behning answered, "Cliff notes, yeah." (chuckles) "Who doesn't love cliff notes?"

President Swanson stated, "Alright. Well, Amy...thank you so much for spending your time with us and for all you team does...it really has made a difference over the years. And, I appreciate you taking the time to be with us."

Ms. Behning answered, "Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity...and I can tell you that our staff...nobody cries when we say hey, I want you to get out to the parks. So, that's a special habit and no one is upset...it's pleasurable thing."

President Swanson stated "Alright, well thank you very much Amy, and enjoy the rest of your night. Thanks everybody for your attention to that. It's a very important report that helps us in so many ways."

Ms. Behning stated, "Thank you."

3. Commissioner Adams moved to approve the September 17, 2024, Commission Minutes, as presented. Commissioner L. Moreno seconded.

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

4. Commissioner Adams moved to approve the September 17, 2024, Commission Closed Session Minutes, as presented. Commissioner Vyncke seconded.

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

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

6. **PRESIDENTS COMMENTS:**

President Swanson stated, "Not much in the way of President's Comments other than Gee-Whiz if you have not been out at the parks to see the leaves changing, get out there while it's a dry period. Go out, go fishing...the colors are striking and gorgeous, but as Mr. Craver will tell you, get out there soon. We do have Transfers of Appropriation on the Agenda...there was something from last month that was inadvertently missed and so, we will get those approved this month. I will be anxious to hear any questions you have for me or Mr. Craver a little bit later in the Agenda."

7. Commissioner Brunk moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2025 Forest Preserve Claims and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$356,314.95 as presented. Commissioner Vyncke seconded.

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

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

TOTAL YES 17

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

8. Commissioner Woods moved to waive the reading and approve the Transfers of Appropriation from September's Agenda, as presented. Commissioner Simmer seconded."

A roll call vote was taken.

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

TOTAL YES 17

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

9. Commissioner Morthland moved to waive the reading and approve the Resolutions regarding FY25 Niabi Zoo Improvements ARPA Grant Appropriations, and FY24 Niabi Zoo Fund Appropriations, as presented. Commissioner Adams seconded.

(Note** The Resolutions are in .pdf format and begin on the next page.)

RESOLUTION

FY 2025 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 \$77,227.25 shall be increased from grant revenue to be received in the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 to the following:


AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$77,227.25	131-32-35 767 ARPA24-60	Infrastructure over \$15,000

SECTION 3. Revenues in the amount of \$77,227.25 shall be increased from grant revenue to be received in the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$77,227.25	131-32-35 331.10 ARPA24-00	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 October, 2024.


 Kai Swanson, President
 Forest Preserve Commission


 Karen Kinney, Secretary
 Forest Preserve Commission

RESOLUTION
RE: Niabi Zoo Fund

WHEREAS, additional funds are required in the Niabi Zoo Fund # 131 for fiscal year 2023-2024, and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this payment is to account for retainage on the big cat house in the proper year, and

WHEREAS, funds are available from grant funds to be received in the Niabi Zoo Fund # 131 once the project is complete and the final bill paid, 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.

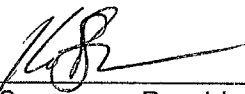
SECTION 2. An amount of \$15,042.48 be transferred from grant funds to be received in the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 in the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$15042.48	131-32-35 331.10 ARPA24-00-33110	Federal Grants-General Government

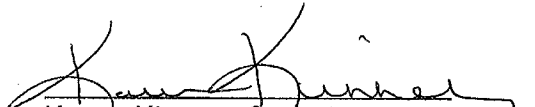
AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$15042.48	131-32-35 765.00 ARPA24-60-765	Construction in Progress

SECTION3: This resolution to become effective immediately.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 15th day of October, 2024.



Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission



Karel Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

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

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

TOTAL YES 17

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

10. **Comments from Commissioners: (NONE)**

11. Commissioner Vyncke moved to approve all Routine Reports from the Director and Departments Heads of the Forest Preserve Commission, as presented. Commissioner McNeil seconded. (Record)

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

President Swanson stated, "The next meeting of the Forest Preserve Commission will be Tuesday, November 19, 2024, at 5:30pm, in these chambers, following the meeting of the Rock Island County Board in the Rock Island County Office Building, 1504 Third Avenue, Rock Island, Illinois. Friends we are in recess. Thank you."

President Swanson declared the Forest Preserve Meeting recessed at 6:36pm.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,



KAREN KINNEY
COUNTY CLERK AND SECRETARY
OF THE FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION

KK:ro