

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
JANUARY 13, 2026**

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

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Craver, District Director; Lee Jackson, Niabi Zoo Director; Mike Petersen, Illiniwek Ranger; Ben Mills, Loud Thunder Ranger; Jay Verstraete, Golf Course Superintendent; April Palmer, Auditor; Nick Camlin, Treasurer.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 9:35 AM on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, in the second floor conference room in the County Building at 1504 3rd Ave, Rock Island, Illinois.

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

TOTAL PRESENT 7

TOTAL ABSENT 0

President Swanson called for a motion approving the December Committee meeting minutes.

MOTION: Dr. Moreno moved to approve the December Committee meeting minutes. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the old year and new year claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$430,256.29.

MOTION: Ms. Woods moved to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$430,256.29. Dr. Simmer 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. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the resolutions regarding the semi-annual review of closed session minutes, and electric vehicle charging station grant in the

improvement fund, and installation of a generator to the biodiversity building at Niabi Zoo in the Niabi Zoo Fund.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the resolutions regarding the semi-annual review of closed session minutes, and electric vehicle charging station grant in the improvement fund, and installation of a generator to the biodiversity building at Niabi Zoo in the Niabi Zoo Fund. Ms. Woods 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 2026 user fees for camping, shelter rentals, golf and Niabi Zoo admission and membership.

MOTION: Dr. Moreno moved to approve the 2026 user fees for camping, shelter rentals, golf and Niabi Zoo admission and membership. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called on Mr. Verstraete for the discussion on Golf Course Improvements.

Mr. Versraete stated that the biggest complaint that staff hears regarding the golf course is the lack of a practice area/driving range. Initially, it was believed that more land would have to be acquired in order to get the space required. However, in accessing the property, it is now believed that with some rearranging of the current course, and landscaping, it would be possible to add a driving range to the property. There would be a small bit of irrigation work for that rearranging. Staff estimates that a few thousand buckets would get sold over the course of the season for the driving range in addition to an increase in sales of season passes.

Ms. Woods asked if golf was becoming more popular or less.

Mr. Verstraete answered that golf has had its ups and down in popularity over the years, and is currently up in popularity.

Dr. Simmer asked about the pavilion at the back of the property. Could it be taken down, and the area put to better use?

Mr. Verstraete stated that the pavilion was in severe disrepair, and not very popular. There may have four rentals last year for it, and that's at most. The fee is small, and not worth the trouble. There is definitely a better use for the area.

Mr. Craver pointed out that the rearranging of the course would also allow the club to expand and add revenue generating services in that respect. This doesn't require any motion

currently. Staff wanted to mention these as possibilities for the future that the parking lot project would open up.

President Swanson called on Ms. Palmer for the discussion on the auditing services of the District's comprehensive annual financial report.

Ms. Palmer stated that the three years with Sikich had just completed. The company has become familiar with the District, but is still new enough to be effective. That familiarity will come in very handy when the new legislation for government auditing that will happen in the upcoming years. There still isn't much interest in auditing, so there really isn't much option at the moment anyway.

President Swanson asked Mr. Petersen if there was anything he'd like to share from his report.

Mr. Petersen stated that staff is working on tree removal. Both invasive species and hazardous. Then in the spring there will be a tree planting to replace what was removed.

President Swanson asked Mr. Mills if there was anything he'd like to share from his report.

Mr. Mills stated that staff has been performing the usual maintenance and working on the forest management plan.

President Swanson asked Mr. Jackson if there was anything further he'd like to share from his report.

Mr. Jackson state that staff has been working on small improvement plans. May through September Niabi will be open until 7:00pm on the third Thursday of the month. MindFire will be assisting in getting the word out to the public.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver if there was anything he'd like to lift up from his report.

Mr. Craver stated that he is waiting on grant announcements. It's typically this time of year that those awards are announced. Staff is looking ahead at what it would take to make Lake George more accessible.

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

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the routine reports of the District. Mr. Layer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called the meeting adjourned at 10:03 AM.

Submitted by: Cassie Sullivan
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant