

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**APRIL 14, 2026**

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

**ABSENT:**

**ALSO PRESENT:** Jeff Craver, District Director; Lee Jackson, Niabi Zoo Director; Ben Mills, Loud Thunder Ranger; April Palmer, Auditor; Nick Camlin, Treasurer.

President Swanson called the monthly meeting of the Forest Preserve Executive Committee to order at 9:31 AM on Tuesday, April 14, 2026, in the second floor conference room in the County Building at 1504 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave, Rock Island, Illinois.

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

**TOTAL PRESENT 7**

**TOTAL ABSENT 0**

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

**MOTION:** Dr. Moreno moved to approve the March Committee meeting minutes. Ms. Woods 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 \$253,653.44.

**MOTION:** Dr. Simmer moved to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$253,653.44. Dr. Moreno seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

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

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

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the resolution in the Improvement Fund pertaining to the Electric Vehicle Charging Station project, and the resolution in the Niabi Zoo Fund pertaining to Conservation in Action Exhibit project.

**MOTION:** Ms. Woods moved to approve the resolution in the Improvement Fund pertaining to the Electric Vehicle Charging Station project, and the resolution in the Niabi Zoo Fund pertaining to Conservation in Action Exhibit project. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Mr. Mielke asked if there was an estimated completion date.

Mr. Craver stated that the project is expected to be finished at the end of May.

Mr. Mielke asked where at Niabi Zoo the station will be located.

Mr. Craver stated that it would be easily accessible in the parking lot.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Ordinance establishing the compensation of members and officers of the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission.

**MOTION:** Ms. Woods moved to approve the Ordinance establishing the compensation of members and officers of the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson made three calls for public comment.

There were no requests for public comment.

President Swanson called on Mr. Craver to go over the Lake George Dam Inspection Report.

Mr. Craver stated that this was the 2025 inspection report. Things got a bit behind, but are back on schedule. The 2026 inspection will be this fall. There are some high priority issues that need fixed, and a few that are lower priority. The wall joists are a major concern. Staff is already in the process of getting estimates on those repairs. The bridge at the bottom going over the creek that the spillway feeds into will also need addressed in the near future. The joists will be the biggest expense, and are the highest priority. Once staff has gotten the estimates, they will be brought to the Committee for approval.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the purchase of three vehicles from Morrow Brothers Ford in the amount of \$162,079.00.

**MOTION:** Mr. Mielke moved to approve the purchase of three vehicles from Morrow Brothers Ford in the amount of \$162,079.00. Mr. Layer seconded the motion.

Mr. Craver stated that these would be fiscal year 2027 purchases, but because of how long it has been taking to get vehicles recently. Staff is going to put in the order soon.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called Mr. Mills and Mr. Craver for information on an opportunity for land acquisition adjacent to the Marvin Martin Conservation Area.

Mr. Mills stated that land has come available that is next to the Marvin Martin Conservation Area. The property is about 200 acres, and they're asking \$1.2 million. The same person who donated the Marvin Martin Conservation Area also donated over a million dollars for further land acquisition. It would be amazing to be able to get a property connected to the existing property as the person who bequeathed the money intended.

President Swanson asked what benefits this property would provide.

Mr. Mills stated that the property would immediately be of recreational value. There are already trails that go through it. Would want to do a species survey. There is a possibility of endangered species, which would hopefully include some bumble bees. There's already several acres cleared that could be planted as prairie.

President Swanson asked where funding for the purchase would come from.

Mr. Craver stated that the property does fall within the requirements for State COA for the conservation opportunity area, and the state outdoor recreation plan. This is a great time of year to do a survey for endangered species. Land adjacent to District properties do not often come up for sale. There are several grants that could be applied for, including OSLAD. The window for this year's OSLAD is closed. However, the Conservation Fund who also helped the District with the purchase of Amôwa does provide several options. They could purchase the property, then the District buys the property from them. It be done in one payment, or there are also payment plan options. Did reach out to the Conservation Fund to come out and see the property this afternoon. Staff needs to know if the Committee is interested in acquiring this property so more information can start to be gathered.

President Swanson asked if there was anything Ms. Palmer wanted to lift up from the Auditor reports.

Ms. Palmer stated that the District was three quarters of the way through the fiscal year. Things look as expected in the fund balances.

President Swanson asked if there was anything from Mr. Mills report that he wanted to bring to the Committee's attention.

Mr. Mills stated that camping season had started with some challenges, but staff is handling it.

President Swanson asked if there was anything that Mr. Jackson wanted to lift up from his report.

Mr. Jackson stated that the carousel motherboard needed replaced, and now the motor on it needs replaced as well. Unfortunately, that means the carousel will not be up and running when Niabi opens. Hopefully it won't be too long after that it can be fixed.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver if there was anything that he wanted to bring attention to in his report.

Mr. Craver stated that several of the preserves had challenges opening this year, but staff has been handling it.

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. Ms. Sowards seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called the meeting adjourned at 10:13 AM.

Submitted by: Cassie Sullivan  
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant