

**FOREST PRESERVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
OCTOBER 15, 2025**

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

ABSENT: L. Moreno.

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 9:32 AM on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, in the second floor conference room in the County Building at 1504 3rd Ave, Rock Island, Illinois.

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

TOTAL PRESENT 6

L. Moreno.

TOTAL ABSENT 1

President Swanson called for a motion approving the September Committee meeting 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 old year and new year claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$867,118.32.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the claims and treasurer's disbursements in the amount of \$867,118.32. Ms. Sowards 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. Mr. Layer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the resolutions regarding the FY25 Appropriations to be transferred to Niabi Zoo, Niabi Zoo Fund Additional FY25 Appropriations,

FY26 DFCI Fund – EV charging station grant improvements, FY26 DFCI Fund – Bike Path grant improvements, and FY26 DFCI Fund Additional Appropriations.

MOTION: Dr. Simmer moved to approve the resolutions regarding the FY25 Appropriations to be transferred to Niabi Zoo, Niabi Zoo Fund Additional FY25 Appropriations, FY26 DFCI Fund – EV charging station grant improvements, FY26 DFCI Fund – Bike Path grant improvements, and FY26 DFCI Fund Additional Appropriations. Mr. Mielke seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the 2025 Levy Ordinances for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, FISSA Fund, Audit Fund, and Development of Forests & Construction of Improvements Fund.

MOTION: Mr. Layer moved to approve the 2025 Levy Ordinances for the General Fund, Niabi Zoological Fund, IMRF Retirement Fund, FISSA Fund, Audit Fund, and Development of Forests & Construction of Improvements Fund. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Mr. Layer brought Mr. Craver's attention to an error.

Mr. Craver stated that he would get those fixed for the Commission meeting.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Abatement Ordinance pursuant to Ordinance #11-01-17 in the amount of \$346,227.50.

MOTION: Mr. Mielke moved to approve the Abatement Ordinance pursuant to Ordinance #11-01-17 in the amount of \$346,227.50. Ms. Woods seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a motion to approve the Abatement Ordinance pursuant to Ordinance #2016-0401 in the amount of \$350,575.00.

MOTION: Mr. Layer moved to approve the Abatement Ordinance pursuant to Ordinance #2016-0401 in the amount of \$350,575.00. 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 purchase of a 2023 Ford Transit Connect Passenger and Cargo Vans for Niabi Zoo in the amount of \$39,977.00 each.

MOTION: Mr. Layer moved to approve the purchase of a 2023 Ford Transit Connect Passenger and Cargo Vans for Niabi Zoo in the amount of \$39,977.00 each. Ms. Woods seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson called for a discussion of Niabi Zoo operating hours. Have heard from parents of young children that so many families have two parents working, that closing at five every day, they can still get over on the weekend. It's not like we're being exclusive, but that if there were evening hours during the week, they'd be more likely to take their kids. Now, this has all kinds of implications, so I don't want to do anything lightly. First would like folks to weigh in on the idea of something like this, and then without prescribing anything, share some parameters and ask staff to come up with a proposal.

Mr. Mielke stated that he thought it bared looking into during the summer hours where the sun is up well into the evening. Has there been any studies or any other zoos that we can look at that are doing some later hours, that we can see how they're doing?

President Swanson stated that he didn't know of any studies on the matter, but there are zoos that do that.

Dr. Simmer stated that he had also had people mention hours as well. However, there are many logistics to take into consideration.

Mr. Jackson stated that staff has already looked into this possibility, and determined to test it out for a season.

Mr. Craver stated that each year in January or February the zoos schedule is voted on by Committee. So this could be brought to the Committee then, and that would give staff the time to come up with the details.

President Swanson called for a motion to direct the zoo staff to come up with a plan and present it to the Committee in January.

MOTION: Mr. Mielke moved to direct the zoo staff to come up with a plan and present it to the Committee in January. Dr. Simmer seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

President Swanson asked Ms. Palmer if there was anything she'd like to share in her report.

Ms. Palmer stated that they were winding up the audit very nicely. They are scheduled to have a draft to us by the end of next week, and so staff will start checking through that. It went very smoothly. Have not gotten any negative comments back from the audit team, and so I do appreciate everyone's help always in that, and teams at the parks as well to be included. We

did have a new hiccup this year at the zoo, and that even turned out just fine, and staff is working together with my staff, and that's what it's all about.

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

Mr. Camlin stated that Niabi didn't end up needing the Tax Anticipation Note, so that's great. If you were in the County's Finance Committee earlier, you heard about the \$20,000,000.00 CD this morning with Blackhawk Bank. The County pooled money from multiple places, including the Forest Preserve. The Forest Preserve makes up 6% of that pool, so the District will get 6% of the proceeds.

President Swanson asked Mr. Jackson if there was anything further he'd like to share with the Committee.

Mr. Jackson state that there was nothing further.

President Swanson asked Mr. Craver if there was anything he'd like to share from the District's routine reports.

Mr. Craver stated that staff did an excellent job of getting input into the budget. The bike path was completed back in August. Obviously, in the claims, we have a sizable amount there going out in the improvement fund. Working on the charging station grant. Mr. Jackson, myself, and Denise from Bi-state completed an application for the OSLAD grant, for the dinosaur digs, splash pad, and the education deck. The District is awaiting word on another bike path grant. Numbers kind of picked up last Friday. Ms. Sullivan and I were quite busy with all the foot traffic, and phone calls for a Friday in the middle of October out at Loud Thunder. Illiniwek has their little Halloween event this weekend. If you have a chance to stop on out there, if you're doing any leaf peaking up and down Great River Road, stop in and say hi. Usually it gets a fairly decent crowd of campers. People are already decorating. So a couple more weeks and then we have Boo at the Zoo. Golf Course had a tremendous September, so it's kind of hard to believe that the weather is going to come crashing down here in a couple weeks. It still feels like it's summertime. It's hard to believe it's October 15th. The new timekeeping system has caused some problems, but staff is navigating through that.

President Swanson asked if there were any questions on the routine reports?

There were no questions.

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 9:55 AM.

Submitted by: Cassie Sullivan
Forest Preserve Administrative Assistant