

**Minutes of the  
QUAD CITIES RIVERFRONT COUNCIL (QCRFC)**

Tuesday, September 24, 2024, 12:00 p.m.  
Niabi Zoo  
13010 Niabi Zoo Rd.  
Coal Valley, IL

Council Members in Attendance

Ms. Heather Bishop  
Mr. Larry Burns  
Mayor Barb Cray  
Mr. Ralph Henninger  
Mr. Tim Knanishu  
Mr. Greg Ludwig

Mr. James Peterson\*  
Mr. Jeff Reiter\*  
Dr. Rod Simmer  
Ms. Brittany Wells  
Mr. Don Wrenn

*\* Current QCRFC Officers*

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Lee Jackson  
Mr. Zach Sutton

1. **Call Meeting to Order** The meeting was called to order by Mr. Reiter at 12:01 p.m.
2. **Approval of the July 23, 2024 QCRFC Meeting Minutes.** Dr. Simmer made a motion to approve the July 23, 2024 minutes as written. Mr. Burns seconded, and the meeting minutes were approved.
3. **Presentation.** Mr. Jackson welcomed the members to Niabi Zoo. He told the group that the zoo is still in the process of recovering from the winter storm that caused the partial collapse of the cat house and aviary as well as extensive damage to the Pallas's cat and bald eagle exhibits (about \$4 million in damage, total). Despite the extensive damage, the zoo only had to move one animal completely off of the property while repairs are being made. The rest have been moved to other locations in the zoo. The zoo is also using this as an opportunity to improve, with the replacements and repairs to these exhibits being more modern than the originals had been. The zoo recently opened their African painted dogs and prairie dogs exhibits, and next year will begin fundraising for a \$7 million grizzly bear exhibit. Mr. Jackson elaborated on the zoo's conservation efforts, and noted that the zoo is the nationwide leader in fennec fox breeding and home to two critically endangered red wolves, of which there are about 35 left in the wild and 200 in captivity. He was asked about the zoo's future plans for an otter exhibit and a penguin exhibit, to which he responded that the zoo still plans to add these exhibits, but does not currently have the staff to maintain them (the penguin enclosure alone would necessitate the hiring of 2 additional full-time staff members). Mr. Jackson also discussed the various partnerships the zoo has formed globally, participating in painted dog education efforts in Zimbabwe and fish identification studies in Paraguay.

4. **Individual Riverfront Reports.**

- *Bi-State* – Mr. Heninger praised the zoo’s facilities and expressed his appreciation for the work that they do.
- *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers* – Ms. Bishop informed the members that dredging in Sunset Marina (Rock Island) is scheduled to start this week. Additionally, the new Lock and Dam 14 mooring cell has been completed, as has the restoration work on Beaver Island.
- *Mercer County/New Boston* – Mr. Peterson gave a series of updates regarding activities in Mercer County. Work on the Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge is still ongoing, as is dredging south of Keithsburg. New Boston is also planning to do dredging work in the near future.
- *Port Byron* – Mayor Cray reported that Port Byron’s Main Street resurfacing project had been completed, and that Port Byron is pursuing multiple bike path grants. She also reported that Port Byron had won the annual Tugfest competition against LeClaire.
- *Visit Quad Cities* – Ms. Wells said that the Davenport’s Union Station will have its centennial celebration on September 26.
- *Rock Island County* – Mr. Burns reported that Indian Bluff Golf Course had reported record revenues this season, and that the trails at the counties forest preserves are currently in good shape.
- *Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce/East Moline* – Mr. Knanishu said that a lot of focus is being placed on the new River Edge Redevelopment Zone, to which Rock Island, Moline, and East Moline had been added. East Moline has held 3 of their 4 Greater Downtown revitalization project public meetings. Construction will be conducted in 3 stages with an estimated completion date in early 2027.
- *LeClaire* – Mr. Ludwig reported that the YMCA announced it was moving forward with opening a location in LeClaire. The city will be soon be reviewing bids for the Wisconsin Street resurfacing project. He also announced to the group that LeClaire’s city administrator had announced his retirement.
- *Rock Island Arsenal* – Mr. Wrenn said that the Arsenal would be celebrating Retiree Appreciation Day on October 19 and is currently taking Veteran’s Day speaking requests. The Arsenal’s golf course will be opening in April and will be returning to its original 9-hole layout.
- *Bi-State* – Mr. Sutton gave a brief update on the grants Bi-State was working on, including Port Byron’s ITEP application.

5. **Next Meeting.** Mr. Sutton told the members that because the next meeting will be held on either November 19 or December 3, as the original scheduled date falls on the week of Thanksgiving. He told the members he would ask for feedback and let the group know what date would be chosen.

6. **Other Business.** None.

7. **Adjournment.** Mr. Knanishu moved to adjourn the meeting, and Dr. Simmer seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m. before the tour, so that anyone who needed to leave could do so.

8. **Tour of Niabi Zoo.** Following the conclusion of Riverfront Council business, Mr. Jackson led the members on a tour of the new facility. Members were first taken to the rhinoceros enclosure, where Mr. Jackson informed the group that the zoo was looking to add a female rhino to pair with the male currently in the enclosure. The group was then shown other exhibits including the new prairie dog exhibit and the African painted dog exhibit. The members were also shown the damaged cat house, where Mr. Jackson told the group that rebuilding is expected to start next month. The upgrades that come with the reconstruction will help the zoo obtain accreditation with the AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums), which will open up more funding opportunities and allow the zoo to add more animals. After the conclusion of the tour, the meeting officially ended.