



**Forest Preserve District of Cook County  
Board of Commissioners**

**Minutes of the Zoological Committee**

**9:35 AM**

**Tuesday, July 1, 2025**

**Camp Sullivan, 14630 Oak Park Avenue,  
Oak Forest, Illinois**

**ATTENDANCE**

**Present:** K. Morrison, Aguilar, Daley, McCaskill, Miller, S. Morrison, Scott and Vásquez (8)

**Excused Absence:** Moore (1)

**PUBLIC TESTIMONY**

**Chairman K. Morrison asked the Secretary to the Board to call upon the registered public speakers, in accordance with Forest Preserves Code of Ordinances, Section 1-5-4.**

**No public speakers.**

**25-0285**

**COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Approval of the minutes from the meeting of 10/22/2024

**A motion was made by Commissioner Vásquez, seconded by Commissioner Miller, to approve 25-0285. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Ayes:** K. Morrison, Aguilar, Daley, McCaskill, Miller, S. Morrison, Scott and Vásquez (8)

**Excused Absence:** Moore (1)

**25-0197**

**Presented by:** EILEEN FIGEL, Interim General Superintendent

**PROPOSED INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT AMENDMENT**

**Department(s):** Office of the General Superintendent

**Other Part(ies):** Chicago Zoological Society, Brookfield, Illinois

**Request:** To extend an agreement between the Forest Preserves of Cook County (the "Forest Preserves")

and the Chicago Zoological Society (the “Zoo”) for a period of one (1) year to allow time to adequately consider and negotiate a new agreement

**Good(s) or Service(s):** Maintenance and operation of a zoological park on lands of the Forest Preserves, commonly known as the Brookfield Zoo Chicago

**Agreement Period:** 4/8/1986 - 4/7/2026

**Proposed Extension:** 4/8/2026 - 4/7/2027

**Fiscal Impact:** N/A (other than funding through annual budget appropriation)

**Accounts:** N/A

**Agreement Number(s):** N/A

**District(s):** 16

**Summary:** The Forest Preserves and the Zoo seek authorization to amend Section 15 of the April 8, 1986 “Agreement Between the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois and the Chicago Zoological Society For the Maintenance and Operation of a Zoological Park on Lands of the Forest Preserve District,” to extend the term for one (1) year. The Zoo has operated a zoological park on Forest Preserves property for over ninety (90) years-since 1934. The April 8, 1986 Agreement between the Forest Preserves and the Zoo is set to sunset on or about April 7, 2026. The parties seek additional time in order to adequately consider and negotiate the terms of a new agreement between the parties, by extending the April 8, 1986 Agreement for an additional term of one (1) year, until April 7, 2027. In the last five (5) years, an average of 10% of the Forest Preserves budget has been allocated to the Zoo. Final amendment is subject to legal review and approval.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Daley, seconded by Commissioner Scott, to approve 25-0197. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Ayes:** K. Morrison, Aguilar, Daley, McCaskill, Miller, S. Morrison, Scott and Vásquez (8)

**Excused Absence:** Moore (1)

#### **25-0258**

**Sponsored by:** KEVIN B. MORRISON, FRANK J. AGUILAR, ALMA E. ANAYA, SCOTT R. BRITTON, JOHN P. DALEY, BRIDGET DEGNEN, BRIDGET GAINER, BILL LOWRY, DONNA MILLER, TARA S. STAMPS, MAGGIE TREVOR, JESSICA VÁSQUEZ, DR. KISHA E. McCASKILL, JOSINA MORITA, SEAN M. MORRISON and MICHAEL SCOTT JR., Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board of Commissioners

#### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

**DECLARING THE FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY’S SUPPORT OF THE INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES AND BROOKFIELD ZOO CHICAGO**

**WHEREAS**, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) was established by the Museum and Library Services Act (MLSA) on September 30, 1996; and

**WHEREAS**, as a federal agency that administers discretionary programs, IMLS is funded through the annual federal appropriations process; and

**WHEREAS**, with its budget, IMLS supports a vast range of museums, including art, history, natural history, nature centers, botanical gardens, and zoos; and

**WHEREAS**, IMLS provides essential funding and guidance for the vast collections of museums across America, acting as community anchors, supporting youth and senior citizens, serving people with disabilities, and helping veterans heal; and

**WHEREAS**, beyond education, museums, zoos, aquariums, and libraries are economic engines, providing jobs, driving tourism, and serving as community cornerstones; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2024, IMLS awarded \$11,347,695 in grants to Illinois institutions, with \$3,214,842 awarded specifically for museum services; and

**WHEREAS**, we in Illinois have seen the great benefit this IMLS funding has on our local community as it has supported groundbreaking programs at Brookfield Zoo Chicago, including local community engagement initiatives, profound international research studies, and internal accessibility endeavors; and

**WHEREAS**, more than 180 million people visit United States zoos and aquariums each year, contributing more than \$22.5 billion to the American economy, with Brookfield Zoo Chicago welcoming 2 million of those visitors annually; and

**WHEREAS**, for decades, IMLS has played a critical role in advancing the capabilities of zoos and aquariums by funding foundational research on their importance to conservation, supporting the creation of a nationwide network of early childhood nature play programs, and enabling groundbreaking multi-institutional welfare studies for species like elephants and dolphins, backing cutting-edge research in reproductive technologies to enhance population sustainability, and promoting greater accessibility in zoos and aquariums for staff, volunteers, and visitors of all abilities; and

**WHEREAS**, museums cannot do this vital work without the support and funding they receive from agencies like IMLS; and

**WHEREAS**, support for museums is overwhelmingly popular, with 96% of Americans saying they would approve of lawmakers who act to support museums and 96% of Americans saying they want to maintain or increase federal funding for museums; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 14, 2025, the Trump Administration issued Executive Order 14238, ‘Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy’ which directs that, among other agencies, the IMLS’s “non-statutory components and functions...shall be eliminated to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law, and...shall reduce the performance of their statutory functions and associated personnel to the minimum presence and function required by law”; and

**WHEREAS**, IMLS's impact and support for Brookfield Zoo Chicago cannot be overstated, with the Brookfield Zoo being awarded over \$1.5 million in programs and grants from IMLS over the last 5 years; and

**WHEREAS**, these grants have been directed towards supporting the Zoo's impactful programs and projects focusing on animal welfare, accessibility, and education; and

**WHEREAS**, as a result of the Administration's gutting of IMLS, Brookfield Zoo Chicago was notified of the termination of several grant-funded programs; and

**WHEREAS**, this included Grant MA-251511-OMS-22, 'Behavioral Diversity as a Potential Positive Indicator of Welfare', a project that was designed to help animal care staff at accredited zoos and aquariums across the United States evaluate positive animal welfare, focusing on continuous improvement in animal care and management; and

**WHEREAS**, under this program, the Zoo would develop lists of behaviors across animal species, train researchers to observe the varieties of behaviors exhibited by each animal, and use chemical analyses to determine the relationships between various behaviors and stress hormones, with a goal of providing a new tool for monitoring animal welfare to be shared with institutions across the nation; and

**WHEREAS**, Brookfield Zoo Chicago also received termination notice for Grant MG-249218-OMS-2, 'The Zoo and Aquarium Radiology Database: A collaborative resource to advance veterinary care' that addresses a continuous challenge veterinarians face in the evaluation of health and disease in wild animals - the lack of adequate and freely available veterinary images such as x-rays, ultrasound, and CT scans for reference from healthy animals; and

**WHEREAS**, this project would establish the Zoo and Aquarium Radiology Database, the first and only free centralized database site for radiology images from zoo animals, which would enable further disease research and evaluation of population health, supporting the continued stewardship of living collections and species sustainability in the wild; and

**WHEREAS**, under these two grants, animal care staff can focus on enhancing animal welfare resulting in visitors experiencing healthy, engaged animals, elevating their overall zoo experience which in turn can lead to increased visitation by satisfied customers, continuing to bolster local economic growth within communities around zoos and aquariums across the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, IMLS has since notified Brookfield Zoo Chicago of the reinstatement of these grants in accordance with a Preliminary Injunction Order under *State of Rhode Island, et al. v. Trump et al.*, but notes that a pending appeal may affect the reinstatement of the grants in the future; and

**WHEREAS**, the permanent gutting of IMLS would be a huge blow for zoo and museum innovation and local community services and engagement; and

**WHEREAS**, protecting this essential agency is critical to preserving the vital role museums, libraries, zoos, and aquariums play in education, the economy, and community infrastructure across the country and in our own local communities; and

**WHEREAS**, though the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia granted a temporary restraining order to block the Trump Administration's dismantling of IMLS on May 1, 2025, it remains crucial that we continue to uplift our support for IMLS, the work it does nationally, and its impact here in Cook County through Brookfield Zoo Chicago;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Forest Preserves of Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby declare its unwavering support for the Institute of Museum and Library Services and all the amazing work it does here in Cook County, including its work with the Brookfield Zoo Chicago; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Forest Preserves of Cook County Board of Commissioners expresses its strong concern over plans to defund the Institute of Museum and Library Services or any other such agencies, programs, or departments who have been legally allocated their due federal funding.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McCaskill, seconded by Commissioner Scott, to approve 25-0258. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Ayes:** K. Morrison, Aguilar, Daley, McCaskill, Miller, S. Morrison, Scott and Vásquez (8)

**Excused Absence:** Moore (1)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Aguilar, seconded by Commissioner S. Morrison, to adjourn. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Ayes:** K. Morrison, Aguilar, Daley, McCaskill, Miller, S. Morrison, Scott and Vásquez (8)

**Excused Absence:** Moore (1)

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman



Secretary

A complete record of this meeting is available at <https://fpdcc.legistar.com>.