

My name is Brett Harrison. I'm President of the crypto currency exchange FTX and a resident of Winnetka. FTX is one of the largest crypto exchanges in the world, valued recently at 40 billion dollars, and our US headquarters is here in Cook County. My company has a noted history of making large investments in urban US counties. Most famously we have invested \$135 million in Miami-Dade County to combat gun violence and Miami's sports arena, the FTX Arena, is named after our company in conjunction with our investment. I'm currently actively working with Mayor Lighfoot's office on pursuing similar investments in Cook County, but the recent outcome of the Forest Preserve District board meeting with respect to Rocky has given me pause.

I've cared deeply about animal welfare my entire adult life. I share this value with the senior leadership of FTX and with my wife, Hannah. At FTX, we have a philanthropic foundation through which we donate 10% of our company's profits to charitable organizations, and animal welfare is one of the main prongs of the foundation's giving. Likewise my personal philanthropic efforts with Hannah have focused on animal welfare for the last ten years, and we support numerous organizations dedicated to improving the lives of captive animals.

I've spoken with my close friends and experts at these organizations, with the experts who have observed Rocky directly, with the experts at Wild Animal Sanctuary in Colorado, and have observed Rocky myself. There is unanimity of opinion that he is exhibiting stereotypic behaviors – highly repetitive, functionless activities such as pacing and over-grooming – indicating significant psychological distress. It's not surprising or hard to understand why Rocky is doing this when you consider the numerous natural and instinctive behaviors he's prevented from engaging in when he's confined to a small concrete cage, alone. Among the natural behaviors he can't currently engage in are: foraging, searching, traveling, den-building, establishing territory, or any of the extensively studied kinship patterns of his highly social species.<sup>1</sup> Studies have shown that coyotes kept in kennels or pens exhibit high levels of stereotypic behavior and heightened stress levels, and that receiving "enrichment" from their human carers does not significantly reduce either.<sup>2</sup>

It's widely accepted by the scientific establishment that animals have complex interior psychological lives, the same way we do, and that this area of research has been grievously neglected until very recently. The Animal Welfare Act, the US law governing animal ownership and establishing USDA standards for animal enclosures, does not take the psychological health of Rocky's species into account in establishing minimum requirements for their enclosures. This is the reason why accredited sanctuaries in the US, which River Trail Nature Center is not, do not rely on USDA minimum standards to determine the size and quality of their animal enclosures, but rather on scientific studies that provide accurate and up-to-date information about animals' natural habitats, how those habitats enable them to engage in natural behaviors, and how unnatural environments adversely affect animals' emotional and physical health.

There is nothing natural about Rocky's confinement at River Trail Nature Center. But you don't even need to be a scientific expert to understand the common sense proposition that confining and isolating an animal - wild, domestic, or otherwise - in a small concrete cage is cruel and harmful to them.

Through Hannah's and my animal advocacy work over the last decade, we've frequently come across situations in which animals (such as dogs or animals in the exotic pet trade) are victims of improper confinement and neglect. We try to do what we can to help, by communicating with the owners of the animal, with local law enforcement, and working with local or regional veterinarians and animal welfare

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.wellbeingintlstudiesrepository.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=acwp\\_ena](https://www.wellbeingintlstudiesrepository.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=acwp_ena)

<sup>2</sup> [https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1961&context=icwdm\\_usdanwrc](https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1961&context=icwdm_usdanwrc)

groups. Nearly every such scenario we've encountered has occurred in a rural area where the animal owners involved lack resources and education. It's shocking and disappointing to me to now encounter a similar scenario in the most affluent and educated part of Illinois, ten minutes from where I've made my home. River Trail Nature Center's response to the rightful and significant public opposition to the way they are confining Rocky is similarly shocking and disappointing to me. Wild Animal Sanctuary is able *today* to provide Rocky with an environment dramatically more conducive to his physical and emotional health. If River Trail Nature Center truly cares about Rocky's health and happiness, its leadership should stop defensively and proprietarily rejecting the multiple offers from both Wild Animal Sanctuary and members of the Northbrook and suburban Cook County community to provide resources to help Rocky immediately.

A scenario in which River Trail Nature Center merely evaluates its current animal housing standards, without a clear timeline or any concrete obligation to change anything, is not an acceptable outcome. It does not address with any urgency Rocky's clearly-exhibited daily psychological stress, and it does not address the legitimate concerns thousands of Cook County community members and business leaders like myself have for his welfare. The best outcome for Rocky is for River Trail Nature Center to work with Wild Animal Sanctuary and with the involved Cook County residents on a transition to Wild Animal Sanctuary, which can be accomplished without any cost to River Trail Nature Center or to Cook County tax payers. Such a resolution would signal to philanthropic companies like FTX that Cook County is a worthwhile focus of our investments.