

RainForest flooding a worry Metroparks to hire - Plain Dealer, The (Cleveland, OH) - February 15, 1990 - page 1-B

February 15, 1990 | Plain Dealer, The (Cleveland, OH) | PAULINE THOMA JOHN S. LONG S STAFF WRITERS | Page 1-B

The Cleveland Metroparks board decided yesterday to hire an engineering firm to determine how to protect the **zoo's** \$27 million RainForest from flooding.

The Plain Dealer reported last month on a series of problems at the RainForest, including that it was being built on one of the lowest spots in the 100-year **flood** plain of **Big Creek**, which runs through the **zoo**. During a serious **flood**, it could be under 7 to 10 feet of water.

Board Vice President Fred R. Rzepka said a **flood** last May brought water to within an inch or two of the RainForest's first floor. The RainForest is in the lowest part of the **zoo** property, all of which, Rzepka said, is in the **flood** plain.

"When we first built the RainForest, we could have built the first floor a foot or two higher, and I wish we would have done so," Rzepka said. He said the board was unaware the project was being built in the **flood** plain until the PD report.

Rzepka said it might be necessary to dig a channel to divert water from the uncompleted building, to build a concrete wall around portions of it or to raise the structure's first floor.

The engineering consulting firm is expected to be hired at the next board meeting Feb. 27. It will be asked for a report on how to alleviate the potential problem in six to eight weeks, Executive Director Vern J. Hartenburg said. Hartenburg estimated the fee would be \$50,000.

The PD story noted RainForest architect Thomas T.K. Zung was hired by the park board to do a \$28,500 feasibility study on building the RainForest at its present location. Zung acknowledged that he never mentioned the **flood** plain in the oral report he delivered.

The PD also reported that Zung was paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for work he never completed on the project, whose cost was originally announced as about \$4 million. Zung admitted paying for a weeklong trip to London for former Metroparks Executive Director Lou E. Tsipis and Tsipis' wife four months after Tsipis recommended that the board hire him to design the RainForest.

Board President Daniel R. Corcoran said yesterday that the board investigated rescinding Tsipis' retirement benefits after reading The PD report. But board lawyers said they could not legally revoke the benefits because they are paid through the Public Employees Retirement System.

Hartenburg acknowledged at the meeting that the park district was "not doing business as usual" because of the soaring RainForest costs.

"We have had to make choices," he said. "We are not able to do everything we'd like to do or that needs to be done."

Rzepka said he wanted to assure the public "the system's roads, shelters and other buildings have been given the highest priority and have not suffered one iota."

Treasurer Robert L. Miller said \$11.7 million had been spent on the RainForest, and \$2.96 million was earmarked for it this year. An additional \$9.2 million is available in "undesignated reserves" for the RainForest and, by the end of 1991, the district will have enough money accumulated to pay for its completion, he said.

In other business, the board granted three-year licenses to longtime operators of the Lake Erie Nature & Science Center, Huntington Theater Inc. and Baycrafters Inc. in the Huntington Reservation. The nature center was also given a \$45,000 educational grant.

Jack Rupert, president of the Cleveland Zoological Society, outlined \$127,000 in 1990 grants that will be given to the park system, including support for conservation programs, purchase of animals, research into embryo transplants and sponsorship of special events. ## PAULINE THOMA and JOHN S. LONG; STAFF WRITERS; The Cleveland Metroparks board decided yesterday to hire an engineering firm to determine how to protect the **zoo's** \$27 million RainForest from flooding.

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