

Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
21 August 2014

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Phil Bartlett, Bud Tibshrary, Lloyd Liles, Jim Smith, Mary Howard

Commissioners Absent: Jan Stamps

Staff Present: Satch Krantz, Tommy Stringfellow, Steve Hatchell

Guests Present: None

Call to Order

Chairman Bartlett called the meeting to order.

Reading of the Minutes

The June 2014 minutes of the Commission were approved as distributed. *For the record, there was no July 2014 meeting.*

Chairman's Comments

Chairman Bartlett welcomed Commission members and staff and remarked that his first meeting as chair was bitter-sweet, given the recent, unfortunate death of former chair Earl Brown. He then asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of Commissioner Earl Brown.

Chairman Bartlett named Commissioners Smith, Tibshrary and Howard to serve as the Finance Committee.

Chief Financial Officer's Report

CFO Hatchell provided the following report:

- **June Financial Statement** – He noted that as in past years the June statement serves as the fiscal year-year end statement and, as such, is not provided until the audit is completed. He reported that the audit is in progress and hopefully can be presented at the October meeting. However, in review, Fiscal Year 2013-2014 was another outstanding year. Not only did Riverbanks experience record breaking attendance, with over 1.05 million guests through the Zoo and Garden gates, the general fund currently shows an excess of \$647,349. (Hatchell stressed that this is a pre-audit number and could change slightly.)

Attendance

- Paid attendance finished almost 20,000 guests ahead of budget and 15,000 over the prior fiscal year. Membership visits were also over budget and last fiscal year, approximately 60,000 and 11,500 respectively.

Balance Sheet

- Cash finished positively.

Revenue

- Admissions Revenue – \$401,635 over budget and \$222,314 over last fiscal year. This is primarily due to the increase in paid attendance.
- Attractions & Events – \$187,620 over budget and \$64,436 over last fiscal year. This is due to education classes and programs generating unanticipated net revenue of about \$33,000. Zip line did not have a budget created for the 2013-2014 fiscal year due to the timing of its opening with the beginning of the fiscal year. It did generate net revenue of over \$63,000.

Expenses

- Departmental expenses were \$155,517 under budget for 2013-2014, but over the prior fiscal year by \$573,045. The amount over last year is primarily due to maintenance and repairs needed throughout the Zoo and Garden that were expensed through the general operating fund.
- **July 2014 Financial Statement** – Hatchell noted that we have started the 2014-2015 fiscal year on a positive note, with attendance up 20,000 visitors over budget and 18,000 over July 2013. We completed July 2014 with the general fund showing an excess of \$23,638 of revenue over expenses.

Attendance

- Paid attendance for July 2014 was 10,187 ahead of budget and 8,979 over July 2013. Membership visits are also over budget and last July's numbers, 12,149 and 11,088 respectively.

Balance Sheet

- Cash continued to be positive through the month of July.
- Accounts payables are higher than normal due to timing of payments.
- The unassigned fund balance is the 2013/2014 fiscal year surplus. This may change slightly after the 2013/2014 audit.

Revenue

- Admissions Revenue – \$170,000 over budget and \$106,000 over last year's amount. This is due to the increase in paid attendance as well as the increase in the admission fee structure.

- Other Revenue – \$76,000 over budget and \$31,000 over July 2013. The zip line had its best month ever, netting \$14,000 over budget. We hosted 877 individuals on the zip line in July.
- Governmental Support – \$52,000 over budget due to timing of funds sent from Richland County.

Expenses

- Department expenses are over budget by \$148,000. This is due primarily to:
 - Marketing & Public Relations – the timing of when invoices are actually received compared to when budgeted.
 - Administration – timing of when invoices were received for IT software licensing and when amounts were budgeted.

Destination Riverbanks Update

Krantz presented the following update on the various Destination Riverbanks projects:

- **CSX** – Krantz and Stringfellow met on Monday, August 18th with three representatives of the Richland County Transportation Penny initiative. The purpose of the meeting was to review the status of the Zoo's plan to alleviate traffic at the I-126/Greystone Blvd. intersection and specifically the two CSX plans (pedestrian bridge and the shoofly/trestle). The Richland County representatives were sympathetic to the Zoo's parking and access problems and were most cooperative. In the end, it was decided to divide the \$4 million into two \$2 million "pots." The first pot will be used to fund the proposed pedestrian bridge linking the Rivermont lot to the new entry plaza. These funds should be available in 2015. The remaining \$2 million will be held until such time that we have a more definitive cost on the shoofly/trestle project. Should that project come in over budget then alternative plans can be addressed. Krantz noted that JCS architects are in the process of seeking proposals from CSX approved engineers in order to develop a cost estimate.
- **Entry/Grizzly/Otter** – This project is now well underway with no serious issues.
- **Sea Lion** – Nothing new to report, however it is anticipated that Rodgers Builders will present a GMP of this project towards the end of August. This is approximately 30 days behind schedule due to pricing of the sea lion life support system.
- **Children's Garden** – The bid opening for the children's garden project occurred on Tuesday, July 15th. The low bid of \$3,555,000 was submitted by Tyler Construction of Columbia (the highest bid of \$4,989,133 was submitted by Gore Construction). This is approximately \$390,000 over the budget estimate. Our architects and staff have been meeting with Tyler to identify where cost-savings could be realized. At this point all value engineering items have been identified and the only remaining option is to cut design elements from the garden. The Commission agreed that it was most important to preserve the garden's design and noted that additional private funds would be needed. Smith moved, Howard seconded, m/c unanimous, to approve the Cost of Wisconsin contract at \$1.2

million and the Tyler Construction contract at \$3,560,519 (includes a new tram stop in the Botanical Garden).

- **Rivermont Properties**

- **Lease** – Krantz and Hatchell reviewed the status of the three remaining Rivermont property tenants. Riverbanks has initiated a formal eviction process with Pool Tables Plus and Secrets of the Islands based on the fact that they are both in arrears on their month-to-month lease. As a result, Secrets of the Islands has identified another property and will be moving within the next two weeks. Pool Tables Plus has indicated a desire to remain in their building until June 2015. A new contract to that effect will be offered.
- **400 Rivermont Exterior Facade** – JP Smith Builders of Camden submitted a low bid of \$139,000 to repair the façade of the 400 Rivermont building. Work is to begin this month.
- **414 Rivermont** – Closing on this building was uneventful. As a result of this purchase, the Commission now owns all of the Rivermont properties.

Chief Operating Officer's Report

COO Stringfellow gave the following report:

- **Brew at the Zoo** – Brew at the Zoo 2014 was extremely successful, given the parking and logistical challenges created by the Destination Riverbanks construction site. According to social media accounts, many attendees stated that this was the best Brew ever. Stringfellow noted that the event is expected to net approximately \$50,000.
- **SSA Sales** – The Commission was informed that it appears that SSA will top \$5.6 million in retail, concession and catering sales for the year. This is approximately \$1.2 million more than Aramark's last year of operation. The Commission was highly complimentary of all that SSA has done for Riverbanks.
- **Spring 2014 Guest Satisfaction Survey** – Stringfellow reviewed the results of the Spring 2014 guest satisfaction survey. He noted that the survey was conducted throughout March, April and May, when the new temporary entrance was in place but before construction actually began. He also noted that as in all previous surveys, Riverbanks surpassed the benchmark number in all important areas. However, there was some decline in the "net promoter score." This is an indication that guests felt negatively impacted by the temporary entrance. While the score did decline, it is still near the benchmark average.

President & Chief Executive Officer's Report


President & CEO Krantz gave the following report:

- **Tuskers Deck** – Krantz reported good news concerning the renovation of the Kenya Café. As part of its contract with Riverbanks, SSA agreed to fund the renovation of Kenya/Tuskers for an agreed upon price of \$1.1 million. As work progressed, it was discovered that some of the "core and shell" components of the building as well as its various mechanical systems needed updating. Riverbanks

agreed to pay for these updates as required of the contract. Riverbanks' cost for these updates totaled just over \$171,000. Towards the end of the project Riverbanks agreed to pay for the cost of constructing a new deck over the alligator lagoon. Krantz has since been informed that the total invoice from Contract Construction was \$1.1 million, including the deck. As a result SSA has agreed to cover all expenses related to the deck.

- **Lexington County Escrow** – The Commission briefly discussed the status of Lexington County's Riverbanks escrow account. This account was established by Lexington County Council and is funded through any over-collection in the estimated millage.
- **Ape Island Replacement** – Now that the Kenya Café renovation is complete, SSA would like to move on to their next (and last) major capital project, the replacement of the Ape Island Snack Bar. At the time of SSA's submittal, everyone (Zoo and SSA) was under the impression that the building (an original structure from 1974) could be renovated. However, architects and contractors have advised against this due to the age and condition of the structure and now recommend that the building be demolished and replaced. SSA is suggesting a strategy that they have employed in other accounts, mainly demolishing the building and replacing it with a simple metal structure. An Asian-themed façade, manufactured off-site by a specialty company, would then be attached to the metal exterior. Krantz distributed a concept sketch of the new snack stand. He noted that the cost of the new stand will come from SSA's \$3 million commitment to capital improvements. Plans are to begin the project in early November 2014 with completion by March 1, 2015.
- **PaCE Grant** – Riverbanks has been awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Palmetto Clean Energy (PaCE) matching solar grant program for educational institutions. The grant will offset the anticipated \$100,000 cost of a 25 kw dc solar pv roof-mount on the new guest services building. In addition to the \$50,000 grant, SCE&G has pledged an additional \$25,000 to the project. SCE&G will draft and share a press release once all grant documents are signed.
- **AZA & Disney Grant** -- The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund have awarded 30 "Nature Play Begins at Your Zoo & Aquarium" grants. Krantz was pleased to announce that Riverbanks received one of the \$5,000 grants. The Nature Play grants provide financial, logistical and creative support for zoos and aquariums seeking to increase or enhance family-centered nature experiences in their communities. A total of 30 grant recipients were selected to receive more than \$200,000 in awards.
- **Destination Riverbanks Fundraising** – Krantz reviewed with the Commission the initial staff plans for raising private funds to supplement the Destination Riverbanks project budgets. He noted that Lochlan Baskin will coordinate the effort with the assistance of the Society Board of Directors and members of the Commission. A draft copy of the fundraising brochure was distributed. Krantz also reported that it is his intention to begin fundraising in the spring of 2015, once all construction is underway.
- **September Meeting** – Krantz noted that the September Commission meeting date (September 18th) conflicts with the AZA annual meeting in Orlando. The

Commission discussed the merits of both Thursday, September 11th and Thursday September 25th. Krantz is to distribute a brief survey in an effort to identify the best possible alternative date.



Approved and/adopted on the ____ day of September,
2014. _____, Secretary