

**Riverbanks Park Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
19 March 2015**

**Attendance Report**

Commissioners Present: Phil Bartlett, Jan Stamps, Mary Howard, Bud Tibshrary, Lloyd Liles

Commissioners Absent: Smith

Staff Present: Satch Krantz, Tommy Stringfellow, Steve Hatchell, Ed Diebold, Susan Reno, John Davis, Scott Pfaff, Colleen Lynch, Jennifer Rawlings, Dave Neller-moe, Keith Benson

**Call to Order**

Chairman Bartlett called the meeting to order.

**Special Presentation**

The Senior Animal Staff (SAS) appeared before the Commission and presented an excellent, hour-long talk on the challenges facing AZA-accredited institutions with respect to animal management and sustainability. Highlights of the presentation follow:

- Ed Diebold, Riverbanks' Director of Animal Collections, began the session by noting that the Riverbanks Animal Collection Plan guides the development and evolution of the animal collection and helps to ensure that it clearly reflects the institution's mission, contributes to the sustainability of our sometime irreplaceable captive animal populations and, at the same time, limits the production of surplus animals. Species selection criteria are applied to ensure the best possible use of limited exhibit and holding space, as well as financial and human resources. Each set of criteria provides a justification and statement of purpose for each species and individual specimen in the collection. The Collection Plan also provides stability to the animal collection while enhancing animal management, health, welfare, exhibit design and interpretation.
- Susan Reno, Riverbanks' Registrar, spoke about data management using ZIMS (Zoological Species Information System), the new web-based database. ZIMS is currently being used by 836 zoos and aquariums in 83 countries and contains information on 3.3 million animals. Susan demonstrated how information from our animal keeper staff is recorded daily and then entered into ZIMS; and then gave examples of how information in ZIMS can be utilized by our animal staff for collection management, husbandry, and animal health and care.
- Colleen Lynch, Curator of Birds, reported that Population Management is the scientific and logistical management of animal populations across a zoo region

such as AZA, or across the world. In AZA, populations are managed under the Species Survival Plan or SSP. There are more than 500 species designated for SSP management. Each of these species has a Studbook that is analyzed every one to three years to create a Breeding and Transfer Plan for the species. This plan includes the genetic and demographic status of the population, considers the needs of individual AZA institutions, and creates animal-by-animal recommendations for the management of the population. SSPs impact all of the animal managers and most of the animals here at Riverbanks.

- John Davis, Curator of Mammals, noted that the African elephant captive population is challenged to meet the current space demand for AZA zoos. Nearly half of the 162 elephants in the captive population are deemed post-reproductive; leaving only 84 animals that are eligible for breeding. Riverbanks' four African elephants range in age from 33 to 44. Two of these elephants exceed the median life expectancy of 38.4 years. Projections indicate that the captive population will be seriously hampered by a demographic bottleneck for the next 2-3 decades, as older females "age out" of the population, resulting in a shortage of animals. Institutions that currently keep older elephants or who are building new exhibits may have challenges in finding animals. The AZA Elephant TAG/SSP encourages institutions to recruit additional breeding animals into the AZA Elephant TAG/SSP managed population from outside of the SSP and to reduce the inter-birth time interval (normally 3-4 years) in order to increase the overall birth rate for the population. However, in spite of these efforts demographic projections indicate that the current breeding population of African elephants will not be able to reproduce quickly enough to fill the estimated 221 AZA elephant holding spaces.
- Scott Pfaff, Curator of Herpetology, reported that Riverbanks' Malagasy leaf-tailed gecko program received the AZA Edward H. Bean Award in 2005. The program has been ongoing for more than 20 years and produced more than 1,505 individual leaf-tailed geckos that have been distributed to 40 different participating AZA institutions. In collection planning, institutions must consider the visitor appeal of a species as well as its conservation value. Riverbanks uses its collection of venomous snakes to help provide training for the US military, DNR law enforcement, poison control centers, emergency medicine personnel and animal control officers.
- Jennifer Rawlings, Curator of Fishes, reported that the management of aquatic collections has its own unique challenges. Unique biological adaptations and life histories must be taken into account when determining how to collectively manage many species of fishes and invertebrates. SSP programs, in particular, are relatively new among zoos and aquariums as we face these challenges head-on in our collection planning processes.

The Commission expressed its gratitude to those members of the SAS in attendance and thanked them for their dedication to the Zoo's mission.

## **Approval of the Minutes**

The February 2015 meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

## **Chief Finance Officers Report**

The Commission dispensed with reviewing the February 2015 finance report. The following highlights of the report follows:

In spite of all our various challenges (inclement weather, construction, etc.) we completed the month of February with a year-to-date *surplus* of \$557,502. This amount reflects a *positive* variance of \$306,000 compared to the current fiscal year's budget.

### **Attendance**

- Total attendance for the year is under budget by 9,859 due exclusively to the inclement weather.
- Likewise, paid attendance continues to be below budget through February by 17,636 guests.
- Membership attendance continues to help offset the deficit of paid attendance and free admissions by producing nearly 24,000 guests more than budgeted through February.

### **Balance Sheet**

- Cash is slightly lower through February, as compared to last year, due to the timing of the reimbursement of bond funds (See "Due from Bond Fund" line item under Assets), as well as the timing of payments of accounts payables.

### **Revenue vs Expense**

#### **Revenue**

- Total Revenue is \$83,000 over budget through February and \$412,000 over as compared to the same time last year. This is primarily due to admissions revenue and other revenue surpassing last year's amounts.
- Admissions revenue for the year continues to be below budget by \$93,000, but above the same period last year by \$163,000. Even though we have seen a decrease in our paid attendance through February, we have been able to offset this situation by the increase in fees implemented at the beginning of this fiscal year.
- Events' net revenue is under budget by \$39,000. This is mainly due to issues with the weather during Lights Before Christmas, which effected gross revenues by almost \$39,000.
- Other Revenues are \$184,000 over budget and \$168,000 over the same time period last year. As mentioned last month, this is mainly due to the property tax reduction and refunds for some Rivermont properties, as well as continued rental income from the remaining properties (which were budgeted at zero dollars. Donations and Sponsorships continue to be over budget through February by \$28,000 and \$30,000 respectively.

- Governmental support from Richland County is under budget by \$23,000. This is due to the timing of the funds allocation from the county in relation to when we budgeted the allocations.

### **Expenses**

- Total Expenses are \$223,000 under budget. All departments continue to be under budget at this point in the fiscal year, with the exception of Guest Services, Facilities Management, and Utilities. Guest Services and Facilities are continuing to work hard preparing for the AZA Mid-Year meeting, AZA accreditation and to get the Zoo and Garden ready for the spring and summer seasons. Guest Services also incurred some up-front costs associated with the Zoo now managing both grounds and housekeeping (formerly contracted with Aramark). Utilities are up mostly due to the extended cold weather.

### **Rock Climbing Wall**

Chairman Bartlett reported that just prior to today's meeting the staff brought before the Finance Committee a proposal for a new climbing wall structure at the Zoo. It is believed that the revenue generated from a new wall will increase significantly over our current program, thereby creating greater net revenue. Our current climbing structure consists of 5 lanes on a climbing wall and 3 lanes on a coconut tree (which is difficult to climb). Riverbanks has an agreement with a third-party partner, who actually owns the current wall, with whom we split the revenue 50/50. The staff believes that a new wall, owned and operated by Riverbanks will have an 18-month payback with an overall net increase in revenue of 27%. Tibshrary moved, Liles seconded, m/c unanimous, to purchase the new climbing wall as proposed by the staff.

### **Destination Riverbanks Update**

Krantz provided the following update:

**Entry/Grizzly/Otter (EGO)** -- This large cluster of projects: the parking lot restroom, guest services building, gift shop, grizzly bear and otter exhibits and life support building are still progressing at a rapid pace, with only routine construction issues. Trespa panels are being placed on the exterior of the restroom and guest services buildings, giving them an almost finished look. Most of the work being done on these two buildings is occurring on the interior, including hanging sheet rock and painting. OTL, the exhibits subcontractor, has finished fabricating the artificial rock at the grizzly bear and otter exhibits and has begun the painting and staining process. SSA has begun meeting with Jumper Carter Sease to pick the various finishes for the gift shop interior. At this time we are still within budget and on-target for an early July 2015 completion date.

**Sea Lion** -- Rodgers Builders has made tremendous progress on the sea lion exhibit since the February Commission meeting. All of the foundation work on the sea lion holding building is complete, and they have moved on to the public viewing building. Other than the extensive foundation work, there is really nothing more to report at this time. We should start seeing walls come out of the ground next week. At this point there are no major issues and at this early stage of construction the project is still on budget and schedule.

**Children's Garden** -- Following a rather slow and frustrating start, construction at all levels of this project is now moving well. One can now interpret the size and scope of this 3-acre project. The rain over the past three months had a severe impact on the construction schedule, but the contractors (both Tyler and Cost of Wisconsin) feel confident they will be finished in early fall of 2015. As reported previously, it is still too early to know how this will impact the children's garden's opening. In spite of the issues that have plagued this project, it is still on-budget and mostly on time.

**Rivermont Parking Lot** – Krantz noted that this project was significantly delayed by the rains over the past month. As a result, Zoo staff was recently warned to expect that no portion of the lot would be ready for Spring Break, sending us into panic mode. Thankfully, CR Jackson has been working diligently over the past week and has made quite a bit of progress. They are now telling us that if the weather remains good for the next two weeks, much of the lot will be ready for Spring Break (not necessarily completed, but ready). Krantz further noted that there has been yet another development regarding the final cost of this project. He reminded the Commission that CR Jackson had encountered an incredible amount of trash, tree stumps and boulders under the 400 Rivermont slab. Removing this debris and replacing it with suitable soil will result in a substantial change order, estimated at approximately \$120,000. Additionally, Krantz recently authorized an additional change order that will total approximately \$35,000 to \$40,000. This involves taking the existing overhead SCE&G and Time Warner Cable lines that run across the back of our Rivermont property and burying them underground at the site of the new CSX pedestrian bridge. While we are contractually obligated to pay the cost of burying these cables, Krantz intends to approach both SCE&G and TWC about sharing in the expense (or paying the entire cost). *The Commission was reminded that Riverbanks has a verbal commitment from Richland County staff to pay for this parking lot with Transportation Penny funds.*

**CSX Pedestrian Bridge** -- Unfortunately, there have been no substantial developments with the bridge since the February meeting. CSX now has all that they need from Jumper Carter Sease in order to grant final approval of the bridge design and construction. Krantz did exchange emails two weeks ago with CSX, and they claim that approval is "imminent." Zoo architects and staff are still in negotiations with Rodgers Builders about the cost of the bridge.

### **President & CEO Report**

Krantz presented the following report:

- **ARC** – Krantz reported that this project is now complete with only a few minor punch list items remaining.
- **Solo's Market** (formerly Ape Island Snack Bar) – This SSA-funded project opened yesterday. In addition, SSA has funded an exterior renovation of both the ICEE and Plaza Café (renamed Kodiak Point). These new facilities are excellent additions to the Zoo's guest services efforts.
- **Aviary** – Immediately adjacent to Solo's Market is the first of several replacement aviaries; it was also completed yesterday. Birds are now being placed in the aviary.
- **Gorilla Transfers** – On Tuesday, February 17, the Zoo's bachelor group of three male gorillas were successfully transferred to the Houston Zoo.

Beginning next week and continuing for the next several weeks we will transfer in to Riverbanks a total of four new gorillas, a male from the Birmingham Zoo, two females from Zoo Atlanta and one female from the North Carolina Zoo. It is hoped that these gorillas will be bred within the not-too-distant-future.

- **AZA Mid-Year Meeting** – Lochlan Baskin attended the meeting and informed the Commission that delegates attending the AZA Mid-Year meeting will begin arriving tomorrow afternoon. The last registration numbers indicate that around 750 people will attend the week-long conference. Baskin and Krantz reminded the Commission that they are encouraged to attend both the Icebreaker (State Museum) and Zoo Day, scheduled for Monday and Tuesday March 23 and 24, respectively.

The Meeting was adjourned.

  
Approved and adopted on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of April  
2015. \_\_\_\_\_, Secretary