



"Creating a just and sustainable world where people and wildlife thrive, together."

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Bernardo Silva
Vice President

Justin Mikita

Daryl Smith

Elnie Vannatim

Richard Lichtenstein
Ex Officio Member

Denise M. Verret
Chief Executive Officer
& Zoo Director

MINUTES

BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

TUESDAY, May 21, 2024 – 10:00 AM

Los Angeles Zoo
Grand Room
5333 Zoo Drive
Los Angeles, Ca 90027

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Winnick
Bernardo Silva
Justin Mikita
Daryl Smith
Elnie Vannatim

VISITORS

None signed in

EX OFFICIO MEMBER PRESENT

Richard Lichtenstein (arrived at 10:13)

COMMISSION STAFF

Denise Verret
Cristina Flores

MEDIA

None signed in

ZOO GENERAL COUNSEL

Steve Houchin

AGENDA ITEM 1

CALL TO ORDER

Commission President Winnick called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM.

AGENDA ITEM 2

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF APRIL 16, 2024

Commission President Winnick requested approval of the minutes of the April 16, 2024 meeting. Commission Vice President Silva so moved, Commissioner Vannatim seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

AGENDA ITEM 3

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

No Comments

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

No Comments

AGENDA ITEM 4

CLOSED SESSION – POSTPONED

- a. The Board may recess to Closed Session, pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(a) and (d)(1), to confer with its legal counsel relative to the



pending case entitled Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust, et al. v. City of Los Angeles, et al., Los Angeles Superior Court Case No. 23STCP03390

AGENDA ITEM 4

PRESENTATION - GORILLA REHABILITATION AND CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTER (GRACE) USALA CORRIDOR PROJECT

Dr. Jake Owens, Director of Conservation gave a presentation on the GRACE Usala Corridor project which is summarized as follows:

- Dr. Owens discussed a new conservation opportunity that came to the Zoo with a message that stated “There are few opportunities left on our planet to ensure large unspoiled tracks of land in high biodiversity tropical forests and this is one such opportunity.” Noting that work the Zoo is doing with this initiative is guided by the Zoo’s Conservation Strategic Plan (CSP) which we are now more than half way into.
- This initiative fits into the Human Wildlife Coexistence component of the CSP as it focuses on conservation solutions that meet the needs for both people and wildlife, focusing on Grauers Gorillas.
- All Gorillas are listed as critically endangered, Grauers specifically have an estimated less than 7,000 individuals with the population still declining.
- GRACE is dedicated to protecting Grauers Gorillas and is the only sanctuary dedicated to protecting them with 12 individuals with the goal of returning some of those into the wild.
- Dr. Owens noted that Zoo Director, Denise Verret is part of the U.S. GRACE Board, informing the decision making providing her expertise. Director of Animal Programs, Beth Schaefer has been a technical advisor with them for several years providing her expertise with Animal Care and training, both in person and remotely.
- The Los Angeles Zoo has partnered with GRACE since 2015 and provides financial and technical support to advance the mission of GRACE that is to provide excellent care for rescued Grauer’s gorillas and work alongside Congolese communities to promote the conservation of wild gorillas and their habitat.
- The program is divided into three major parts which the Zoo has supported over the years.
 - Rescue, rehabilitation and release into the wild;
 - Insitu conservation actions (snare removals anti-poaching efforts, field surveys, etc.); and
 - Deep community engagement
- The Tayna Nature Reserve is globally significant. It has high species richness, high numbers of endemic species, and is a unique area of transitional forest between the montane forest of the Albertine Rift and the broad-leaved lowland forests of the Congo Basin. Tayna is also a place of extremely high conservation priority because of hunting, agriculture and extreme poverty of communities that struggle to meet their basic needs.
- The plan is to develop a roughly 31-kilometer-wide corridor that would link Tayna Nature Reserve with Maiko National Park that would help to halt the deforestation that is starting to encroach on this area.
- The Corridor will protect nearly 350,000 acres of primary rainforest in one of the most biodiverse places on earth. This is 25,000 acres larger than the entire City of Los Angeles. This is a significant contribution to the 30 by 30 plan to protect 30% of the planet’s oceans, lands, and freshwaters by 2030, which is a key step in the long-term conservation needs of our planet. This project will also legally recognize the forest rights of local communities and ensure the community-based management of the forest.
- This project will also be highlighted at this year’s Beastly Ball to raise funds with the paddle raise in hopes to shed light on the initiative as well as raise funds.

- Dr. Owens ended his presentation by emphasizing the project and the partnership with GRACE, along with other projects within the CSP and the work being done throughout the Zoo every day that are demonstrable proof that we are creating a just and sustainable world where people and wildlife thrive, together.

AGENDA ITEM 6

GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

a. Animal Updates

- 1 female Giant Otter went to Argentina as part of a reintroduction plan with a male from Europe. Additionally, a female from Jacksonville and a male from the Dallas World Aquarium will be coming to the L.A. Zoo as part of a breeding recommendation.
- 3 male Ringtail Lemurs on loan from Wildlife Safari in Winston, Oregon as part of a Species Survival Plan (SSP) recommendation.
- Female Red-flanked Duiker on loan from the World-Famous Charles Paddock Zoo for breeding.
- Male Geoffroy's marmoset on loan to the Philadelphia Zoo as breeding recommendation.
- Female Binturong, sale to the Virginia zoo as part of an SSP recommendation.
- Male and female Tawny Frogmouth, sale to the Saint Louis Zoo to fulfill internal species planning needs.
- Female Cape thick-knee chick, sale to the Sedgwick County Zoo as part of an SSP recommendation.
- Two male and one female Raggianna bird-of-paradise, sale to Zoo Miami for hopeful reproduction.
- The California Condor hatchings are up to 14 so far

i. Necropsy Results for Asian Elephant Shaunzi

Dr. Dominique Keller, Chief Veterinarian provided a report on the final necropsy for Shaunzi which included the following:

- Shaunzi was a 53.5 year old female Asian Elephant and was euthanized on January 3, 2024. She came to the Los Angeles Zoo from the Fresno Chaffee Zoo in 2017 at 47 years old. Necropsy results were received on May 1, 2024.
- Multiple joints on every limb with moderate to severe degenerative joint disease most pronounced in wrist and knee joints. These are age-related changes of osteoarthritis or arthritis and are chronic based on the findings. This is something that was being monitored since she arrived at the L.A. Zoo in 2017
- The right patella (knee cap) had a tiny fracture. This is likely secondary to the multiple chronic degenerative changes in that joint previously referenced.
- Severe wear of her teeth, common in geriatric elephants
- Moderate myocardial fibrosis of the heart.

b. GLAZA Updates

Janet Dial, GLAZA Vice President of Advancement

- Large gift in March closed out the fundraising for the second Los Angeles Zoo children's book project.

- At the end of March and beginning of April an additional \$350,000 was raised for restricted funding projects which included elephant barn rubber flooring and rhino substrate, as well as pledges for the Betty White's Zoo Pals and Zoo Camp Scholarships
- Membership earnings through March were above goal with an increase in households as now at 42,365 households. Ms. Dial also pointed out that this was 2,000 more households than March 2023.
- Spring Acquisition pop up coupon has already generated \$266,000 in revenue and the direct mail pieces have generated more than 2,600 memberships and \$358,000 in revenue so far.
- Attendance was up 118% with a year to date total of 12% above projected amount.
- Admission revenue was 37% more than budget which included a \$1 million payment for Zoo Lights. Making the year to date total 108% above projected amount.
- GLAZA Revenue site rentals is currently at 90% for March but the year to date is at 100% of the projected amount.

c. Zoo Director Updates

- There are three California Condor eggs left, and if they all hatch we could break our record of 15 chicks that was set in 1996.
- The Zoo's Learning and Engagement team hosted the California Regional Environmental Community Network (CREEC) for a planning workshop. The network fosters regional partnerships throughout California to promote environmental education and literacy by providing teachers with access to professional learning opportunities and educational resources. This event included LAUSD, L. A. County Office of Education, Aquarium of the Pacific and the LA County Natural History Museum.
- The Conservation team hosted the Pasadena Audubon Society Birding and Conservation tour at the Zoo. Mission is to bring the excitement of birds to the community through birding and conservation of bird habitat. They also supported the instillation of the MOTUS bird monitoring equipment.
- The Zoo held its first Día de los Niño's event that included book readings by librarians in English and Spanish, cultural dance performances as well as engagement with Animal Care staff as the animals were presented with enrichment pinatas.
- Learning and Engagement participated in CicLAvia in the Venice community.
- Veterinary team hosted the LA County Public Health Veterinary Team, toured the nutrition center, discussed animal cases, treatment approaches highly pathogenic avian influenza and the condor vaccination program.
- City Council adopted a motion asking for a report on the two Asian Elephants that passed away as well as the compliance with AZA standards relative to elephants, which was covered in the news.
- Project Pollinator Launch was covered in various media outlets.
- BBC interviewed our Curator of Birds to talk about our California Condor Breeding program
- Beverly Press covered the Zoo's Annual Spring Sheep Shearing.

AGENDA ITEM 7
OLD BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no more business to come before, Commission President Winnick motioned to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Smith so moved and Commission Vice President Silva seconded; the meeting was adjourned at 10:49 AM.

ATTEST:

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY