



MINUTES

BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

TUESDAY, JULY 16, 2024 – 10:00 AM

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

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

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Karen Bass
Mayor

Nithya Raman
Council Member
4th District

Zoo Commissioners

Karen B. Winnick
President

Bernardo Silva
Vice President

Justin Mikita

Daryl Smith

Elnie Vannatim

Richard Lichtenstein
Ex Officio Member

Denise M. Verret
Chief Executive Officer
& Zoo Director

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Winnick
Bernardo Silva
Justin Mikita
Daryl Smith
Elnie Vannatim

VISITORS

None signed in

EX OFFICIO MEMBER PRESENT

Richard Lichtenstein arrived at 10:06 AM

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 10:00 AM.

AGENDA ITEM 2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF JUNE 18, 2024

Commission President Winnick requested a Motion to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Smith so moved, Commissioner Vannatim seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

AGENDA ITEM 3 GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Patricia O'Riley (comment provided in writing)

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

No Comments

AGENDA ITEM 4 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Vice President Silva nominated Karen Winnick for President, the motion passed unanimously.



President Winnick nominated Bernardo Silva for Vice President, the motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 5

PRESENTATION – FISCAL YEAR 2024-25 BUDGET

Mei Kwan, Zoo Deputy Director gave the following presentation:

- For context Ms. Kwan explained that with the Zoo's accreditation process ending in early 2023 and the City's requirement for the department's budget proposal to be submitted in November of 2023, the Zoo Department was able to plan for the capital improvement needs brought to light during the accreditation process.
- As the Zoo moved through the budget process, City departments were forced to take some cuts which resulted in the elimination of 21 vacant positions. However, the Zoo did receive continued support for the department's priority needs.
- Ms. Kwan discussed a chart demonstrating attendance trends over the years indicating that while attendance is strong the Zoo is still not at pre-pandemic numbers. The Zoo is hopeful that with ongoing facility improvements and increased community engagement, those numbers will continue to rise. While the attendance numbers have not risen, the revenue has risen which is a credit to the increase in admission revenue.
- The Zoo's budget this fiscal year is about \$31 million with 85% of that going to salaries and 15% to operating expenses, with no significant change from last years budget. However, to the Zoo did receive close to \$5 million in support for capitol programs as well as a few new positions in animal health and maintenance.
- Ms. Kwan detailed the distribution of the budget within the department as follows:
 - 45% Animal Wellbeing and Conservation Programs
 - 27% Daily Support - facility maintenance and Improvements
 - 16% Learning and Engagement, Guest Services, Communications
 - 12% Administration and Business Operations
- Ms. Kwan also detailed the source of the funds as follows:
 - \$21 million is made up of admissions fees, concessions and membership revenue
 - \$3 million from fee-based programs, GLAZA reimbursements and other miscellaneous receipts
 - \$7 million from General Fund and Zoo Enterprise Trust Fund
- This fiscal year the Zoo has 3 key initiatives:
 - Animal Well-Being - eight animal keeper positions have been continued this fiscal year, two new animal keeper positions have been added to support the Nutrition Program
 - Facility Maintenance and Capitol Improvement – additional funding has given the Zoo the ability to hire trade staff to support the improvements
 - Increase Accessibility – this is the second year the Zoo has received a grant through the County to provide field trips and expand the ages this year.

AGENDA ITEM 6

PRESENTATION - LA ZOO TEEN COUNCIL FOR CONSERVATION

Anna Becker - Community Conservation Coordinator

- Ms. Becker discussed how the Teen Council for Conservation (TCC) is integral to how the Conservation Strategic Plan (CSP) is executed, specifically focusing on the Social & Environmental Justice and California Conservation focal areas.

- Conservation Challenges are rooted in human issues that require justice centered solutions.
- In 2023, the Los Angeles City Youth Development Department (YDD) released the city-wide youth development strategic plan which addresses the need for more resource's tools and strategies for the youth who are one-third of the City's population facing significant challenges related to climate change and environmental injustice such as, heat, food insecurities, poverty, and lack of equitable paid resources or opportunities.
- The Zoo is in a unique position as a City department and a conservation organization to create impactful youth programs that focus on justice and sustainability and resource youth and leverage the innovative ideas they have for a better future.
- TCC provides the opportunity to connect youth to each other as well as to opportunities that build knowledge and opportunities. The Council is composed of a diverse group of individuals from various backgrounds, representing 14 of the 15 council districts in the City of Los Angeles.
- The program's six core components are: Youth Leadership, Career Development, Sense of Place, Professional Development, Community Building and Impact. These components align with the City's Framework for Positive Youth Development developed by YDD which consists of Enabling Environment, Youth Assets, Youth Agency and Youth Contribution.
- Following last year's program and this year, the Council was able to provide feedback and lessons learned were applied this year, some of which were: Mentorship Program, Meeting Frequency, Optional Field Trips, Civic Engagement and a Youth Conservation Symposium.
- When Councilmembers meet in person, their focus is to explore conservation and build skills in leadership, networking, local fieldwork and community building.
- Councilmembers, Alex Ramirez, a Senior at El Camino Real Charter High School (Council District 12), De Dinovi, a Junior at North Hollywood High School Zoo Magnet and Jerry Yang, who was unable to be present, provided a video for the Commission and they were able to hear first-hand the impact that this program made on them.
- Ms. Becker shared some of the notable impacts after assessing this year's program with the Council. Some of which included 100% of the participants reported a positive or improved relationship with conservation and participants felt better able to identify and take action on conservation issues.
- In addition to reviewing their experiences, the participants also arrived at some improvements or goals for future programs such as, increase awareness of TCC on Social Media, partnership development, and continued evaluation.

AGENDA ITEM 7

GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

a. Animal Updates

Director of Animal Programs, Beth Schaefer, provided the following animal updates:

- Female Blue-billed Curassow going to National Zoological Park in Washington, DC on Loan as part of an SSP recommendation as a companion to another non-reproductive male.
- Young Masai Giraffe going to West Texas Wildlife Preserve as part of an SSP recommendation.
- Red tailed cockatoo not needed in genetic population so is going to America's Teaching Zoo in Moorpark to be an education animal.
- Buff-cheeked gibbon who already lives here is being donated by the Denver Zoo.

- All Condor chicks have hatched for the year, with a record breaking 17 hatched.
- Yellow back duiker born and is doing well with its mother

b. GLAZA Updates

Dawn Petersen-Amend, GLAZA Interim President, provided the following updates:

- In May, in addition to the Beastly Ball funds raised, over \$110,000 was raised in restricted fundraising, putting the total at 82% of the annual goal.
- Restricted gifts this month:
 - A private trust donated two gifts:
 1. \$75,000 to the Betty White Zoo Pals Trust
 2. \$25,000 to the Zoo Camps Scholarships Trust
 - Private Foundation donated two gifts:
 1. \$5,000 for Zoo Volunteer Programs
 2. \$5,000 for Zoo Education Programs
 - Private Individual donated \$2,000 to name two flamingos.
- Membership budget for May ended at over 87% of budget with a Dia de los Muertos event and an upper-level Member Preview Morning. May ended with a year-to-date total of over 84% of annual membership budget. Membership households decreased by 889 households.
- 2024 Spring acquisition ended in June but will continue to count incoming funds through the month of July.
- Attendance was 14% over budget with year-to-date attendance at 11% over budget at the end of May.
- Admissions for May revenue was 98% of budget, year-to-date was 2% over budget projections.
- GLAZA revenue to the Zoo for April came in at 71% of budget with a year-to-date total being 97%.
- Summer events are in full swing which opened with Roaring Nights, August will be filled with Zoo Friday Nights, Brew at the Zoo will be August 3rd with a new Sip N Stroll component and the final Roaring nights in September.

c. Zoo Director Updates

Zoo Director, Denise Verret gave the following updates:

- Last year US Fish and Wildlife launched a historic vaccine trial to combat the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in California Condors with our Chief Veterinarian leading our participation in this trial. This year she used her talents to help vaccinate wild Condors at Bitter Creek National Wildlife Rescue. The Zoo is happy to support the team as the vaccine is important as 21 condors were killed last year as a result of HPAI.
- Learning and Engagement team participated in the following events:
 - Ciclavia on Western in Council Districts 8 & 9.
 - LA City's YDD Expo held at L.A. Trade College
- Summer Zoo Camp began a few weeks ago for ages pre-k through those entering 6th grade.
- At the request of Council President, Paul Krekorian, the Zoo hosted the San Fernando Valleys Youth leadership program, and will be hosting a second cohort in August.
- The Zoo's paid internship started in July and will look forward to hearing from them at the conclusion of this program.

- The Discover & GO program, in partnership with the L.A. Public Library Department has had over 8,800 uses of the program which is the highest since the program launched in 2019.
- This fiscal year the Zoo welcomed nearly 140,000 school group visitors, 68,000 of which came from LAUSD. It is the highest amount of LAUSD schools at least in the last fourteen years.
- In the News:
 - Teen Conservation Councilmember, Yajayra Figueroa was featured in LA Downtown News highlighting the Zoo's Teen Council for Conservation program.
 - LA Zoo's Teen Council for Conservation Youth Conservation Symposium was also covered in the news by KABC, LAist, Daily News, Telemundo 52 and the Eastsider.
 - An article in the Economist covered the California Condor Recovery Program.

**AGENDA ITEM 8
OLD BUSINESS**

None


ADJOURNMENT

There being no more business, Commission President Winnick requested a motion to adjourn the meeting; Commission Vice President Silva so moved and Commissioner Vannatim seconded; The motion passed by unanimous vote and the meeting was adjourned at 11:12 AM.

ATTEST:



PRESIDENT



SECRETARY