



MINUTES

BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

TUESDAY, November 19, 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 arrived at 10:05
Elnie Vannatim arrived at 10:11

VISITORS

None signed in

EX OFFICIO MEMBER PRESENT

Richard Lichtenstein

COMMISSION STAFF

Denise Verret
Cristina Flores

MEDIA

None signed in

ZOO GENERAL COUNSEL

Brendan Kearns

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 OCTOBER 15, 2024

Commission President Winnick requested a Motion to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2024 meeting. Commission Vice President Silva so moved, Commissioner Mikita seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

AGENDA ITEM 3

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

No Comments

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

No Comments

AGENDA ITEM 4

PRESENTATION – Conservation Strategic Plan Annual Update

Director of Conservation, Dr. Jake Owens gave the following presentation:



- Dr. Owens reviewed the Conservation Strategic Plan (CSP) and its progress since its launch in 2021.
- In 2024, the Zoo began working to expand the impact by extending out beyond the social, environmental justice and local California areas of conservation as well as deepening our partnerships, especially around the world.
- Conservation Culture:
 - Zoo's Conservation Survey, indicated that 90% of the staff respondents felt connected to the Zoo's mission and 94% believed their roles directly support the mission.
 - American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) Los Angeles Chapter's record-breaking work has raised funds for Rhino conservation and professional development for chapter members.
 - The Plastic Free Echochallenge lead by Dr. Carol Armstrong, Director of Capital Programs & Sustainability was successful and as a result thousands of pieces of litter were picked up and thousands of gallons of water were saved.
 - The Zoo's Montgomery grant program provided four recipients to visit three continents and work with elephants, giraffes, macaws and more. Recipients were able to use their expertise to support field conservation and animal welfare.
- California Conservation
 - Project Pollinator HQ is a consolidation of conservation work the Zoo is working on for local pollinators. The Zoo created a space to be able to have events and engage the communities in that work.
 - Gateway Garden, which was part of the turf replacement program was turned into a pollinator garden.
 - The Zoo has been monitoring Bats to see what impact the Zoo is having on native bat species, positive or negative. At this time, twelve bat species have been recorded.
 - The Zoo hosted an Earth Day event in partnership with the L.A. Zoo Magnet School to remove thousands of invasive plants and added native plants for pollinators.
 - Griffith Park West Trail Restoration program continues and we have seen some positive outcomes where native plants have begun to take over where invasive plants have been removed as part of this program.
- Social and Environmental Justice:
 - This marked the second year of the Paid Internship Program which has been going strong. Last year we had sixteen interns with three second year mentors.
 - Teen Council for Conservation is in its third year with 27 new students and three returning student mentors.
 - The Zoo received a \$3.6 million grant for the Oak Woodland Restoration Project that will serve to restore six acres of land above the Africa section of the Zoo as well as provide training and research. This program is in partnership with Outward Bound Adventures focusing on reaching youth who are from high gang impacted areas.
 - The Migrant Education Program had another successful year focusing on engaging children of migrant workers.
 - Measure A and The Betty White Zoo Pals programs helped provide schools and students the opportunity to come to the Zoo or to have Zoo team members visit them.

- **Illegal Wildlife Trade:**
 - In partnership with the Global Conservation Force the Zoo helped to start an anti-poaching force in Africa to protect the rhinos, supporting with ranger salary, training and equipment.
 - The Zoo worked with and supported the Macaw Recovery Network restoring Scarlet Macaws to the wild.
 - Together with the various organizations the Zoo has an installation at LAX to promote responsible tourism and educate the public.
- **Human-Wildlife Coexistence**
 - The Zoo is working with local organizations in Africa to support the Amboseli Noonkotiak Research Center as well as working with the Masai women, learning through them and considering them as this center is developed.
 - The Zoo has a long standing partnership with the Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education Center (GRACE) to work with communities in ways that are ethical in the process of creating a corridor for the conservation of Grauers Gorillas.
 - The Zoo works with and supports Paso Pacifico and its efforts to protect Big Cats such as jaguars in Nicaragua.
 - For the second year the Zoo has supported the Kasiisi Project to provide hand wash stations at schools, which will reduce the spread of sicknesses to people and ultimately to the chimpanzees.
 - One of the Zoo's longest partnerships continues with Wild Earth Allies protecting elephants and people in Cambodia through a variety of projects; including a new nursery project where seeds are collected from elephant dung and planted for use in community gardens which keeps people out of the forests, where the elephants are.
- **Conservation Translocations**
 - Southern Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog program is going strong with over 6,700 tadpoles produced since the program started. This project is more important than ever because of the fires and climate change in these areas.
 - California Condor recovery work continues at the Zoo with a record number of chicks hatching this year. The Zoo also participated in the HPAI vaccine trial.
 - The Zoo is also supporting efforts to start a similar program to the Condor Recovery Program with Bearded Vultures in South Africa.
 - The Zoo's reptile team has begun work to restore the population of New Mexico Ridge-nosed Rattlesnakes, having collected 30 individuals distributed to three different facilities which have now produced twenty young.
- **Evidence-Based Conservation**
 - This year the Zoo funded eleven projects with the average grant being a little over \$13,000 per grant.
 - The Zoo has supported a project in Saba to determine the cause of so many Asian Elephant deaths primarily around chip sites. The Zoo has supported this project with funding and resources to pinpoint the root cause and find solutions.
 - Using iNaturalist, the zoo has started several projects collecting large amounts of data using contributions from the public.

AGENDA ITEM 5

PRESENTATION – L.A. Zoo Lights Program

Mari Vasquez, GLAZA Special Events Senior Manager gave the following presentation:

- This year Zoo Lights will open on November 15th with a City preview night on November 14th. Opening for 42 nights, Zoo Lights will be closed some Mondays and Tuesdays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.
- Special Event nights will include Sensory Inclusive night, Holiday Happy Hour, two Pajama Nights and Pride Night.
- Every area of the route will have themed zones, which will include holidays, pollinators, interactives, sea creatures, zoo animals, rainforest and winter animals.
- This year Santa is back most nights through December 23rd.

AGENDA ITEM 6

PRESENTATION – L.A. Zoo Marketing Program

Emily Marin, GLAZA Director of Marketing and Communications gave the following presentation:

- Marketing goals are to drive attendance and revenue, member acquisition and retention in addition to raising awareness of the Zoo's mission and to support the City's priorities like diversity and environmental commitments.
- Communications move the consumer from awareness, familiarity, consideration, purchase to create a loyalty loop.
- Communications channels include, paid media, earned media, owned media and direct marketing.
- Special events are a key strategy offering something new to talk about and are able to be used to incentive memberships, discounts and perks.
- Each special event has an integrated marketing plan, which included cross promotions with the Autry, Hollywood Bowl, KCRW, Sketchers, Mars Inc. and Discover Los Angeles.
- The remaining Events/Wild Weekends in Fiscal Year 2025 include Lunar New Year, Spring Fling, Wild for the Planet (Earth Day) and Dia de los Niños.
- Continuity advertising which drives awareness of the Zoo throughout the year took advantage of the Google grant which offers up to \$10,000 of free advertising on Google. As a department of the City of Los Angeles the Zoo is also eligible for free advertising at LAX. Additionally, the Zoo runs an ad with a discount in the L.A. Daily News in which the Zoo was named favorite amusement park and favorite outdoor entertainment.
- Owned channels are free, however in order to prevent unfollows and unsubscribes, communications need to be high quality and engaging. Algorithms can positively or negatively affect engagement. Posts are strategically posted to increase reach and drive awareness.
- Email is used to provide news, announcements, attractions, events, exclusives, discounts and charitable giving opportunities.

AGENDA ITEM 7

GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

a. Animal Updates

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

Sales/Loans

- 1.0 King vulture on loan from the Charles Paddock Zoo in Atascadero, California as a companion
- 2.0 Tasmanian Devils on loan from the Tasmanian Government Save the Tasmanian Devil Program
- 0.2 Francois Langur will be on loan to the Mesker Park Zoo in Evansville, Indiana. The Zoo will maintain a bachelor troop.
- 1.0 Aruba Island Rattle Snake is on loan to the Dallas Zoo in Texas.
- 0.1 California Condor is going to the Oregon Zoo in Portland, Oregon as a breeding recommendation

Births/Hatchings

- 1.0 Colobus Baby
- 0.0.7 Poison Frogs

b. GLAZA Updates

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

- Restricted Gifts totaled nearly \$46,000 including \$27,500 for the Zoo Teen Council Youth Symposium. Additional funds received included \$10,000 for the LAIR, some animal naming's, animal adoptions and some contributions for the CSP.
- Advancement team has raised 88.5% of the Zoo's priorities
- Membership revenue came in at 96.6% of budget with the September household count of 37,606 decreasing by 40 households.
- Fall Acquisition campaign is ongoing and will run through December 31st.
- Attendance for September came in at 90% of budget.
- Admission for September came in at 101% of budget.
- GLAZA revenue for September came in at 95% of budget.
- Zoo Lights opened November 15th and through the first week, sales are 31% over budget.

c. Zoo Director Updates

Zoo Director, Denise Verret gave the following updates:

- Community and Conservation Engagements
 - In partnership with the Friends of Ballona Wetlands the Learning and Engagement team hosted a Bioblitz at the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve. Partnering with Cosplay for Science as well who help communicate science with the public through the use of fantasy and popular culture to encourage guests to trek through nature as if they were adventures.
 - The Zoo hosted the Brotherhood Crusade youth group for a career tour which included keeper talks and behind the scenes experiences.
- Collaborative Partnerships
 - In partnership with the City of Los Angeles the Zoo lit up the entrance sign with the colors of the Filipino flag in recognition of Filipino American History Month
- International Relations
 - The Zoo met with the City's Los Angeles Guangzhou Sister City Association in an interest to explore opportunities for cultural and wildlife exchanges

- A team from the Korean Associations of Zoos and Aquariums and the Southern Korean National Institute of Ecology visited the Zoo. They met with our team leaders about how we train our staff as an AZA accredited Zoo, emergency management training, safety drills, zoonotic disease trainings and educational training.
- The Zoo welcomed the Nagoya City Assembly Tour as part of the Sister City Program. They were interested in our Sensory Inclusion Program as well as the Komodo Dragons.
- The Zoo also celebrated L.A. Dodger Pride by lighting the sign up to celebrate and congratulate the World Champion Dodgers.
- Zoo in the News
 - Beloved Pets Ofrenda was featured on the City's news channel as well as featured in the LA Times digital publication as one of the ways to celebrate Dia de Muertos.

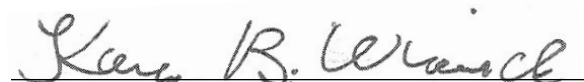
**AGENDA ITEM 8
OLD BUSINESS**

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no more business to come before the Commission, President Winnick requested a motion to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Smith so moved and Commission Vice President Silva seconded; the motion passed by unanimous vote and the meeting was adjourned at 11:06 AM.

ATTEST:



PRESIDENT



SECRETARY