



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

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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, APRIL 15, 2025 – 10:00 AM

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

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Winnick
Bernardo Silva
Daryl Smith
Elnie Vannatim

VISITORS

None signed in

EX OFFICIO MEMBER PRESENT

Richard Lichtenstein

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 10:00AM.

AGENDA ITEM 2

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF MARCH 18, 2025

Commission President Winnick requested a Motion to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2025 meeting. Commission Vice President Silva so moved, Commissioner Smith seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

AGENDA ITEM 3

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

No Comments

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

No Comments

AGENDA ITEM 4

PRESENTATION – GIANT OTTER CONSERVATION GLOBAL COLLABORATION
Curator of Mammals, Candace Scimenti gave the following presentation:



- Ms. Scilimenti is the Giant Otter Program Leader of the North American population. She explained that the AZA's reimagining of Species Survival Plan (SSP) Program no longer qualifies this species as part of an SSP due to the low number of Giant Otters in AZA facilities. This species is however part of an AZA Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) monitored program.
- As the Program Leader, Ms. Scilimenti, in collaboration with Europe and South America, has applied for the Giant Otters to be a globally managed species through WAZA in order to further conservation efforts.
- Ms. Scilimenti discussed her and Dr. Jake Owens, Director of Conservation, recent trip to Lima, Peru for the Third Giant Otter Workshop where she was able to collaborate with international experts, discuss U.S. imports of the species, and strengthen conservation partnerships.
- The workshop goals included strengthening global collaboration, updating conservation strategies (both in and out of the wild), and bring new members into the Giant Otter Alliance.
- The working group, which included 35 participants from 18 institutions across 9 countries, created two-year goals with metrics around research, outreach, anti-poaching, and eco-tourism.
- Progress was made toward importing new otters to the U.S. (more below).
- Ms. Scilimenti is now tasked with editing the English version of the giant otter husbandry hand book as part of a Global Collaboration in working towards updating the outdated manual which will then be translated into German, Spanish, and Portuguese.
- One U.S. zoo is actively importing two otters from South America hoping to import four more otters from Europe: two for the Los Angeles Zoo and two for another U.S. facility to reinvigorate the breeding program.
- Update on Rosario's Journey to Argentina
 - Rosario was identified in 2021 as a great genetic match for a male in Argentina, part of Rewilding Argentina's project to reintroduce extinct species.
 - The Los Angeles Zoo became the first U.S. zoo to collaborate with them on this species.
 - It took two years to get the export permit, but in May 2024, Rosario finally headed out.
 - Rosario traveled by plane from Los Angeles to Mexico City to Bogotá to Buenos Aires ending after a 6-hour drive to the release facility.
 - A custom crate was built, and a full team (including a fluent Spanish speaker) accompanied her. She traveled with food and water, and was checked on regularly during flight.
 - After a 30-day quarantine, she's now living in a pre-release habitat, catching live fish, no longer needs supplemental feeding and she's thriving,
 - She's awaiting a new male mate (the original match paired off while waiting), and two breeding pairs are now expected to be formed from this.

AGENDA ITEM 5

GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

a. Animal Updates

Misha Body, Deputy Director of Animal Programs provided updates which included the following:

- The Zoo recently sent some giant horned lizards from a group hatched here at the LA Zoo in late 2024 to other zoos
- LA Zoo was one of the first U.S. zoos to breed this rare species back in 2010 and is still the top producer.
- A few interesting facts about the giant horned lizards:
 - They've got amazing camouflage to blend into their environment.
 - Their horns make it tough for predators to bite them and they can posture in a way that makes them look more dangerous.
 - They really do look like tiny triceratopses—minus the big head plate.
 - Wild defense mechanism: they can squirt blood from their eyes to confuse predators.

b. GLAZA Updates

Janet Dial, GLAZA Vice President of Advancement gave the following updates:

- February restricted fundraising totaled over \$40,000, including \$10,000 for education initiatives and \$10,000 for elephant support
- Year-to-date restricted fundraising reached 105% of the goal raising over \$2.8 million
- Membership
 - February membership revenue reached 121% of the \$328,500 budget at \$68,393 over budget.
 - Member households ended at 36,914, down 739
 - Spring membership campaign began in early March and runs through the end of May which is expected to regain memberships
- Attendance:
 - February attendance came in at 113% of monthly budget
- February admission revenue:
 - 98% of monthly budget
- GLAZA revenue to the Zoo for February came in at 90% of budget
- Ms. Dial also highlighted the Betty White stamp dedication ceremony held at the Zoo by the United States Post Office

c. Zoo Director Updates

- Animal Programs
 - Condor egg laying season has ended with approximately 13 fertile eggs; 3 chicks hatched so far, expecting more successful hatchings in the coming weeks
- Community Outreach
 - Learning and Engagement (L&E) staff attended La Brea Tar Pits Girls in STEM Festival
 - Reached nearly 700 community members, promoting zoo-related careers
 - Participated in Koreatown Meets Hollywood CicLAvia
 - Engaged with diverse community members
 - The L&E team has noticed recurring presence of pet birds at these events, sharing photos of a pet bird interacting with the condor puppet

- Special Events
 - USPS held the Betty White stamp unveiling at the zoo
 - With over 400 attendees the event attracted stamp collectors and Betty White fans
 - Spring Fling weekend in March
 - The great weather resulted in strong attendance, drawing over 20,000 guests
 - Public debut of Pink's hot dog stand
 - In partnership with the Pink's family and with SSA the Pink's grand opening garnered long lines and positive reception
 - This partnership adds a well-known culinary brand to the guest experience
- Media and Recognition
 - Teen Conservation Youth Symposium was featured in March 23rd Sunday L.A. Daily News newspaper, highlighting the Youth Summit and the programs' engagement and conservation impact

AGENDA ITEM 6

OLD BUSINESS


None

AGENDA ITEM 7


ADJOURNMENT

There being no more business to come before the 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 10:41 AM.

ATTEST:



PRESIDENT



SECRETARY