



MINUTES

BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025 – 10:00 AM

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

LOS ANGELES ZOO
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Los Angeles, CA 90027

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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

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Winnick
Bernardo Silva
Justin Mikita
Daryl Smith
Elnie Vannatim - absent

VISITORS

None signed in

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 10:01AM.

AGENDA ITEM 2 - APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF OCTOBER 21, 2025

Commission President Winnick requested a Motion to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2025 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 COMMENTS

No Comments

AGENDA ITEM 4 – PRESENTATION – L.A. ZOO MARKETING PROGRAM FY 2025/26

Max Pulsinelli, Chief Communications and Marketing Officer, provided the following updates:

Mr. Pulsinelli provided an overview of the Zoo's updated communications and marketing strategy, noting that all messaging is now aligned with the Zoo's mission and strategic plan. He explained that the mission's four pillars guide content development and that the PESO model (paid, earned, shared, and owned media) is being used to ensure all channels work together more effectively.

DENISE M. VERRET
Chief Executive Officer
& Zoo Director



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He shared that each media channel plays a key role. Paid media covers digital ads, radio, streaming, and out-of-home placements connected to major campaigns. Earned media has grown significantly, with nearly triple the amount of news coverage over the past two years, including strong performance from conservation-focused stories. Shared media now highlights more behind-the-scenes content, especially animal care and veterinary stories. On the owned side, publications, the website, and email communications are shifting toward more mission-driven storytelling.

Regarding social media, Mr. Pulsinelli reported steady organic growth since July, especially on Facebook, which aligns well with the Zoo's core demographic. He noted improvements in linking social media content back to the website, something the team is now doing more consistently.

He then provided updates on Zoo View and the Zoo's website. Recent issues of the publication have focused more on mission-related features, and the Zoo is currently in an RFP process for a full website redesign to improve storytelling and user engagement. Email outreach has also expanded to include past general admission and nighttime event ticket buyers.

Mr. Pulsinelli reviewed recent paid media efforts, including the campaigns for Boo at the Zoo and LA Zoo Lights, developed with SSA and The Mighty Media Shop. These campaigns use geofencing, CRM targeting, and look-alike audiences to better reach families and potential visitors. Advertising now spans digital, social, streaming TV, radio, outdoor displays, community publications, and soon, billboards.

He noted that Boo at the Zoo performed well, generating roughly 31,000 website clicks and exceeding industry benchmarks for engagement and video views. For LA Zoo Lights, the Zoo expanded into TV advertising, YouTube (in English and Spanish), connected TV, additional radio placements, and digital kiosks at major shopping centers. The creative assets remain consistent with previous years to maintain strong brand recognition.

In closing, Mr. Pulsinelli shared that the Zoo has unified its marketing, website, and publications efforts under a single coordinated strategy. The Zoo is finalizing RFPs for a new marketing agency and website developer and plans to hire a marketing specialist, a digital media manager, and a photographer/videographer to support future communications and content needs.

AGENDA ITEM 5 - GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

a. Animal Updates

Dominick Dorsa, Director of Animal Care provided updates which included the following:

Mr. Dorsa reported that the Zoo successfully welcomed several new bird species. He announced the arrival of a Kea parrot, a Palm cockatoo, and a Major Mitchell's cockatoo, all of which are new residents in the Zoo's collection.

He provided some background on each species. The Palm cockatoo is native to northern Australia, Indonesia, and New Guinea, while the Major Mitchell's cockatoo is also found in Australia but primarily in inland regions. The Kea parrot originates from New Zealand and is well-known online for its playful reputation—often seen in videos interacting mischievously with skiers and cars in alpine areas.

Mr. Dorsa explained that both the Kea parrot and the Palm cockatoo are part of managed breeding programs within the AZA. Through these programs, accredited institutions contribute to conservation efforts in the wild, including support for organizations such as the AZA Conservation Trust and the World Parrot Trust. The addition of these birds also allowed

the Zoo to activate two previously vacant exhibits, which are now open and viewable to guests.

In response to a question about signage, Mr. Dorsa confirmed that temporary signs are already in place, thanks to Dan and the Learning & Engagement team. He noted that the Major Mitchell's cockatoo is currently being kept indoors, but she is expected to be on exhibit soon.

He shared that all three birds are adjusting well, and the team is excited to introduce these new species to the Zoo and support their associated conservation programs. Each species is currently represented by a single female, and the Zoo hopes to expand these populations as they work with SSPs to acquire future companions. He added that the Major Mitchell's cockatoo, named Emily, has already become a standout among the new arrivals.

b. Zoo Director Updates

Denise Verret, Zoo Director gave the following updates:

- Animal Programs
 - The Zoo welcomed a baby male orangutan on October 10—the first in 15 years!
 - He's now out in Red Ape Rainforest with mom Kalim.
 - Kalim is an experienced mom, and the little one is adjusting really well.
- School Programs – Safari Days Program
 - The Measure A program is going strong, giving LAUSD students from high-need areas free visits to the Zoo.
 - So far, over 6,000 students and 1,000 chaperones from 59 schools have come to the Zoo as part of this program.
 - We're on track to reach 10,000 students by the end of the fiscal year.
- Community Outreach
 - Our team had a great time at the annual P-22 Festival, connecting with nearly 600 guests.
 - We also joined the Tom LaBonge Memorial Hike with Ivanhoe Elementary students—a fun way to engage the community right here in Griffith Park.
- Special Events – Boo at the Zoo Wrap Up
 - Boo at the Zoo drew about 36,000 visitors over four days, with trick-or-treating, educational stations, and the always-popular animal pumpkin feedings.
 - U.S. Fish & Wildlife joined the event to share the Not a Pet message with guests.
- Zoo Projects
 - Tree Tops Terrace
 - Repairs are complete after the 2024 structural issue.
 - The space is back online and hosted the VIP reception for Zoo Lights.
- Cambodia Deck
 - Water damage repairs are done, and the area is ready for events.
 - Discussions are underway on the best species to move into the former elephant space, keeping the Zoo Vision Plan in mind.
- Zoo Monthly Data
 - Attendance: October brought 92,000 visitors (a bit below the 115,000 projection, but a 62% increase from September). Year-to-date attendance is nearly 310,000—84% of the goal.

- Membership: 30,765 member households as of November 1. Family and Family Deluxe memberships make up the largest groups, and numbers are already bouncing back.
- Revenue: October revenue for admissions, concessions, and memberships totaled \$1.2M; year-to-date \$5.1M, about 83% of budget.
- Media Highlights:
 - The Dodgers–Toronto Zoo World Series wager got great local and international press.
 - Zoo Lights preview received live coverage from ABC and other outlets.
 - The baby orangutan announcement received national coverage, including AP, LA Times, and Daily News.

AGENDA ITEM 7 - 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 11:34 AM.

ATTEST:

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY