



MINUTES

BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 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 – arrived at 10:10

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 10:00AM.

AGENDA ITEM 2 - APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 18, 2025

Commission President Winnick requested a Motion to approve the minutes of the November 18, 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 – ADVANCING L.A. ZOO ANIMAL CARE AND WELLBEING

Dr. Dominique Keller, Chief Veterinarian and Director of Animal Health and Wellness, provided the following updates:

Dr. Keller provided an overview of the Animal Health Division, which includes the Animal Health Center (hospital) and the Nutrition Center. She emphasized the critical role of preventive care in maintaining animal well-being, including wellness exams, vaccinations, disease screening, and emergency care. The hospital operates year-round with veterinary staff on call after hours and includes a separate quarantine area

DENISE M. VERRET
*Chief Executive Officer
& Zoo Director*



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for newly acquired or transferred animals. She highlighted the close coordination between Animal Health and Animal Care staff in all aspects of daily operations.

Dr. Keller introduced the Zoo's new CT scanner, describing it as a major advancement in diagnostic capabilities. She explained that the scanner provides faster, more detailed information, improves surgical planning, and reduces the risks associated with transporting anesthetized animals offsite. The Zoo is one of a small number of U.S. zoos with an in-house CT scanner. She noted its wide bore, which accommodates large animals, and AI-enhanced imaging capabilities that improve diagnostic accuracy.

She described the process of acquiring and installing the scanner, including planning, securing City funding, lead-lining the room, reinforced flooring, and building a control area for safe operation. Staff training began in August, and the scanner became operational shortly thereafter. It is now used nearly every day for a variety of species.

Dr. Keller emphasized that while the CT scanner is a powerful tool, it complements rather than replaces other diagnostic methods such as radiographs, ultrasounds, and hands-on examinations. She highlighted the significant benefits it has already provided in diagnosing conditions, planning treatment, and supporting medical decision-making for the Zoo's collection.

AGENDA ITEM 5 - GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

a. Animal Updates

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

Mr. Dorsa discussed recent animal transfers, noting they were part of cooperative population management efforts, including SSP breeding recommendations and exhibit support.

Mr. Dorsa shared the arrival of a female Bali myna from the Kansas City Zoo and discussed the species' critically endangered status.

Mr. Dorsa explained that the Bali myna is found only in Bali, Indonesia, and that the wild population declined to as few as six individuals in the late 1990s. He noted current estimates place the population between 50 and 100 birds, with illegal trapping for the cage bird trade being the primary threat.

Mr. Dorsa stated there are currently 172 Bali mynas in 49 AZA-accredited facilities and noted the Los Angeles Zoo has successfully hatched 65 Bali mynas since acquiring its first pair in 1966.

Mr. Dorsa discussed Star, a Bali myna confiscated at LAX in 2017, noting she produced three offspring, which later produced nine additional birds at other institutions. He shared that Star passed away earlier this year and mentioned ongoing efforts to reintroduce Bali mynas into the wild.

b. Zoo Director Updates

Denise Verret, Zoo Director gave the following updates:

- Animal Programs**

- Announced birth of new gorilla baby, fifth great ape born to N'djia and Kelly; family is on exhibit for guests.

- Elephants Tina and Billy at Tulsa Zoo: Billy was one of the first three elephants to enter the new 10-acre preserve; social media post reached over 89,000 views.
- Highlighted successful condor conservation story: LA Zoo condor (born 2018) rescued from lead poisoning, rehabilitated by veterinary team, and re-released back into the wild in September 2025; blog picked up by CBS LA.
- Community Outreach
 - The Zoo's outreach team attended the South Park Family Fun Night which was an extension of the Summer Night Lights program; the team shared conservation messages and promoted LA Public Library partnership for free Zoo access.
 - LA Zoo Lights Animals a Glow received positive media coverage, including Fox 11 News segment.
- Monthly Data
 - Attendance: nearly 100,000 visitors in November (70% of monthly goal); year-to-date attendance over 408,000 (80% of projected). Members represent 31% of visitors.
 - Membership: as of December 1, there are 29,151 member households; family and family deluxe remain largest categories. Recent membership campaign showing positive results.
 - Revenue: November revenue was \$1.3 million; year-to-date \$6.4 million (81% of budgeted projections). Largest revenue sources: admissions, concessions and membership.
- In the News
 - Media coverage of gorilla baby reached over 51 million broadcast viewers and 31 million digital viewers

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 Mikita so moved and Commissioner Vannatim seconded; the motion passed by unanimous vote and the meeting was adjourned at 10:43 AM.

ATTEST:

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY