

**Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
15 January 2026**

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the agenda is available to radio and TV stations, newspapers, and persons requesting notification; was posted in the lobby of Riverbanks' administration building and was uploaded to Riverbanks' webpage.

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Cliff Bourke, Bob Davidson, Chip Huggins, Jeff Reeves, Deneen Shockley, Mike Velasco, Alana Williams.

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Christie Vondrak, Lochlan Wooten, Jessica Austin.

Call to Order

Chairwoman Williams called the meeting to order at 12:30pm.

Reading of the Minutes

The November 20, 2025, Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

Huggins motioned to approve the minutes, Bourke seconded, m/c unanimous.

Chairwoman's Remarks:

- None.

Finance Report:

VP of Finance Ashley Harris provided the following report:

- December Dashboard Report:
 - Net revenue over expenses is reporting \$906,000 better than budgeted
 - Total attendance through December reported 3.1% below budget. Total attendance through the first half of the fiscal year is reporting 7.4% above prior year, with 36,000 more guests in attendance from prior year.
 - Total earned revenues are up significantly over budget and prior year. Through December we are reporting over \$1M more in earned revenues than last year.
 - Concession and retail commissions are reporting \$120,000 over budget and \$109,000 over prior year.
 - Miscellaneous revenues are running well above budget. Includes \$250,000 in insurance proceeds related to the burned tram incident and interest income.
 - Expenditures are \$266,000 below budget, primarily due to utility credits applied to the Zoo water bill. Credit now exhausted; utilities expected to normalize but remain under budget.
- December Balance Sheet:
 - LGIP's average interest rate for December was 4.09%
 - Should not see movement in the Unassigned Fund Balance now that the FY25 audit is nearly complete. Will discuss potential allocations in February's meeting.

Velasco motioned to approve the financials, Huggins seconded, m/c unanimous.

- Will file FY25 draft with SEC on February 1. Additional reporting complexity due to reporting on two bonds in the debt service fund. Finance Committee will review the draft prior to final issuance, with full Commission vote anticipated at the February meeting.

President & CEO Report:

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- New Chair (Darrell Hudson) & Vice Chair (Todd Cockrell) at Lexington County Council. Will present FY26 budget to council in February.
- Sam Johnson was elected to City Council At-Large position. Looking forward to working with him.
- We have a \$5M infrastructure request list prepared at the State level. State funding is uncertain; last year included significant cuts to earmarks statewide. Legislative engagement efforts are ongoing, including Legislative Night.
- Five new Society Board members appointed:
 - Bill Lamar – Senior Broker, NAI
 - Michelle Jones – Managing Director, Elliott Davis
 - Lauren Sawyer Foster – Sales Manager, Guild Mortgage
 - Andrew Baumgartner – Owner, Savage Craft
 - Cecilia Fournil – Principal, Vista Insurance (returning member)
- Board & Commission Social – February 26 at the Aquarium & Reptile Conservation Center

Chief Administrative Officer Report:

Chief Administrative Officer Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Dates and Reminders
 - **Free Fridays** in January and February for Lex/Rich County Residents
 - **January 20** – Town Hall
 - **January 26 – 30** – Directors Policy Conference
 - **February 19** – Commission Meeting
- Recapped Admin Appreciation Night, Leadership Holiday Breakfast, and Leadership Retreat

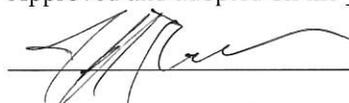
Chief Operating Officer Report:

Chief Operating Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Received two male Bennett’s wallabies, Gus and Danny
- Will receive another female Tammar wallaby in a few months
- Reviewed latest designs for new lion enclosure
- Conducted a venomous snake handling course and CIG interpretive course for SC State Parks
- AZA accreditation application is in process. Will provide periodic updates ahead of inspection later this year.
- Food & beverage RFP went out to bid; intend to award to SSA.
- Provided update on gift shop fire. Anticipate reopening by the 2nd week of February.
- Conservation outpost tunnel roof in the process of being replaced. Anticipate opening back up next week.
- Education Center construction update. Building will be done in spring.
- Shared projects timeline.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 19 day of January 2026.

 _____, Secretary