

**Riverbanks Park Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**16 March 2017**

**Attendance Report**

Commissioners Present: Mary Howard, Bob Davidson, Jan Stamps, Bud Tibshrary, Alana Williams, and Jim Smith

Commissioners Absent: Phil Bartlett

Staff Present: Satch Krantz, Tommy Stringfellow, Breta Rheney, Ed Diebold, John Davis

**Call to Order**

Chairwoman Howard called the meeting to order.

**Special Presentation**

Director of Animal Collections Ed Diebold and Curator of Mammals John Davis gave a PowerPoint presentation that outlined the status of elephants in AZA institutions. John noted that given the current ages of our three female elephants we will soon be in a position to alter the makeup of our herd. Given the fact there may be no female elephants available for the next 10 to 15 years we may be forced to switch to an all-male herd or another species (rhinos, hippos). There was considerable discussion about the future of elephants at Riverbanks and in the wild.

**Reading of the Minutes**

The February 2017 minutes were approved as distributed.

**Chief Finance Officer's Report**

CFO Rheney provided the following report:

Through February revenue exceeded expenses by \$588,623. This is \$633,752 better than budget and over \$360,332 better than the prior year. We are currently awaiting the final receipt from the Richland County Penny Tax Fund of \$73,580 for the 50/50 split of the unsuitable soil charge that was incurred with the bridge project. The remaining expense for the bridge project has been funded from current year surplus and is shown as the operating transfer of \$70,862. Our net surplus to date is \$517,761.

**Attendance**

Attendance is 101,300 over budget and more than 125,000 ahead of last year. January and February Free Friday attendance was slightly over 24,000. This is the highest Free Friday attendance since FY2010. Year-to-date total paid admission visits dropped to 37.7% and membership visits have remained steady at 55.5%. We ended February with 40,936 memberships. Pricing increases for some membership categories went into effect March 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Balance Sheet**

### ***Assets***

- We are in a strong cash position as we move into the busy spring season. We have transferred \$1.5 million of the \$1.7 million of operating support from the Riverbanks Society. We are also in the process of finalizing some of our approved capital projects. We will evaluate which projects need to be funded from Society and make the transfer in the next couple of months.

## **Revenue vs. Expense**

### ***Revenue***

- Revenue is \$851,857 ahead of budget and over \$1.1 million ahead of the prior fiscal year with admission revenue accounting as the biggest contributor. We continue to monitor the effect of paid attendance over membership attendance.
- SSA is benefiting from the increased attendance and their actual revenue is exceeding their budgeted revenue by \$193,138.
- Rides and attractions and classes and programs variances are a result of additional revenue and savings in personnel costs.

### ***Expenses***

- Administrative budget variance is made up of an unbudgeted existing position (IT), some employee break room expenses paid from the prior fiscal year fund balance and overages in consolidating expenses.
- Animal care has some departmental savings that help offset other departments with overages. The overage is mostly a result of increased spending by the hospital for supplies, medications and lab work related to several high-profile medical cases.
- Facility Management has overages in the Life Support Systems (LSS) department. This is due to unbudgeted spending for stocking of replacement parts and other supplies. This is the first full year of the LSS operations. Adjustments were made by Facility Management to move capital related expenses to the capital fund; thereby, improving their overall budget.
- Guest Services has savings in personnel cost, mostly in Public Safety and Grounds & Housekeeping.
- We continue to monitor the utility expense as we complete the first full year of Destination Riverbanks.

### ***Additional Comments***

- A budget revision is in the works to adjust for some revenue increases and expense overages.
- The FY2018 budget process is also in process.

Breta also noted that there will be significant increases next fiscal year in both the employer and employee portions of the state health insurance plan and the state retirement plan.

## **Chief Operating Officer's Report**

COO Stringfellow presented the following:

- **Food Truck Relocation** – Stringfellow reported that the newly acquired SSA food truck has been relocated to Waterfall Junction. The truck was delivered to the Zoo just prior to Boo at the Zoo and was used during Boo and Lights Before Christmas to serve specialty items. The truck will remain in Waterfall Junction through the summer to supplement the small snack bar with more substantial food items like hot dogs, hamburgers and fries.
- **Membership Update** – The Society now has over 41,000 household memberships, a record high. Stringfellow noted that members now account for approximately 55% of all daily visitors, higher than the ideal of 40% to 45%. He feels like memberships should level off around 43,000 before falling back below 40,000, once the excitement over Sea Lion Landing subsides.

## **Chief Executive Officer's Report**

CEO Krantz provided the following report:

- **Sea Lion Landing Update** – Krantz was pleased to report that Sea Lion Landing has reopened following the replacement of the broken window. He noted that the staff, architects, engineers and contractors are continuing to study some of the issues related to the life support system. It appears that there were errors made by the mechanical contractor, charged with installing the trickle tank system.
- **Lil Sprouts Splash Zone** – The renovation of the former “tadpole” pond into a toddler splash pad is complete and open. The new water feature has been renamed the Lil Sprouts Splash Zone and is a welcome addition to Waterfall Junction.
- **Rivermont Transfer** -- The transfer of Rivermont Drive and Wildlife Parkway from the State Highway System to the Zoo has been approved by the Federal Highway Administration. The next step will be to go before the SCDOT Commission for final approval. Due to the time required to prepare the Commission approval package, this will likely take place at the April 20, 2017 meeting. After that, we will need to prepare a quitclaim deed to the Zoo.
- **West Columbia Zoning** – Krantz reported that a routine request by the Garden staff to remove several pine trees along Mohawk Drive revealed that the entire Garden site is zoned residential, R4. This is most confusing in that the Garden site was rezoned approximately 17 years ago to allow the construction of Botanical Parkway and the Garden entrance. A West Columbia official informed our attorney that a new zoning ordinance had been adopted in 2004. We are continuing to investigate the issue and will report the results at a later date.
- **Greenway Construction** – Bids for the Lower Saluda River portion of the Three Rivers Greenway were opened last week and the low bid is within the amount budgeted by the Transportation Penny team. Krantz has requested a meeting with Mike Dawson of the River Alliance and the Transportation Penny Tax team to review the construction schedule, as well as the planned logistics to ensure that the Zoo's parking lot is not impacted.
- **TIF** – Krantz noted that he has received another Tax Increment Financing (TIF) notice, this time from the Town of Lexington. This is the second such notice in

the last two months, the first coming from Cayce. According to local media, the City of Columbia is considering two TIF initiatives. Krantz noted that each of these proposed TIFs could impact the Zoo's future tax revenues.

- **Bequests/Endowments** – A recently received, unexpected bequest has raised the issue of how such gifts should be handled. There was discussion among the Commission about establishing an endowment with these gifts. Krantz reported that he would seek advice and report back to the Commission at a later date.

### **Executive Session**

The Commission went into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter but no action was taken.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of April 2017.

Jan H. Stamps, Secretary