

**RIVERBANKS PARK COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
19 January 2017**

**Attendance Report**

Commissioners Present: Bob Davidson, Jan Stamps, Bud Tibshrary, Jim Smith, Alana Williams, and Phil Bartlett

Commissioners Absent: Mary Howard (out of town)

Staff Present: Satch Krantz, Tommy Stringfellow, Breta Rheney

Guests Present: None

**Call to Order**

Vice Chairman Tibshrary, substituting for Chairwoman Howard, called the meeting to order.

**Reading of the Minutes**

The December 2016 minutes were approved as distributed.

**CFO Report**

Chief Finance Officer Breta Rheney presented the following report, which represents the first six months of the fiscal year.

We are running a planned deficit of \$284,390, which is ahead of the actual budgeted deficit by over \$349,000 and prior year by over \$491,000. Highlights of the report include:

**Attendance**

Although attendance has dropped due to inclement weather over the past few weeks, the numbers remain strong; we are over 31,000 visitors ahead of budget and over 63,000 the same period last year. We had very good Boo at the Zoo and Lights Before Christmas attendance. The percentage of Admission Visitors (paid) has dropped from last month as we had a high attendance of Member Visitors for Lights. All memberships allow one free visit to Lights and the higher levels allow unlimited visits. Year-to-date total paid admission visits are 40.9% and membership visits are 55.4%.

**Balance Sheet**

***Assets***

- Our cash position is good. We have a little more Transportation Penny Tax money to draw down, as that project is almost closed.

***Unassigned Fund Balance***

- The adjustment is reflected to show an increase in the Operating Cushion to \$1.7m.

## **Revenue vs Expense**

### ***Revenue***

- Revenue is running over \$553,000 ahead of budget and over \$907,000 ahead of prior fiscal year, exclusive of the Society operating transfer difference.
- Admission revenue is slightly ahead of budget and more significantly ahead of prior year mostly due to the ticket price increase effective 7/1/16. The strong attendance has resulted in more concessionaire commission.
- Event increases from budget and prior year are mostly from Boo, at approximately \$95,000, and Lights, at \$79,000, respectively. Boo ticket prices were increased after the budget was prepared, resulting in more revenue than budgeted and as compared to the prior year. Additional expenses for the remaining fiscal year will reduce these numbers slightly.

### ***Expenses***

- Some departmental expense differences are due to timing of actual vs. budget.
- Animal care has incurred some higher than expected costs for medications and lab work.
- Facility Management includes the Facilities Maintenance and Life Support Systems (LSS) departments. Contracted expenses, safety supplies and tram repairs are over for Facilities Maintenance. Tools, small equipment and parts & supplies are over for LSS.
- Guest Services' overage is mainly due to personnel costs.

## **Chief Operating Officers Report**

Chief Operating Officer Stringfellow provided the following report:

- **Lights Before Christmas** – Stringfellow noted that final attendance numbers for the 2016 Lights Before Christmas promotion were slightly ahead of budget. As is typical, the four or five nights leading up to Christmas Eve were the most attended nights of the event. He also noted that the percentage of members attending the event was higher than usual and that offering free admission to members may need to be reevaluated.
- **Update on Attendance Trends** – Just like Lights Before Christmas, the percentage of members attending the Zoo and Garden on a daily basis continues to rise. However, the recently approved increase in membership dues combined with a significant increase in the annual contribution to the operating budget should offset any impact on admissions revenue.

## **President and CEO Report**

President and CEO Krantz provided the following report:

- **Sea Lion Exhibit Update** – Krantz reported that we are close to replacing the broken sea lion glass window with acrylic. We will also take this opportunity to replace the sole remaining unbroken glass window with acrylic. According to the

last timeline provided by Rodgers, the acrylic will arrive on or around January 30<sup>th</sup> and the entire replacement could take 6 to 8 weeks: one week of prep, one week to install, two to three weeks of cure time and another 10 days to fill the pool and achieve optimum water quality.

- **New Waterfall Junction Splash Pad** – Work continues on the new toddler splash pad at Waterfall Junction. Earlier today work crews poured the concrete pad. This means that all remaining work will not be impacted by inclement weather. Krantz predicted that the conversion will be complete before March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **West Columbia TIF** – The Zoo has received legal notice that the City of West Columbia has made application to extend the time limit of a relatively small Tax Increment Finance district within City limits. The Commission must receive notice of any such changes in the TIF due to the fact that future tax collections within the TIF district could impact the Zoo's Lexington County revenue. Krantz noted that he spoke with attorney Theo DuBose about this, and DuBose said any such impact would be negligible. Krantz also noted that *The State* newspaper recently reported the City of Columbia is considering the creation of up to three new TIF districts and cautioned that this could have more of an impact on Zoo tax revenues collected in Richland County.
- **Elephant Death** – Krantz briefly reviewed the facts surrounding the December death of Petunia, Riverbanks' 43-year-old, female, African elephant. Petunia was humanely euthanized on the afternoon of Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup> after she was found lying down in her stall that morning. She was unable to stand, and early indications suggest she suffered from severe arthritis in her back legs. Petunia was donated to Riverbanks, along with her companion Robin, by Disney's Animal Kingdom. Her death leaves Riverbanks with three elephants, one of whom is 46 years old, several years beyond her life expectancy. Upon that elephant's death Riverbanks will no longer be in compliance with the AZA's elephant standards which call for a minimum herd size of three. Krantz noted that he has asked Ed Diebold and John Davis to appear at the February meeting to explain the future of elephants at Riverbanks.
- **Meeting Host** – Riverbanks is playing host to two important meetings during the month of January.
  1. Riverbanks hosted the AZA Upper South Regional Educators Conference on January 11 - 13. Sixty-three individuals from 14 southeastern AZA zoos and aquariums, including representatives from Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and South Carolina attended the event. Over the two-and-a-half day meeting, individuals had a chance to network, discuss best practices and programming needs, obtain updates and hear from guest speakers. Break-out and brainstorming sessions centered on topics pertaining to volunteers, distance learning, climate change, nature play and visitor evaluations.
  2. On January 18<sup>th</sup> Riverbanks hosted the inaugural meeting of a newly formed horticulture group, the South Carolina Plant Conservation Alliance. Members of the SCPCA represent over 20 different groups and agencies from around the state including universities, government agencies and plant societies. The purpose of the SCPCA is to protect and conserve 22 federally listed plant species as well as 34 at-risk plant species found in South Carolina. Nine of the

22 species only occur in two states with SC being one of them. The goals of the first meeting were to solidify a mission statement, identify high priority species and determine potential project leaders for those high priority species.

### **Executive Session**

An executive session was held to discuss a personnel issue. Following Executive Session, Stamps moved, Bartlett seconded, m/c unanimous to engage the executive search firm of Isaacson Miller in order to conduct a search for the replacement of retiring President & CEO Krantz.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 16 day of February 2017.

Jan H. Stamps, Secretary