

Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
19 October 2017

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Bob Davidson, Bud Tibshrary, Alana Williams, Phil Bartlett, and Mike Velasco

Commissioners Absent: Mary Howard, Jan Stamps

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Breta Rheney, Katie McCoy, Ed Diebold, John Davis

Special Presentation

Riverbanks' Curator of Mammals, John Davis, and Chief Life Sciences Officer, Ed Diebold, updated the Commission on the status of elephants at Riverbanks Zoo and Garden. Davis shared a history of elephants at Riverbanks, as well as challenges that the elephant population in zoos is currently facing. He presented a few potential exhibit plans and options for continuing to house elephants at Riverbanks.

Call to Order

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

Reading of the Minutes

The September 2017 minutes were approved as distributed.

Committee Appointments

Vice Chairman Tibshrary appointed Commissioners Davidson and Velasco to the finance committee. He also appointed himself and Commissioner Williams to the audit committee.

Tibshrary moved, Bartlett seconded, m/c unanimous to accept committee appointments.

Chief Finance Officer's Report

CFO Breta Rheney provided the following report:

Attendance

Riverbanks completed the first quarter of fiscal year 2018 with 325,673 visitors. With first quarter attendance budgeted at 287,300 and prior year actual at 298,906, Riverbanks is currently 38,373 visitors ahead of budget and 26,767 ahead of prior year. Member visits for the quarter were 53.8%, slightly higher than budget but less than the prior year.

Balance Sheet

Assets

- Cash reserves are being used to help fund operations as we transition into our routinely slower months.
- A little over one million dollars is available to spend on the Society-funded capital projects.

Revenue and Departmental Expense

Revenue

- Net revenues increased over \$75,000 from last month, for a total year-to-date of \$3,425,469.
 - This is a \$352,157 increase over budget and \$370,322 increase over prior year, excluding Society operating variance.
- Largest increases are:
 - *Budget* – General Admission Fees; Rides and Attractions, net; Classes and Programs, net
 - *Prior year* – General Admission Fees; Rides and Attractions, net; Concessionaire and Retail Commissions

Departmental Expense – Budget

- Departmental expenses are less than budgeted, creating a positive variance of \$157,902, mostly as a result of overall personnel savings. The budget reflects fully funded permanent full-time & part-time positions.
- Of the \$157,902 savings in the budget from departmental expenses, approximately \$162,000 relates to salaries and benefits.
- Other operational expenses are slightly over budget by approximately \$4,700.

Departmental Expense – Prior

- Departmental expenses exceed prior year by \$154,970.
- Of the additional expenses, approximately 46% relates to salaries and benefits and is mostly from the approved budget changes of merit and pay adjustments, along with some new positions. The employer retirement match increase of 2% went into effect 7/1/2017.
- Other operating expenses increased 54%.
- Increases in other operating expenses are:
 - *Administrative* – IT expenses; timing differences; and from the 25% increase in projected spending
 - *Marketing and Public Relations* – advertising and dues and subscriptions; timing differences; overall budget increase for other operating expenses is 7%
 - *Botanical, Zoo and Garden* – increased tree removal expenses and non-capital expenses, along with various overall additional increases due to additional projects
- Utilities (electricity, gas, water, sewer & fuel) are holding steady with prior year.

Chief Operating Officer's Report

COO report was provided by Tommy Stringfellow:

- The ZOOfare fundraiser was successful this year. The event generated \$40,410 in ticket revenue, \$3,650 in Wild Wall revenue, and \$42,800 in combined silent and live auction revenue. About 700 guests attended. This was the first time in several years that the auctions took place in the main entry plaza versus Safari Camp. This change was well received with great reviews.
- Boo at the Zoo starts tomorrow evening. The events team has introduced a few new activities this year. The projected, budgeted attendance is 31,500.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

President and CEO Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Riverbanks participates in a head start program for endangered gopher tortoises and endangered green sea turtles. Recently, the herpetology department released 27 gopher tortoises into the wild in collaboration with South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Savannah River Ecology Lab, Longleaf Alliance, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Also, SCDNR and aquarium staff released a green sea turtle back into the wild. WIS TV covered the sea turtle story in a "Beyond the Banks" segment.
- Stringfellow distributed a document pertaining to the first and second quarter action plans.
- Stringfellow introduced Executive Assistant Katie McCoy.
- The discovery phase of the potential elephant exhibit modifications was presented today. Stringfellow will continue to update the group as plans progress and more information is available.
- John Davis mentioned in his presentation that there are proposed updates to the meerkat exhibit as well. Stringfellow explained that updating and expanding their exhibit and barn could allow Riverbanks to house a much larger mob of meerkats, as well as allow for the possibility of breeding, which is not feasible given the current setup.
- Stringfellow shared the recently updated organizational structure. The Commission received an updated organizational chart and staff directory.
- Stringfellow provided an update on the COO search. The first candidate was on site earlier this week. No decisions have been made as of yet.
- Stringfellow shared one of his initiatives to continue working and meeting with political allies. He met recently with Mayor Benjamin and plans to arrange meetings with the chairs of Lexington and Richland County Councils as well.
- Stringfellow shared the prospect of sourcing a master plan and strategic business plan. He will look into various firms to assist in the strategic planning process and will share the options at an upcoming Commission meeting.

- The Senior Leadership Summit on November 1st will include the chief officers and directors to look at strengths, weaknesses, and mission statement. The summit will be a full day, off site workshop. The Commissioners are invited to drop in at any point during the day.

Executive Session

The group did not enter into executive session.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 16th day of November, 2017.

Jan H. Stamps, Secretary