MINUTES
BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS
OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES
VIRTUAL MEETING*
TUESDAY, April 21, 2020 – 10:00 AM

* IN CONFORMITY WITH THE GOVERNOR’S EXECUTIVE ORDER N-29-20 (MARCH 17, 2020) AND DUE TO CONCERNS OVER COVID-19, THIS BOARD MEETING WAS HELD ENTIRELY TELEPHONICALLY VIA GOOGLE MEET.

“Creating dynamic experiences to connect people and animals”

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Karen Winnick
Margot Armbruster
Daryl Smith
Christopher Hopkins
Bernardo Silva

EX OFFICIO MEMBER PRESENT
Richard Lichtenstein

COMMISSION STAFF
Denise Verret
Denise Tamura

ZOO GENERAL COUNSEL
Steve Houchin

AGENDA ITEM 1
CALL TO ORDER
Commission President Winnick called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

AGENDA ITEM 2
APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 18, 2020
Commission President Winnick moved to approve February 18, 2020 minutes. Commission Vice President Silva so moved, Commissioner Smith seconded and the motion passed.

AGENDA ITEM 3
GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT
No Comments

LOBBING NOTICE
No Comments

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
No Comments

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Accredited by the American Association of Museums
Member of the California Association of Zoos and Aquariums
AGENDA ITEM 4
ZOO DIRECTOR’S UPDATE ON ZOO OPERATIONS AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Denise Verret, Zoo Director, reported the Zoo has been closed since March 13, 2020 due to the Mayor’s Executive “Safer at Home” Order as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. Essential Zoo staff have been reporting to work and approximately 60 employees are telecommuting. Some employees have been placed on leave due to school closures or are vulnerable. Some employees in Admissions and Learning & Engagement divisions have been reassigned to work in the City’s Disaster Service Worker program. Animals are being kept on routine and continue to receive exceptional care. The Zoo has been working to secure PPE equipment and disinfectant supplies for staff. Earlier this month, the Zoo also implemented daily temperature checks for employees reporting to work and all employees are required to wear face coverings.

The Zoo continues to engage our visitors through the website and social media posts.

It is difficult to determine the fiscal impact this closure will have on the Zoo. To date, the Zoo has lost approximately $4.2M and anticipates $8.3M deficit by the end of the fiscal year. The Zoo has cash reserves and the City has reported they will cover the $1M anticipated deficit.

A task force of City, GLAZA and SSA staff are convening weekly to develop a reopening plan when it is appropriate following State, County and City guidelines. It is difficult to determine what that means with so much uncertainty, but the task force is researching all scenarios. Staff has also been speaking with global colleagues about what guidelines they are following before their facilities open. Operational changes such as online ticketing only, timed visits, and social distancing enforcement, are just some of the options being explored.

Ms. Verret continued noting that the Mayor released his proposed 2020/21 budget yesterday. It provides funding for anticipated revenue loss while the Zoo complies with Safer at Home order extending the closure. It was a difficult budget to formulate due to the uncertainty of this situation.

Overall, the Zoo’s response has been exemplary under these strenuous circumstances. Zoo staff have remained diligent and professional during this time.

Commission Vice President Silva inquired about the 26 furlough days the Mayor mentioned as part of the proposed budget and what other items are impacted. Ms. Verret noted that it is unclear how furloughs will affect the Zoo, but the impact is different based on being open or closed. Staff is waiting for further guidance from the City. Other work, such as the EIR vision plan project, continues to progress and is on pace to be completed by Fall 2020.

Commission President Winnick inquired if staff is splitting their schedules to minimize exposure. Ms. Verret responded staff is working their normal shifts, but this is being considered and will be discussed with the appropriate unions.
AGENDA ITEM 5
INTRODUCTION OF DR. DOMINIQUE KELLER
Ms. Verret provided a brief introduction of Dr. Keller and the search process for the Chief Veterinarian position. Dr. Keller provided some background and noted how welcome the Zoo family has been. She has been acquainting herself with staff and the facility. She has stressed to her staff that we are here for the animals. She will also be exploring how the Zoo can play a larger role in veterinary research and conservation. Appreciates the Medical Advisory Board members available to assist us in providing the best care possible for our collection. Believes in “One Health” approach and looks forward to expanding this philosophy further.

AGENDA ITEM 6
GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS
A. Animal Transactions
Beth Schaefer, General Curator, noted that several animal transactions are on hold due to COVID-19 pandemic emergency. Several pending animal transactions were highlighted:
- Male African crowned eagle transferring to private falconer
- 2 male Francois langurs will be transferred out of the collection
- Receiving two female Tasmanian devils
- Other animal collection highlights include:
  - Mandrill, Speke’s gazelle and white fronted marmoset births
  - Seventeen California condor eggs have been laid; expecting 8 chicks
  - Thirty egg masses of mountain yellow-legged frogs have been laid which could result in 4,000+ tadpoles
  - A third male gorilla has been added to the bachelor group and they are getting along well
  - Introductions for two female chimpanzees has gone well

Commission President Winnick inquired about breeding bettongs. Ms. Schaefer replied that the SSP is analyzing the population so we are waiting for their recommendations, but are eager to start breeding them.

B. GLAZA Update
GLAZA President, Tom Jacobson, provided the following update on GLAZA:
- Staff have been telecommuting during the Zoo’s closure
- Applied for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan which has been approved so funding is anticipated later this week
- Overall expenditures have been reduced and will continue through the end of the fiscal years so cash flow will not be negatively affected
- The Zoo’s revenue and transfers were on target with projections through February
- Staff has been working on engaging the community through the website and social media
- ZooScape newsletter is being distributed weekly to keep members informed of status
- Spring appeal has been going well
- Restricted fundraising has slowed, but staff continues to submit various grant proposals
- This year’s Beastly Ball will be held virtually. Information will be communicated several ways and updated information can be found at beastlyball.lazoo.org. Honorees will be recognized next year. Anticipate meeting revenue projections
- The Board will be reviewing the City’s proposed 2020/21 budget to ensure GLAZA’s budget is complementary; should be approved in June
C. **Zoo Director Reports**

Denise Verret, Zoo Director, commented that during this unprecedented time, it has been inspiring to see all Zoo staff members working through this new normal and adhering to the guidelines. As staff works diligently, we are also reminded to spend time outdoors and nature to practice self care.

Vice President Silva asked about the Zoo’s portion of the proposed budget. Ms. Verret noted that the current fiscal year budgeted for $25.8M while next year’s budget is approximately $22.7M which is a $3.1M reduction mostly from salary savings and furlough program. There will be a presentation on 2020/21 Budget at a future Commission meeting.

Vice President Silva inquired how other AZA facilities are coping with the closure. Ms. Verret reported she and other AZA Board members meet weekly to discuss the current status, the effects of the closure on facilities and how the AZA can help those that need assistance. Several organizations have applied for stimulus and PPP funding. AZA is also working closely with lobbyists to ensure zoos and aquariums are included in funding proposals.

**AGENDA ITEM 7**  
**OLD BUSINESS**  
None

**AGENDA ITEM 8**  
**ADJOURNMENT**  
There being no more business to come before, President Winnick motioned to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Vice President Silva so moved and Commissioner Smith seconded; the meeting was adjourned at 10:56 AM.

ATTEST:

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PRESIDENT  
SECRETARY