MINUTES
BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS
OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES
VIRTUAL MEETING*
TUESDAY, June 16, 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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Eric Garcetti
Mayor

David E. Ryu
Council Member
4th District

Zoo Commissioners
Karen B. Winnick
President
Bernardo Silva
Vice President
Margot Armbruster
Christopher Hopkins
Daryl Smith
Richard Lichtenstein
ex officio member

Denise M. Verret
Chief Executive Officer & Zoo Director

MEMBERS PRESENT
Karen Winnick
Margot Armbruster
Daryl Smith
Christopher Hopkins
Bernardo Silva

VISITORS
No response

EX OFFICIO MEMBER PRESENT
Richard Lichtenstein

COMMISSION STAFF
Denise Verret
Denise Tamura

MEDIA
No response

ZOO GENERAL COUNSEL
Steve Houchin

AGENDA ITEM 1
CALL TO ORDER
Commission President Winnick called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM.

AGENDA ITEM 2
APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF MAY 19, 2020
Commission President Winnick moved to approve April 21, 2020 minutes. Commission Vice President Silva so moved, Commissioner Smith seconded, and the motion passed.

AGENDA ITEM 3
GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT
No Comments

LOBBYING NOTICE
No Comments

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
No Comments
AGENDA ITEM 4
TAIPR CONSERVATION VETERINARY FIELD STUDY PROJECT PRESENTATION
Dr. Jordan Davis-Powell, Zoo Veterinarian, provided a summary of her field work of mountain tapirs in Ecuador. Three species of tapir are critically endangered, and one is vulnerable. There are less than 2,500 mountain tapirs in the wild and only nine in captivity; of those nine, six are currently here at the Zoo.

Participated in the following field work during the study:
- Tracking wild mountain tapirs
- Performing veterinary exams
- Educating community on value of tapirs
- Planning of future conservation efforts

Dr. Davis-Powell thanked Zoo & GLAZA staff as well as the Stone Foundation Veterinarian Advanced Field Studies program to allow her participation in this important field work. Commission President Winnick inquired about diseases found in the wild population if they are also found in captive animals. Dr. Davis-Powell noted diseases that affect tapirs in the wild have not been seen in captive populations, but captive populations have had iron issues not seen in wild populations.

AGENDA ITEM 5
GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS
A. Animal Updates
Beth Schaefer, General Curator, noted that several animal transactions continue to be on hold due to COVID-19 pandemic emergency. Recent animal highlights include:

- Several reptiles will be transferred to Knoxville Zoo as well as Fort Worth Zoo
- Male Von der Decken's hornbill will be transferred to Henry Vilas Zoo
- Births/hatchlings include California condors, Chinese goral, Eastern bongo, crested capuchin, red-billed blue magpies, Southern pudu, rock doves and speckled mousebirds

B. GLAZA Update
Tom Jacobson, GLAZA President, provided the following update on GLAZA:
- Received funding through Beastly Ball fundraiser to purchase portable ultrasound
- Beastly Ball netted approximately $1.05M which exceeded expectations
- Membership has decreased to approximately 42,000 households, but it is anticipated this will increase once the Zoo is reopened. Zoo has one of the largest membership bases of local organizations
- Although attendance revenue has been eliminated due to closure, other revenue sources remain at or slightly above projections for year
- Have been interviewing firms to discuss development of a feasibility study for the vision plan campaign. Checking references for the final two candidates and will make a selection soon

C. Zoo Director Reports
Denise Verret, Zoo Director, provided an update on the Zoo’s operation and response to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency that began in March. The Zoo continues to remain closed and essential workers are reporting to work. The animals continue to do well.
Late last week, the State and County provided guidelines for zoos and aquariums to reopen. The Zoo has been developing our final reopening plan and are awaiting final approval from Mayor’s office which is expected later this month. The changes necessary will address the guidelines and protocols to reopen the Zoo in a safe manner for our guests, staff and animals. Some of these changes include capacity limitations, social distancing measures, signage, timed ticketed entries and closing high traffic or enclosed areas such as the Papiano PlayPark and Manckiewicz Carousel. Also working on obtaining appropriate sanitary and disinfectant supplies such as hand sanitizing stations throughout the Zoo. There is not a reopening date, but staff is working towards some time in July.

Ms. Verret informed the Commission she was appointed to serve as a Board Member of the Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education Center (GRACE) which is a conservation project located in the Democratic Republic of the Congo committed to rescuing and saving the Grauer’s gorilla. The Los Angeles Zoo has supported GRACE through conservation grants and Beth Schaefer is an Animal Care and Welfare Advisor CoChair for GRACE.

Ms. Verret continued her report discussing the recent statement issued by the Zoo. As a City Department and Community Resource, this statement about social and racial justice and inclusion and equity was distributed to staff, members and shared on the Zoo’s website. The Zoo will continue to investigate how we can be part of the solution and will be working to determine how the Zoo can engage the black community more and how the Zoo can elevate the black community.

There was discussion about how the Zoo can expand on current programs and the importance of accessibility to the black community and other people of color. It will be necessary to talk and engage with members of the black community about how they would like to utilize the Zoo and introduce the black community to opportunities that the Zoo has to offer as an educational facility and career possibilities. Ms. Verret concluded that the Zoo is reimaging how to engage with school children and families in different ways than previously due to the new normal of living with COVID-19.

Vice President Silva inquired about the status of the EIR for the Vision Plan. Ms. Verret noted progress continues and there will be a draft project description soon to share and completion is expected in the fall, so it remains on schedule.

AGENDA ITEM 6
OLD BUSINESS
None

AGENDA ITEM 7
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 & Armbruster seconded; the meeting was adjourned at 10:43AM.

ATTEST:

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PRESIDENT                          SECRETARY