MINUTES
BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS
OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES
VIRTUAL MEETING*
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 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 ZOOM.

“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

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 SEPTEMBER 22, 2020
Commission President Winnick moved to approve September 22, 2020 minutes. Commissioner Smith so moved, Vice President Silva seconded, and the motion passed.

AGENDA ITEM 3
GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT
No Comments

LOBBying NOTICE
No Comments

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
No Comments
AGENDA ITEM 4
LOS ANGELES ZOO FIRE PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM
Rick Thorstensen, the Zoo’s first Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC), introduced himself to the Commission and gave some background on his City and Naval service. As the EMC, Mr. Thorstensen is in charge of creating comprehensive emergency plans for the Zoo Department. Today’s presentation is solely about the Zoo’s Fire Preparedness Plan as it relates to the Department, Beth Schaefer, General Curator, will discuss the specific Fire Emergency plan for Animal Care and Health. Components of the overall Plan are:

- Ensure safe operating procedures for emergency – staff training, proper equipment, emergency drills, and effective coordination with other agencies
- The plan is evaluated and maintained by the Zoo’s Emergency Readiness Team
- Annual brush clearance
- Over 300 fire extinguishers at the Zoo are maintained in full working order
- Fire alarm system monitored by LAPD; will notify Zoo Management and LAFD if activated. If there is a fire that is too large for Zoo staff, LAFD will be the managing agency and set up a Command Post at the Zoo.

General Curator, Beth Schaefer discussed the fire plans for Animal Care and Health. This plan was enacted in 2018 when there was a fire in Griffith Park that reached the perimeter of the Zoo. Some specifics from the plan include:

- Moving animals in perimeter exhibits to interior Zoo space
- Evacuating vulnerable species to the parking lot or other areas of the Zoo
- Some species have exhibits where they are able to shelter in place and sprinklers within exhibits are turned on
- There are enough crates on grounds to move all animals needed. Separately, the California condors, which are managed by the Federal Government each have their own individual crates

Commission President Winnick asked if visitors were present during the 2018 fire. Ms. Schaefer noted the fire started before the Zoo was open, but noted in the Zoo’s overall plan there are specific evacuation routes for visitors and staff. President Winnick asked about the task of getting animals moved and crated. Ms. Schaefer stated that is when all divisions of the Zoo pitch in, from Construction helping move large crates to Learning and Engagement staff helping move/observe smaller animals.

AGENDA ITEM 5
GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS
A. Animal Updates
Beth Schaefer, General Curator, gave the following transaction updates:

- Various loans of our animals that are located at other zoos
- Incoming female hornbill for possible breeding
- Incoming male echidna for possible breeding
- Recently born Francois’ langur and ocelot are out on exhibit
- Male Masai giraffe born is shy but has access to his exhibit
- Two female Peninsular pronghorns are going to San Diego Safari Park to create more space for breeding
B. GLAZA Update

GLAZA President Tom Jacobson gave the following update:

- Restricted fundraising is at 14% of the yearly goal for current year
- Angela Collier Gardens and Conservation continue to be the fundraising priorities; expecting the Conservation Strategic Plan to be completed early next year which will help with fundraising
- Currently have over 51,000 households with Memberships, but continue to have customer service issues as the Zoo can meet Members demands to visit due to capacity limits
- Held first of three “Drive-In Nights at the Zoo”. Friday had 922 in attendance, Saturday had 1,000, and Sunday had 630

President Winnick asked how much revenue the movie nights brought in; Mr. Jacobson responded $100,000, but that the overhead for the event was high so he didn't anticipate seeing much of a net profit from this first weekend.

C. Zoo Director Update

Zoo Director, Denise Verret noted that the Zoo reopened in August we’ve had over 67,000 visitors. The Zoo will increase visitor capacity beginning November 1. Director Verret discussed results from the visitor exit survey which has received over 3,000 responses; respondents feel safe at the Zoo and would recommend the experience to family and friends. Overall visitor response has been very positive.

Beginning this year, the Zoo will be closed on Thanksgiving as well as Christmas. Director Verret explained there is not considerable revenue loss for that one additional day closure and this is in line with other cultural institutions who are giving employees Thanksgiving off to enjoy as they wish.

Learning and Engagement division continue to work with LAUSD to assist with virtual learning having held their first teacher workshop. They will continue to work with teachers to assess their needs for class engagement and education.

Vice President Silva asked if the Zoo Director had received any further instructions or information regarding the City’s layoffs. Director Verret noted there has been no discussion beyond the Mayor’s letter announcing layoffs could be one of the steps used to possibly balance the current fiscal year budget or a tool for next fiscal year’s budgetary restraints. For the current fiscal year, employees will take two unpaid holidays and begin furloughs in January 2021.

Ex-Officio Member Lichtenstein stated some time ago the Zoo had discussed hosting a day to honor firefighters and wanted to know if that had happened. Director Verret noted that was discussed some time ago but nothing was ever planned. Mr. Lichtenstein noted if the discussion is picked back up he’d like to be part of the planning.

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; Vice President Silva so moved and Commissioner Smith seconded; the meeting was adjourned at 10:44 AM.

ATTEST:

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PRESIDENT                                                              SECRETARY