MINUTES
BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS
OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES
VIRTUAL MEETING*
TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2021, – 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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MEMBERS PRESENT
Karen Winnick
Daryl Smith
Bernardo Silva
Christopher Hopkins
Margot Armbruster

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 DECEMBER 22, 2020
Commission President Winnick moved to approve December 22, 2020 minutes. Vice
President Silva so moved, Commissioner Armbruster seconded, and the motion passed.

AGENDA ITEM 3
GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT
No Comments

LOBBYING NOTICE
No Comments

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
No Comments

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AGENDA ITEM 4
ORNATO GRANT RECIPIENT PRESENTATION – African Gray Parrots at Limbe Conservation Center

Animal Keeper, Kristen Marshall, one of the 2019 Ornato Grant recipients, traveled to the Republic of Cameroon to work with African gray parrots at the Limbe Wildlife Center (LWC). The LWC is the only center that provides rehabilitation and release of this species of bird, even though their primary focus is primates. Prior to her travel to Cameroon in October 2019, Ms. Marshall reviewed LWC plans for a new aviary which started construction before her arrival to the facility and she was able to assist with finishing this aviary while she was there.

Prior to the completion of this new much larger space, birds were housed in small quarantine pens that did not allow for free flight. As an experienced avian keeper, Ms. Marshall assisted with gathering browse and perching for the aviary. Once the aviary was completed, the LWC veterinary team assessed each bird before relocating them to the new space. The new aviary is much larger and allows the birds to rehabilitate and relearn necessary behaviors prior to release back into the wild. Within 48 hours of release into the new aviary, the birds could be seen perching and getting accustomed to their new surroundings.

Ms. Marshall also provided medical supplies donated by the Los Angeles Zoo and created a husbandry manual for use by the center to aid in their rehabilitation efforts. Ms. Marshall thanked Mr. Ornato for sponsoring these grants and thanked the LA Zoo for giving her this opportunity.

AGENDA ITEM 5
PRESENTATION – LOS ANGELES ZOO CONSERVATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Dr. Jake Owens, Director of Conservation, provided an overview of the Zoo’s Conservation Strategic Plan (CSP). Dr. Owens explained the 6th Mass Extinction the Earth is currently experiencing. In 2020, at least 100 species were determined to be extinct. Humans are the driving force behind this extinction and global social inequity is a factor as well. Utilizing the current COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Owens highlighted the issues within illegal wildlife trafficking.

Proof that conservation efforts are working were noted by data from 1993-2020 that recognized 30-50 bird species and 9-23 mammals have been saved from extinction due to collaborative conservation work. Dr. Owens discussed the vital role zoos play in conservation. Zoos are the third largest funding source for conservation partners as well as being unique facilities with staff who have specific species husbandry skills that can be utilized all over the world.

The CSP will cover species management, capacity building, and outreach and education as well as the Zoo’s conservation efforts with CA condors, mountain yellow legged frogs, and peninsular pronghorn species. There is a need for more funding as we build out capacity and continue working with our 30 partners from around the world. Education will continue and grow through community outreach and partnerships that will focus on conservation, equity, and inclusion. Dr. Owens highlighted the Zoo’s work with the LAUSD Migrant Student program.

The Zoo has hired Zoo Advisors to help complete the CSP. Strategic goals include: Leadership. Community, Culture, Advocacy, Brand, and Growth. The CSP focus will be: Illegal Wildlife Trade, CA Conservation, Human - Wildlife Coexist, Evidence Based Conservation, Social and Environmental Justice, and Translocation, Rehabilitation, and Release. This work will rely on cooperative efforts with various conservation partners.

Dr. Owens noted that the Zoo itself is in its own bio-diverse area, Griffith Park. The Zoo has started a conservation committee that any staff member may participate in as well as providing
conservation training for all staff to gain a better understanding. The plan will be announced on April 22, 2021 in connection with Earth Day.

AGENDA ITEM 6
GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

A. Animal Updates
Beth Schaefer, Director of Animal Programs, gave the following transaction updates:
● Young male sifaka transferring to San Diego
● Elderly male breeding Komodo dragon passed away; will bring back male from North Carolina for exhibit and possible breeding
● Received sunburst diving beetles
● Spectacled owl chick in nest box; not sexed yet

B. GLAZA Update
Tom Jacobson, GLAZA President, gave the following update:
● Fundraising exceed goals for December
● 20% drop in Membership; down to 41,000 households
● Good year philanthropically with $1.6 million raised
● Raised $30,000 for the naming of the California condor chick
● Preparing for this year’s virtual Beastly Ball in June
● Development is already working on fundraising for the CSP

C. Zoo Director Update
Zoo Director Denise Verret noted the Zoo continues to be closed due the pandemic and the Governor’s Regional Stay at Home Order. The Southern CA Region is still 0% ICU capacity and the region cannot move out of restrictions until there is projected 15% ICU capacity for four weeks out. Currently only essential staff are on-site, all other staff are telecommuting until further notice.

● The Mayor’s office will be providing the Zoo with two paid internships in Conservation. These interns will assist Dr. Owens with local community outreach and Griffith Park specific projects.
● BOE held its virtual public meeting for the Zoo’s Draft EIR last week. 55 people attended. Public comments are allowed through February 15.
● Update to current fiscal year budget - the City and Unions have reached a tentative agreement to forgo furloughs and layoffs for the current fiscal year in return for staff deferring pay raises for two fiscal years. Mrs. Verret will update the Commission if there are any other budgetary changes.
● Dr. Barbara Natterson-Horowitz asked Dr. Dominique Keller to co-teach the new UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine course for second year medical students entitled “Zoobiquity: The Animal Nature of Human Medicine. This opportunity strengthens the Zoo’s position and role in the university and medical school community.
● Mrs. Verret expressed her sadness at the passing of former Councilman and forever Zoo friend, Tom LaBonge.

President Winnick asked if Dr. Keller and the new Conservation interns could make presentations at future meetings.
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; Vice President Silva so moved and Commissioner Hopkins seconded; the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 AM.

ATTEST:

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PRESIDENT                                                              SECRETARY