

Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
17 September 2020

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present (via conference call): Bob Davidson, Alana Williams, Mike Velasco, Jan Stamps, Deneen Shockley, Mary Howard

Commissioners Absent: Phil Bartlett

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Christie Vondrak, Lochlan Wooten, Katie Eaton

Call to Order

Chairman Davidson called the meeting to order.

Reading of the Minutes

The August 20, 2020 commission minutes were approved as distributed.

Howard motioned to approve the minutes, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous.

Chairman's Remarks

Davidson commends staff for doing their best to keep expenses notably down. He extends his appreciation to the staff for their continued hard work.

President & Chief Executive Officer's Report

President and CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- August Financials:
 - Total membership is down slightly, and still artificially inflated due to membership extensions from covid closure. Down about \$334,063 in membership revenue
 - Attendance is down about 60,000 in attendance to date
 - Per cap-admission is tracking slightly above budget at \$18.97
 - Staff are working hard to keep expenses as low as possible without sacrificing any animal welfare.
 - Operating reserves- of \$2 million, we have spent close to half
 - Velasco motion to approve financials, Stamps second, m/c unanimous
- Trends- The months of July and August were hotter than normal and in combination with the enforced facemasks, this led to lower attendance in the summer months. However, with the improved temperatures, covid cases trending down, and the opening of rhino exhibit, we have seen improvement in attendance numbers. Also got permission to go from 30-50% cap on attendance which gives us the ability to allow more guests in.
- Federal funds will not be approved until after the election. Will not expect much movement on those funds until the beginning of the new year
- On the state level, the general assembly is back in session and they will begin allocating the state dollars, hopefully in the next couple of weeks.
- On the county level, Riverbanks has requested that the counties advance the money collected. Richland County has voted and approved to do so. Stringfellow is working with Administrator Brown to determine the level of funds that can be advanced.

Stringfellow will follow up with Lexington County, in hopes that Riverbanks can get on the September 22nd agenda to open the same discussion with them.

- Finance Committee Selection- As Davidson has moved into the chairman position, there is a need to go ahead and replace his position on the finance committee. Chairman Davidson has appointed Williams on to the Finance Committee.
- Emeritus Discussion- Chairman Davidson appointed Howard, Stamps and Bartlett to a committee to discuss. Bartlett will serve as committee chair. They will bring a recommendation to the next meeting.

Chief Administrative Officer's Report:

CAO Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Vondrak is happy to report that there are currently no positive or pending covid cases in staff, volunteer or interns.
- Our Safety Manager has started a new series of emails called "Self-Care Seconds" that focus on mental health and wellbeing reminders, tips, and resources for our staff
- With schooling starting back, we are navigating working parents who are balancing school and work. Managers are encouraged to offer options and flexibility on a temporary basis. The education department's ZooCare has been a helpful resource for a handful of families who have been participating.
- As positions become open, we are taking the opportunity to assess positions to ensure efficiency and best practices. Last week worked with the horticulture departments to streamline the horticulture departments (botanical and habitat) into one cohesive team. The department has been reorganized to have one director and manager and supervisor roles have been redistributed. This new organization allows for more succession and opportunities for their team.
- We are continuing to hold open positions and redistribute duties as needed. The HR assistant position opened a couple of months ago and we have held the spot and redistributed duties to Katie Eaton.
- An anonymous donor reached out to Christie to request to host a tailgate style parking lot party for staff for a morale boost. Vondrak would love to extend the opportunity to allow Commission to donate as well. We will supply food, music, and a time for staff to hang out together during a time that we have not been able to do much for our staff.

Chief Operating Officer's Report

COO Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- The rhinos made quick work of the grass in their exhibit and we will be seeding with something different. The male rhino will be arriving in the next month or so and would likely be on exhibit in early December after he has cleared his quarantine.
- Looking closely at attendance numbers and how many guests we can get into the park safely and how to manage timed ticketing
- Still no indoor dining open on site, but we have opened additional locations on the weekend to allow for more dining options
- Working on renovations for aquarium. Will have more information and a public announcement in the next 60 days
- Staff did prep work yesterday in the park to prepare for heavy rains today.

- Education is working on innovative new offerings with Zoom to host drop ins to virtual meetings or happy hours with animals or keepers
- Virtual Zoofari is next Friday. The cocktails and cuisine package includes a 3-course meal with specialty cocktail and an exclusive Zoom link. In addition, doing a live feed on Facebook Live to highlight auction items. Zoofari auction items are live online right now for bidding.
- Hoppy Hour will be on October 1. It will be a safe, adult venue to get a glass of wine or beer and walk through the park. We expect it to be a successful evening, and anticipate extending it to a series event
- The Cheetah Trust in South Africa is a Satch Krantz Conservation Fund small grant recipient that protects livestock with Anatolian shepherd dogs. The Cheetah Trust has 4 Anatolian shepherd puppies born that they asked us to name. Allowed for our staff to vote on the names as a fun way to get them involved with some of our conservation efforts.
- “Fish in the Classroom” is a DNR program where they take trout in large tanks to schools to rear the trout to teach children about rivers, lifecycles, etc. They have asked Riverbanks to host the “Fish in the Tank” program virtually this year. Our education department will be working on that as a cool partnership with DNR and local schools

Williams motion to adjourn, Shockley second, m/c unanimous

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 15 day of October 2020.

Michael Velasco, Secretary