

Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
20 June 2019

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Bud Tibshrary, Bob Davidson, Mike Velasco, Jan Stamps, Phil Bartlett, Alana Williams

Commissioners Absent: Mary Howard

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Breta Rheney, Lochlan Wooten, Katie McCoy

Special Guest: Lexington County Councilman Glen Conwell

Call to Order

Chairman Tibshrary called the meeting to order.

Reading of the Minutes

The May 16, 2019 Commission minutes were approved as distributed.

Davidson motioned, Bartlett seconded, m/c unanimous.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Tibshrary remarked that he was delighted to have Lexington County Councilman Glen Conwell join the meeting today. Councilman Conwell was supportive through the funding review with Lexington County. Tibshrary wanted to thank the staff and management for the work and support throughout this county budget process and praised Stringfellow for his leadership and communication. Tibshrary also congratulated Stringfellow for being included in the Free Times list of the next 50 most powerful leaders in Columbia.

Chief Financial Officer's Report

Chief Financial Officer Breta Rheney shared the following monthly financial report, and a report on the proposed 2020 budget.

Financial summary through May 2019:

Attendance

Budgeted attendance for the month of May was 144,500; actual attendance was 142,060, down 2,440 visitors. Year to date we are up to budgeted attendance by 23,722. Membership sales are still holding strong resulting in membership visits tracking ahead of projected visits. The increase in member visits is helping offset the paid (general admission) attendance deficit. Paid attendance represented 39%, membership visits represented 54%, and free represented 7% of the total.

Revenue

Year to date budgeted gross revenue through May was \$17,403,095; actual revenue was \$17,540,097, resulting in a \$137,002 increase compared to budget.

Despite paid attendance being soft, the primary contributor in the revenue increase is due to the Lexington County escrowed funds that were received in November. General Admission revenues are down primarily due to a decline in paid attendance due to weather factors and an

increase in membership sales which has created the decline in general admission per cap. The per cap decrease is found across all ticket types which began trending this way in the month of October. With the ticket price increase in group and corporate ticket categories in January we are seeing our budgeted per cap rebound slightly as the summer season approaches.

Expenses

Gross year to date through May budgeted expenses were \$16,617,302; actual expenses were \$16,186,164 resulting in \$431,138 savings compared to budget.

Primary contributors to the savings are due to timing of invoices, savings in open or unfilled positions, and reduced staffing expenses during bad weather days.

Society

Annual budgeted membership households is 38,000; year to date actual membership is 42,475. Actual membership revenue through May was \$5,039,469 compared to budget of \$4,721,005, resulting in an increase of \$318,464 in Society membership revenues. Increase is primarily due to the increase in purchases of memberships before dues increase in January and the anticipation of The Farm Experience and Dinosaurs exhibits.

Davidson motioned to approve the May financials, Stamps second, m/c unanimous.

Proposed budget report:

Rheney and Stringfellow met with the finance committee (Davidson and Velasco) on Monday to review the 2020 budget.

- Velasco inquired about potential endowment scenarios in the future. Stringfellow will follow up with potential options.
- 2020 budget is almost flat but showing a 2.5% decrease from prior year. This reduction was afforded by reducing some operating expenses and not proposing cost of living or merit wage increases.
- Shorter operating hours will help with reducing operating costs.

On behalf of the finance committee, Velasco commented that he thought this was a well thought out and conservative budget and done well. Velasco would like to see an increase in reserve fund in case of emergencies, disasters or unexpected long-term closures.

Velasco motioned to approve the proposed budget for FY 19-20, Bartlett second, m/c unanimous.

Chief Marketing Officer's Report

Chief Marketing Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Wooten reported some recent additions to Riverbanks' "baby boom" king cobra babies and two rockhopper penguin chicks. One of the rockhopper chicks involves a cool story with Elmer's glue. WLTX will be featuring a cute story on that one.
- Recently lost one of our two siamang apes, Josie, due to an untreatable illness. The announcement has received a positive social media response. The Siamang SSP is working to identify a new mate for the remaining ape.
- Sean Foley was recently awarded an AZA SSP Sustainability award for his work with Henkel's leaf tail geckos.
- The Society had a very successful wine tasting event, and several members nights.

- The big news this week was the elephant/rhino story. The story has run in a few locations and received overwhelmingly positive responses. Communications is working to clarify the misconception that elephants are leaving to make room for rhinos, which in fact the opposite is true. Riverbanks is doing what is in the best interest of the elephants first. Moving them out for their own wellbeing happens to present the opportunity for Riverbanks to use that space and exhibit to support another species that is in need.
- Dinosaur Exhibit- 25,000 people to date have been through the dinosaur exhibit. Per cap is almost exactly where projected, 25% penetration. Feedback has been awesome- people have loved it. Dominion energy (sponsor of the exhibit) has come out to do great stories.
- Special Birthday Surprise- A Lexington County officer was recently involved in a wreck and Riverbanks had the opportunity and pleasure to help the family by making sure one of the officer's children had a special birthday in the park.

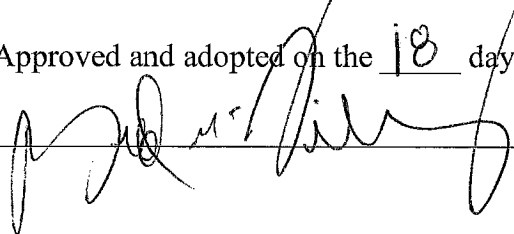
Chief Executive Officer's Report

President and CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Stringfellow shared that he is excited that Lexington County decided to fund the zoo at \$1.2M. He will spend the next year working with the counties to put Riverbanks in the best position to request funding in the following years.
- Working on wrapping up the Master Plan. Looking at the end of July to have renderings and information finalized. Will then invite council members to attend and learn about the future of Riverbanks and the master plan. Will also work with other constituents, City of West Columbia, City of Columbia, etc. for infrastructure needs. Will know the timing better by the end of this year.
- Power Outage- about 10:00am last Friday we lost complete power in the zoo. We immediately went into emergency response mode. The new generators purchased with county funding last year worked right away and were a huge relief to staff for our animal collections. The last generator to purchase would be for the hospital.
- Penny Tax Greystone Improvement- a few years ago an engineer study was completed on improving the traffic at the Greystone interchange. This would create two lanes coming off the interstate so that a right lane to Candi Lane would assist those going to the River Walk/not going to the zoo. Current estimate is that the improvement could be done within the allocated penny tax money. DOT also mentioned they had been working on the garden side with Botanical Parkway as well.
- West Columbia Resolution- Signed a resolution in support of the zoo. West Columbia wanted to share that they are supportive of growth and funding of the zoo.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 18 day of July 2019.

 _____, Chair