

Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
15 October 2015

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Phil Bartlett, Jan Stamps, Lloyd Liles, Alana Williams, Bud Tibshirany, and Jim Smith

Commissioners Absent: Mary Howard

Staff Present: Satch Krantz, Tommy Stringfellow, Steve Hatchell

Call to Order

Chairman Bartlett called the meeting to order. He expressed his gratitude for the wonderful job done by SSA in hosting a recent client appreciation and recruitment event.

Special Request

Commissioner Liles expressed his belief that Commission meetings are sometimes too brief and may not allow time for adequate discussion and debate. The Commission discussed the matter at length and pledged to devote the time necessary to carrying out its duties and responsibilities.

Chief Finance Officer's Report

CFO Hatchell reported that the Commission remains in a strong financial position, showing a deficit of \$636,511 for August 2015. This amount is actually a *positive* variance of \$793,000 when compared to budget.

Attendance

- Attendance for the month of September was just over 72,000. This is in line with our budgeted amount for the month. For the year, we are 39,000 guests over budget, of which 13,000 were paid.

Balance Sheet

- Assets
 - We continue to be in a very positive cash position through September, especially considering we are due reimbursement for bond-related expenses. This amount is shown on the Due from Bond Fund line.

Revenue vs Expense

Revenue

- Total Revenue through September was \$2,519,000, which is \$462,000 over budget. Total Revenue was \$81,000 under September 2014 figures, mainly due to the allocation of Society support contributions.
- Admissions revenue through September 2015 was \$330,000 over budget. This is due to the continuation of paid attendance out performing budget.

- SSA Commissions through September continue to outperform budget by \$84,000.

Expenses

- Administrative expenses through September were \$30,000 over budget. This is due mainly to an increase in credit card processing fees. We are currently reviewing these fees.
- Facility Management expenses are under budget by \$125,000. This is partially due to budgeted repairs pertaining to AZA accreditation that were not used.
- Marketing/Public Relations expenses are under budget by \$229,000 due to the timing of paid advertising and production cost.
- Utilities are over budget by \$47,000. Due to the new exhibits (grizzly bear/otter) and facilities (Guest Relations and Gift Shop), utilities are running higher than anticipated. We will continue to monitor this situation as we go forward.

Destination Riverbanks Update

Krantz presented the following report on the Destination Riverbanks projects:

- **Sea Lion** -- Rodgers continues to make progress on the sea lion exhibit. Amazingly, they were on the job on Monday, October 5, the day after the flood. Other developments related to the sea lion exhibit are:
 - Several Riverbanks staff members spent the entire day on Thursday, October 1, with representatives of ECOS, our interpretive graphic designers. The purpose of the workshop was to finalize the direction of the sea lion graphics. Krantz distributed a workbook from the session.
 - Riverbanks' Senior Keeper Andrea Muller is currently in San Diego working with the San Diego Zoo staff and the four sea lions that will be housed at Riverbanks.
- **Children's Garden** -- This project continues to progress, slow and steady. The General Contractor, Tyler Construction, has now changed the completion date to mid-December. The project architects and staff continue to dialog with Cost of Wisconsin about problems with the water feature.
- **CSX Pedestrian Bridge** – Now that Richland County Council has given its approval of the bridge project, we are moving forward with contractual issues. Rodgers still feels that they can begin construction in December.

Chief Operating Officer's Report

- **ZOOfari** – Stringfellow reported that in spite of inclement weather, ZOOfari was quite successful. With the threat of heavy rain predicted in the days leading to the event, ticket sales suffered. However, our live and silent auctions were among the most successful ever.
- **Boo at the Zoo** – Begins this Friday and Rodgers Builders has promised to install a sidewalk linking the east and west ends of the park. This will greatly facilitate foot traffic throughout the Zoo for both Boo and Lights.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

- **Flood** – Krantz provided an overview of the recent flood. In general terms, the Zoo weathered the incident with only very minor issues. In fact, the only serious problem associated with the “flood” occurred when SCE&G opened the gates at the Lake Murray dam at around noon Sunday. Within 30 minutes of their opening the gates, water began to overflow the banks of the Lower Saluda River. By the end of the day the back portion of the Zoo’s perimeter road was completely under 3 to 4 feet of flowing water. This condition remained throughout most of Monday. As a result, the Zoo’s river water pump station was submerged and rendered useless until Friday morning. Krantz also noted that two employees suffered extensive damage to their homes, while one employee was forced to permanently vacate her apartment.
- **Lexington County Escrow** – On September 29, Commissioners Howard and Stamps and CEO Krantz met in the Botanical Garden with Lexington County Council Chairman Johnny Jeffcoat. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the status of the County’s Riverbanks escrow account (\$1 million+). Mr. Jeffcoat was very impressed with the children’s garden and quickly grasped its potential impact on West Columbia and Lexington County. He was also supportive of the Zoo’s request for some portion of the escrow account to support construction of the garden. He suggested that the Commission make a formal presentation before County Council at its November 10 meeting.
- **AZA Accreditation** – Krantz was pleased to report that Riverbanks received AZA accreditation at the recently held Salt Lake City annual conference. Accreditation is good for five years, at which time it must be renewed.
- **Komodo Exhibit** – Krantz was pleased to announce that the Zoo’s pair of Komodo dragons have been moved from the Aquarium-Reptile Complex to their new home adjacent to the koala exhibit. The dragons are currently only on display inside the Zoo’s temporary ticket booth structure, which has been relocated and renovated to mimic a Komodo Island ranger station. To date, the bulk of the expenses associated with this new exhibit have been covered by two donations. We currently have out for bid the renovation of the exterior exhibit.
- **Siberian Tiger** – Riverbanks recently sent a 10-year-old, non-breeding female Siberian tiger to the Racine, Wisconsin Zoo. She will be replaced with a 10-year-old proven breeder from the Denver Zoo in mid-November. The new female and our male will be bred at the earliest possible time.
- **Elephant Importation** -- The Dallas, Omaha and Wichita Zoos have applied to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and CITES for permits that would allow them to import 18 African elephants (3 adult cows and 15 sub-adults ages 6-15 years) from the Kingdom of Swaziland. The elephants are currently housed in a bomas managed by Swaziland’s Big Game Parks. The number of elephants in Swaziland’s parks now exceeds carrying capacity and overwhelmingly competes with rhinos. Increasing the population of rhinos, the black rhino in particular, is a top priority of the Swazi wildlife authority. Removal of a total of 18 elephants to make room for rhinos was decided on by management and approved. The three zoos and the AZA expect strong legal opposition from the animal rights community.


- **Sea World Ruling** – Last week the California Coastal Commission, a state agency that focuses on preserving and protecting coastal values and resources, approved a \$100,000,000 plan for Sea World of San Diego to expand its killer whale tanks but with conditions that would bar captive orca breeding and limit the transfer of whales in and out of the park. SeaWorld maintains that federal law pre-empts all state laws involving any aspect of public display, exhibition, conservation and management of marine mammals. If upheld, the Commission’s decision would effectively end Sea World’s killer whale program in San Diego.

Executive Session

The Commission went into Executive Session to discuss a matter related to its contract with Service Systems Associates. No action was taken.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 19 day of November 2015.


_____, Secretary