

**Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
19 October 2023**

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Jan Stamps, Jeff Reeves, Deneen Shockley, Bob Davidson, Alana Williams, Mike Velasco

Commissioners Absent: Cliff Bourke

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Lochlan Wooten, Christie Vondrak, Jessica Austin

Call to Order

Chairwoman Stamps called the meeting to order at 12:30pm.

Reading of the Minutes

The September 21, 2023 Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

Reeves motioned to approve the minutes, Davidson seconded, m/c unanimous.

Chairman's Remarks

- Lexington County bond reading went great, many supporters spoke. The meeting was well attended.
- Commissioner Reeves and Commissioner Shockley commended the great effort from RBZ staff and supporters.

Finance Report:

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Stringfellow reviewed the August financial statements:
 - September was a marked improvement over a slower August.
 - Total membership is up over 3,000 households from budgeted.
 - Total attendance is down but wristband revenue is up from budgeted.
 - General admission visits down about 10,000 but increasing, ahead of 2022.
 - Expect membership purchases to increase ahead of Boo at the Zoo and Wild Lights special events.
 - Increase in under 2 admission – due to new software system implementation.
 - Earned revenue up \$176,000 over budgeted.
 - Expenditures – down due to timing issues with invoices being paid.
 - SSA concessions and retail and facility rentals are strong.
 - Society operating contribution is up over last year, on target with what was budgeted.
 - Miscellaneous revenue, up due to good interest rate.
 - Lexington county made their first contribution of \$250,000. Richland is above last year in contributions.
 - Commissioner Reeves – will there be Christmas bonuses for staff? Vondrak replied that they will review and advise, however, bonuses are usually considered at the end of the fiscal year,
 - Ashley Harris is examining whether reserve increase will be possible. Will know more information in November.
 - Will make recommendations in November to assign additional dollars to capital projects.
 - Commissioner Velasco – is it possible to move capital projects money to gondola to avoid borrowing? Stringfellow – our goal is to fund the gondola with capital and other revenue resources.

- Commissioner Reeves – are there any benchmarks on operational expenses at other zoos? Wooten – Riverbanks operates on a three-month reserve per the Government Finance Officer’s Association’s standards.
- Davidson motioned to approve the financials, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous.

President & CEO Report:

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Lexington county public hearing went well. Each speaker brought something different. No one was there to speak out against.
- Second reading next Tuesday 10/24.
- Richland has not scheduled first reading.
- Stringfellow discussed moving forward with Gondola project. Will call a vote at the November Commission meeting.

Chief Administrative Officer Report:

Chief Administrative Officer Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Ashley and Hopper update – mom and baby are doing well.
- Boo at the Zoo starts tomorrow 10/20. 616 volunteers will be handing out candy over the course of ten nights. Will revisit staying open on Halloween night 2024.
- Dates and Reminders-
 - Vet tech week 10/15-10/21
 - Staff Saluda River cleanup 11/7 3:00pm – 4:30pm
 - Save the date - Wild Lights VIP Party 11/16
- Guest services appreciation week 10/1-10/7 celebrated with an arcade day and a tailgate potluck.
- Heard about Our Herd – monthly employee recognition. Great way for teams to appreciate their peers on social media.
- Senior Leadership Retreat at Columbia Convention Center – day for senior leadership to dive into three key objectives in Riverbanks’ Strategic Plan.

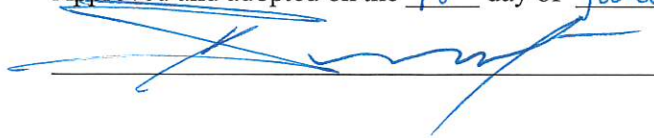
Chief Operating Officer Report:

Chief Operating Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- All four meerkat babies are doing well.
- Harbor seal Piper passed away last month. In the process of identifying cause of death.
- Green sea turtle Destiny was released into the wild. Riverbanks received a new baby turtle from SCDNR at Hunting Island state park.
- Wild Lights are here – updated operating hours from November 14 – January 14. The park closes at 4pm, Wild Lights opens at 5pm.
- Attendance figures are 34% over budget for the first part of October. September was second best attendance in history.
- Zoofari was very successful, grossing over \$110,000 – on par with budget.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 18 day of January 2024.


_____, Secretary