

Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
20 August 2015

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Mary Howard, Jan Stamps, Lloyd Liles, Alana Williams, Bud Tibshrary, Jim Smith

Commissioners Absent: Phil Bartlett

Staff Present: Satch Krantz, Tommy Stringfellow, Steve Hatchell

Employee of the Quarter

The Commission was pleased to welcome Sarah Moore, Riverbanks' Employee of the Quarter. Sarah joined the Riverbanks education team 2 years ago, bringing an extensive science and education background. Sarah has field experience, having worked with California condors and white-tailed deer. She also spent seven years as a classroom teacher. Upon her arrival she was given the hefty task of re-writing all of Riverbanks' school programs, changing the format from "talk at you" programming to engaging, hands-on, station-based programming. In addition to this she worked to reformat the Zoo's homeschool programming. Both areas have seen an increase in attendance in the last two years, with 500 school programs being taught and selling out nine fall homeschool dates (50 kids/program) in less than 3 weeks.

Sarah was nominated by her co-workers for her willingness to jump in and do just about anything, from interpretive talks to animal encounters. Sarah is creative and always has a pleasant demeanor. She truly is an asset to the education department and the Riverbanks organization.

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Howard, acting for Chairman Bartlett, called the meeting to order.

Chief Finance Officer's Report

CFO Hatchell reported that the Commission is showing a slight deficit of \$7,368 for July 2015. This amount is actually a *positive* variance of \$178,000 when compared to budget. Highlights of the month are as follows:

Attendance

- Attendance for the month of July was 108,297. This is over the budgeted attendance by 6,000 guests and just slightly under 2,000 guests compared to July 2014 (the 2015-2016 Budget is based on 1,100,000 visitors). Paid admissions were 5,000 guests below July 2014.

Balance Sheet

- Assets
 - Cash is higher through July, compared to July 2014. This is attributed to how well we ended the 2014-2015 fiscal year.
- Fund Balances

- Capital Fund Balance – The \$175,000 is designated for projects that are currently in process for the new fiscal year.

Revenue vs Expense

Revenue

- Total Revenue was \$999,000, which is \$177,000 over budget. Total Revenue was \$76,000 under July 2014 figures, mainly due to an allocation of Society support contributions in July 2014.
- Admissions revenue for July 2015 was \$92,000 over budget.
- SSA Commissions for July were over budget (\$43,000) and above last July's amount (\$46,000).
- Events net revenue (after expenses) was over budget by \$13,000. This is due to the purchase of theming supplies in preparation for upcoming events.
- Other Revenues for the month of July is slightly over budget due to the forfeiture of security deposit of one tenant (Pool Tables Plus) and a refund of a security deposit that is in process (Columbia City Jazz).

Expenses

- Total Expenses were slightly over budget by \$5,000, but above last July's amount due to timing of paid advertising.
- Administrative expenses for the month were \$16,000 over budget. This is due to architectural expenses associated with the design and development of the pedestrian bridge project (which were not budgeted) and the timing of the purchase of IT software.
- Marketing/Public Relations expenses were under budget by \$20,000 due to timing of paid advertising.
- Guest Services expenses were over budget for the month by \$13,000. This is mainly due to salaries associated with Public Safety.

Proposed Procurement Policy Change

Hatchell informed the Commission that due to the unique nature of the Zoo and Garden, the staff is proposing changes to the Commission's Procurement Code. Some of the proposed changes are nothing more than housekeeping, while others are somewhat more comprehensive. All of the proposed changes have been reviewed and approved by the Zoo's procurement attorney and fall within similar policies of Richland and Lexington Counties, the City of Columbia and the State of South Carolina. The proposed changes were also reviewed in detail with the Commission's finance committee. The changes were then reviewed, following which Smith moved, Tibshrary seconded, m/c unanimous, to approve the changes as presented.

HR Restructuring

The recent reorganization of Riverbanks' Human Resources department was reviewed. Hatchell noted that the most significant change was the creation of a recruitment and training coordinator position. Hatchell noted that the new position should help ensure that all employees and volunteers, including SSA, receive the same basic orientation. These changes were achieved through the reassignment of duties and not new positions.

Destination Riverbanks Update

Krantz presented the following report on the Destination Riverbanks projects:

- **Sea Lion** -- Rodgers continues to make tremendous progress on the sea lion exhibit. There are no known issues with the sea lion exhibit at this time.
- **Children's Garden** -- This project continues to progress. Of particular note is that the General Contractor, Tyler Construction, is now estimating a completion date of mid-to-late November. Cost of Wisconsin, the water feature designer and contractor, has finished their work and vacated the site. They will return within the next few weeks to test the feature. Krantz noted that the staff is now working on opening and operational issues.
- **CSX Pedestrian Bridge** – Krantz reviewed the status of the bridge project and the challenges faced by Rodgers in identifying and recruiting LSBEs. He noted that an “up or down” vote will be taken by Richland County Council on the evening of September 8.

Destination Riverbanks Capital Campaign

Krantz provided an update on the status of the Destination Riverbanks capital campaign. He noted that as of this week, the campaign has raised \$1,155,905 in committed funds (cash and/or written pledges). He noted that there are five or six outstanding requests from potential “major” donors who have indicated their willingness to make a contribution. He then presented the following general status report:

- Corporate: We have contacted many of the donors considered to be “low hanging fruit” (those with a significant capacity to give and/or an established relationship with Riverbanks). Several of these have since given but there are still several who have yet to commit. We have identified the next 40+ companies with a significant capacity to give. Meetings with these companies will be scheduled in the coming weeks.
- Individuals: We have been most gratified by the response of our individual donors (\$468,000 raised so far). These include individuals, Society board members, and Society members in general, including a number of those in the upper membership categories. An appeal letter will be sent to all members later in the fall.

Chief Operating Officer's Report

- **Brew at the Zoo** -- Stringfellow noted that Brew at the Zoo was a tremendous success, with 2,000 tickets sold. Brew tickets sold out over a week before the night of the event. The VIP ticket packages actually sold out almost a month before that.
- **ZOOfari** – Riverbanks' next fundraiser, is scheduled for Friday, September 25 from 7:00-11:00pm. This year will feature food inspired by classic low country cuisine. Sponsors include Land Rover Columbia and Colonial Life. We will be trying a mobile bidding service for both the silent and live auction. To-date ticket sales are up 100% over 2014.
- **Riverbanks App** -- Stringfellow introduced Susan O'Cain, Riverbanks' Public Relations Specialist, who reviewed with the Commission Riverbanks' new smartphone app. Susan demonstrated the app which has a number of features that have been requested by Zoo and Garden guests. Susan noted that the app should

be available to the public with the next two weeks. The Commission also expressed its gratitude for all that Susan has done over the last few weeks to publicize Riverbanks.

- Gift Card -- The new Riverbanks gift card was circulated and discussed. Stringfellow noted that the card will be sold throughout the Zoo and Garden and can be used to purchase everything from memberships and admissions to food, retail and rides. He noted that guests may “load” any amount of money on the card, with a \$10.00 minimum.
- PaCE Grant -- Stringfellow reported that due to cost savings, the Guest Relations’ solar array (funded through a PaCE grant) will be expanded and may provide all of the electricity for the building. It is hoped that we will be able to go live with the array in November.

Chief Executive Officer’s Report

- AZA Benchmark Survey – Krantz reviewed some of the more pertinent results of the 2015 AZA Benchmarks Survey. Riverbanks ranks favorable in many of the most important categories for those zoos with budgets of \$7,000,000 to \$25,999,999. Of the 64 zoos and aquariums in this category Riverbanks ranks 58th in operating cost per visitor. Riverbanks is the 14th most visited zoo and aquarium and ranks 13th in total memberships. Riverbanks has a 137% market saturation attendance (10th) and 19% market saturation membership (7th). With 122 full-time employees Riverbanks ranks 35th. Only 17 zoos and aquariums in this category have more parking spaces than Riverbanks.
- Rivermont Road Closure -- The Zoo’s real estate attorney, Kevin Garrison, is in active negotiations with the SC Department of Transportation to have both Wildlife Parkway and Rivermont Drive conveyed to the Riverbanks Park Commission. The request is being made due to the fact that the Zoo now owns all of the land along Rivermont Drive between I-126 and the railroad tracks and is willing to take over the ownership and maintenance of these roads from DOT. The City of Columbia has the first right of refusal to take over the maintenance of roads owned or maintained by DOT and will need to provide a written statement indicating that it has no interest in maintaining or owning the roads.
- Sculpture Lawsuit – Krantz reviewed the status of a lawsuit filed with the Insurance Reserve Fund concerning an incident in 2013 in which a young man suffered a broken arm when he fell from the lion sculpture. The plaintiffs contend that the various sculptures found throughout the Zoo grounds should be considered “playgrounds.” If this determination is made by the court or the IRF, we would need to review access to the sculptures. Krantz also noted that there have only been approximately eight recorded incidents on the lion sculptures in the past six years, during which over six million people visited the Zoo. All of these incidents resulted in bumps and bruises except for the one broken arm. This represents .0001333 incidents per 6 million people.

Tour

Commissioners were taken on a tour of the new Destination Riverbanks facilities.

The Meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the _____ day of September 2015.

 _____, Secretary