

**Riverbanks Park Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**15 April 2021**

**Attendance Report**

Commissioners Present: Bob Davidson, Deneen Shockley, Jan Stamps, Mary Howard, Alana Williams, Mike Velasco

Commissioners Absent: Phil Bartlett

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

**Call to Order**

Chairman Davidson called the meeting to order.

**Reading of the Minutes**

The March 18, 2021 commission minutes were approved as distributed.

**President & Chief Executive Officer's Report**

President and CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- March financial review:
  - Just a note that this time last year Riverbanks was closed for 62 days.
  - Membership is doing well and has exceeded the budget number of member households. Membership revenue also reflects a strong increase. This year was second only to year 2017 for the month of March.
  - Attendance is still down to budget, but numbers are trending up.
  - Lexington county informed us that they will not be able to pay their commitment from the accommodations tax as those dollars were unable to be collected this year.
  - Expenses are still down. However, these are mostly deferred expenses, and some of those dollars will begin to be used for fixes etc. that are needed and were budgeted for.
  - Velasco motioned to approve the March financials, Howard second, m/c unanimous.
- Stringfellow and Lander Hiott participated in AZA Advocacy day. This was an opportunity to talk about legislation, bills, etc. with various politicians and people of influence. Stringfellow and Hiott participated in meetings with the staff of senators James Clyburn, Tim Scott, and Lindsey Graham. The meetings went very well, and Stringfellow will continue to work on those relationships and opportunities.
- Working on the budget plans and meetings with Richland and Lexington Counties. Those meetings will begin in May.
- Audit report:
  - Michael Slapnik of auditing firm Scott & Company presented the 2019-2020 Riverbanks Commission audit.

- Slapnik and the Commission's audit committee (Velasco and Williams) met last week to take an in-depth review of the audit.
- Scott & Company anticipates issuing a "clean, unmodified audit opinion" which is the highest level of assurance that they give, meaning the financial statements are fairly presented in accordance with GAP. They were pleased to report that there were not any material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in Riverbanks internal controls to report.
  - Velasco motioned to accept the audit, Howard second, m/c unanimous.

### **Chief Administrative Officer's Report:**

CAO Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Vondrak introduced Riverbanks' new VP of Finance, Jessica Johnson. Johnson comes most recently from Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission, a local agency that is governed very similarly to Riverbanks. She also has worked for a prior auditing firm, and has worked on a Riverbanks audit before, so she is familiar with Riverbanks' financials. She will be an asset to the team, and Riverbanks is excited to have her on board!
- Over the next two months, Tommy, Lochlan and Christie will be visiting each department of Riverbanks to do individualized departmental Town Halls. They are looking forward to spending time with each department and hearing from them.
- Vondrak shared some of the staffing challenges that Riverbanks is experiencing. The leadership team has been working on the budget and looking for ways to fairly compensate staff and creatively encourage applications to fill open positions.
- Riverbanks is continuing to focus on the safety of our staff and guests. Currently have no positive COVID cases, and no pending.

### **Chief Operating Officer's Report**

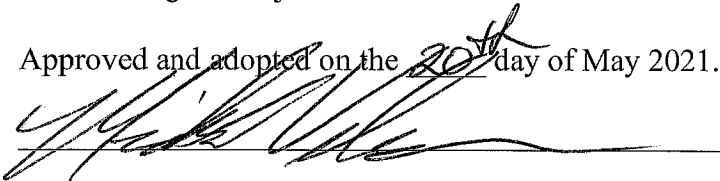
COO Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Wooten shared an updated photo of the new shelter on siamang island. The animals are really enjoying it, and Riverbanks is extremely appreciative of the Davidson's donation for this new addition.
- Bird department welcomed fairy bluebird chicks. This was an exciting hatching for the department.
- Another exciting birth was of a three banded armadillo. This offspring will become an animal ambassador animal, pending approval.
- Rhino introductions continue to go well. They are now spending hours together in the morning and continuing to get to know each other.
- Spring Break- saw about 20,000 less people through the gates compared to 2019. However, revenue was still strong due to increase at the gate and some changes in taxes.
- Davidson applauded Wooten for her recent article on resiliency in organizations that was published in the April edition of *Connect* magazine.
- Riverbanks is hoping to open Waterfall Junction in May; however, this is completely dependent on being able to staff it. Will continue to monitor and assess the number of applications and staff and come up with creative solutions as needed.
- Stringfellow received word from the Governor that Riverbanks has approval to increase indoor capacity. We will begin to do this and continue to monitor.

- Wooten shared the timeline. Notably, there are in-person events on the calendar again; Riverbanks Run on May 1, two members nights in the month of May, and a Hoppy Hour in June. The Events department continues to work on adding more back to the calendar.
- “Wine and Dine” is a new online auction for a private dining experience in the garden. Bidding will close on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Wooten shared an update on the aquarium renovation. The RFQ has gone live. It will be a two-phase bid process. On the timeline, the aquarium closing has been pushed back to tentatively August but is still dependent on getting construction documents completed on time.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of May 2021.

 \_\_\_\_\_, Secretary