

**Riverbanks Park Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
21 September 2023**

**Attendance Report**

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

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

**Guests Present:** Dan Fritze, Chakisse Newton

**Call to Order**

Chairwoman Stamps called the meeting to order.

**Reading of the Minutes**

The August 17, 2023 Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

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

**Chairman's Remarks**

- AAZK Bowling for Rhinos was a success, thank you to commission members for participating.
- Stamps, Shockley, Reeves, Bob and Jane Davidson, and Stringfellow attended Lexington County Council's first reading of the bond request. Stringfellow will share more in President & CEO Report.
- Stamps turned the discussion to Vondrak and Fritze regarding an email received on September 20<sup>th</sup>.
  - Vondrak: Fritze met with the Society board in July to review and edit Shared Services and Operating agreements. Agreements were approved at the September Society meeting.
  - Fritze: Shared Services agreement – Recognizes Society board as a separate entity from Riverbanks Zoo & Garden. Operating agreement – added clarity.
  - Davidson motioned to approve the Operating agreement, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous. Reeves motioned to approve the Shared Services agreement, Williams seconded, m/c unanimous.

**Finance Report:**

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Stringfellow reviewed the August financial statements:
  - 47,115 membership households – up from the 44,000 budgeted.
  - Wristband revenue was down at \$14580.00. Likely due to a reduction in general admission visits during a hot and stormy August. Also affected membership visits.
  - School year commenced in August – field trip visits are on par with previous year.
  - Per cap was up to \$19.18.
  - Earned revenue was up (2.8M) compared to budgeted (2.7M).
  - Under budgeted expenses.
  - Miscellaneous revenue – Ashley Harris placed funds in a higher yield account which explains the increase.
  - Reeves motion to approve the financials, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous.

**President & CEO Report:**

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Bond petitions were submitted to Lexington County & Richland County Councils.

- Lexington had its first reading and passed the bond (8-1) on September 12<sup>th</sup>. Next step is the Public Hearing on October 12<sup>th</sup>. Commissioners encouraged to speak. Reeves praised Stringfellow for navigating the process smoothly.
- Richland did not have first reading yet. Commissioners are encouraged to speak to council representatives.
- Gondola project – engineering studies completed. Legal documents submitted to Fritze’s firm – expect to have back in next couple weeks. Anticipated Commission vote in October.

**Chief Administrative Officer Report:**

Chief Administrative Officer Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Ashley Harris welcomed first baby Hopper Wilkes Harris on September 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Vondrak welcomed the new Procurement Manager, Noelle Kelley. Previously worked with SSA.
- Dates and reminders-
  - Hispanic Heritage Month – ERG will host food trucks on September 26<sup>th</sup>.
  - Zoofari – September 29<sup>th</sup>.
- AAZK Bowling for Rhinos – 150 participants raised almost \$3000.00.
- AZA Conference in Columbus, OH went very well – excellent programming and education.
- Staff, Commission, and guests congratulated Lochlan Wooten for election to AZA Ethics Board.
- Video – USC Alumni Association filmed their members from Riverbanks staff.  
Watch here: <https://fb.watch/nCuCy5xn2L/>
- Martha Weber accepted a position at USC as an adjunct professor in the Public Health department.

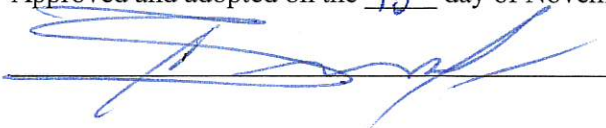
**Chief Operating Officer Report:**

Chief Operating Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Meerkat had four babies. Mama and babies are doing great.
- Kendra Bottini, Aquarium Curator, is teaching aquaculture at the DNR.
- Komodo Dragon breeding and conservation facility construction begins the first week of October.
- Conservation Learning Center – moved ahead with request for proposals (RFP) to select an architect. Will have one by beginning of December.
- EBT/SNAP partnership program has been very successful. 1000 admissions from the program in the first two weeks of September. Rachael Bashor is working with SC Head Start to develop a program to engage children.
- Matt Perron worked with Flock and Rally to aggregate news stories and see what works for the public.
- Strategic Plan update – booklets were made available to meeting attendees.
- ZOOfari – Judi Gatson will be MC with Jimmy Derrick serving as auctioneer. The silent auction features many prizes including paintings by Patrick the Gorilla.
- Next year’s ZOOfari will include the awarding of the Satch Krantz Conservation Fund Scholarship. Applications will be opening in early 2024.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 15 day of November 2023.

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