

**Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
15 June 2023**

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Jan Stamps, Jeff Reeves, Deneen Shockley, Bob Davidson, Alana Williams, Mike Velasco, Cliff Bourke (via phone for Executive Session)

Commissioners Absent:

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Lochlan Wooten, Ashley Harris, Christie Vondrak, Katie Eaton

Call to Order

Chairwoman Stamps called the meeting to order.

Reading of the Minutes

The May 18, 2023 Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

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

Chairman's Remarks

- Chairwoman Stamps remarked that she appreciates the continued teamwork portrayed by the staff and Board members.

Executive Session

Davidson motioned to enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel and legal counsel matter. Shockley seconded; m/c unanimous.

Following the executive session, Reeves motioned to increase Stringfellow's salary by 4%, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous.

VP of Finance Report:

VP of Finance Ashley Harris provided the following report:

- Harris reviewed the May financial statements:
 - Attendance is tracking below projected, but we are continuing to see revenues exceed budget.
 - Currently earning at a rate of 5.27% average earning rate in LGIP for May.
 - Through May actual admission fee revenue is up over anticipated general admission fee budget by \$153,000. Expect we will land over projected revenues by end of fiscal year.
 - Concession and retail commissions, rides and attractions and events revenue lines are all projecting up in FY24 budget, consistent with FY23 upward trend.
 - Davidson motioned to approve the May financials, Velasco seconded, m/c unanimous.
- The finance committee (Velasco and Williams) met to discuss the FY24 budget in detail. A public hearing was also held on June 1.
 - Projecting up concessions and retail commissions, rides and attractions and events for FY24. All fiscal year 2023 we have seen those line items trending up
 - Operating support from Society was increased \$600,000 to support the increase in operations and inflation. The additional support is based on the continuous rise in our member base. The Society board has approved this increase.
 - Williams motioned to approve the FY24 budget presented, Velasco seconded. m/c unanimous

President & CEO Report:

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Bond Update- tomorrow morning Stringfellow will meet with Lexington County Administrator for an update. In addition, we have challenged the bond company, First Tryon, to minimize impact and do staging for the bond rollout. There would be no tax increase in 2023 or 2025 and in 2026 it would be \$4/\$100,000 household. Richland County Administrator requested to see what that plan may look like, and it has been provided to them. Lexington County is ready to proceed with the bond request. Stringfellow and Best continue to meet with Richland County Council members. Chairwoman Carrigg at Lexington County has requested to meet with Councilman Walker at Richland County.
- Community Input Discussion- Stringfellow suggested adding a community input segment to each month's meeting agenda and the policy to be posted on the website.

Chief Administrative Officer Report:

Chief Administrative Officer Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Riverbanks' Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) have been busy hosting various activities and socials. They will be hosting two food trucks on site next week.
- We will be having our annual End of Year Town Hall Celebration at the end of this month. This year we will have departmental showcase and have a representative from each team share what they are proud of from this year, and looking forward to in the next year.
- National Zookeeper week will be July 18-24
- Excited to welcome Jeremy Keen as Riverbanks' new Director of Guest Experience. Jeremy has previously worked at USC and with the Fireflies and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience with him to this role. We are thrilled to have him on board.
- Last month Christie attended GLMV's ECHO conference in Birmingham. Next year Riverbanks will be hosting the conference.
- Vondrak shared a look back at last year's goals for the year, and the ways that Riverbanks was able to achieve them. She shared that they are looking forward to continuing with those initiatives this year and building upon the successes from this fiscal year.

Chief Operating Officer Report:


Chief Operating Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Unfortunately, we recently lost meerkat mom Lily. Her female offspring, Poppy has stepped up to lead the mob. The teams will be doing renovations in the exhibit to expand their square footage.
- The PR team is being intentional about doing media releases about every 10 days to share our stories and keep Riverbanks in the media.
- Aquarium Curator Jennifer Rawlings has resigned to move closer to home. We are sad to see her leave, but excited for her personally. She has built a wonderful team to step up in her absence.
- Colleen Lynch has been approved to be an AZA accreditation inspector. She just completed her first shadow inspection. She is a perfect person for the job, and we are proud of her for representing Riverbanks.
- Staff is hard at work completing hurricane inspections to ensure our park is ready for this hurricane season.
- Received results of the survey the board took and were glad to see it was aligned with staff feedback. The team has been working to identify key commitments, and working to set definitions and high level objectives for each of those commitments. Proud of all the staff, board and community member's hard work.
- Membership continues to trend high at still over 45,000 households. This speaks deeply to the amount of support from the community for Riverbanks.

- Conservation update- Riverbanks is partnering with US Fish & Wildlife to hold trafficked and confiscated animals awaiting trial dates. We are honored to be part of this process and to assist in protecting animals from being illegally trafficked.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 20 day of July 2023.


_____, Secretary