

Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
20 June 2024

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the agenda is available to radio and TV stations, newspapers, and persons requesting notification; was posted in the lobby of Riverbanks' administration building and was uploaded to Riverbanks' webpage.

Attendance Report

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

Commissioners Absent: Cliff Bourke

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

Call to Order

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

Reading of the Minutes

The May 16, 2024, Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

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

Chairman's Remarks:

- Zoo has been exceptionally busy since the last meeting. Camps have been packed!
- County council elections – we have a few new faces.
- The new renovation looks great, glad to be back at Rivermont.

Finance Report:

VP of Finance Ashley Harris provided the following report:

- May Dashboard Report:
 - We're not meeting our projected attendance overall attendance through May, but we are right on track with our paid admission visits. We're almost 35,000 visitors over prior year through May. With that, our general admission revenues are exceeding budgeted and prior year.
 - Earned revenues up over budgeted by \$1.6M. The primary drivers are concession & retail commissions, facility rental & group admission fees, rides & attractions, and interest income.
- May Balance Sheet:
 - The average earning interest rate in LGIP for May was 5.53%. Earned \$883,000 in interest income through May.
 - Due from Bond Fund is where our bond-related costs and proceeds are reflected on the General Fund. Most of that are gondola payments to date.
 - In the January Commission meeting, we approved to increase the Operational Reserve by \$600,000 giving us \$3M in the current year.
 - Reeves and Velasco pitched upping operational reserve and separating categories, i.e. animal care, employee relief, etc. Proposed study for need. Harris will investigate.

Reeves motioned to approve the financials, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous.

- FY23 Audit:
 - The Audit Committee met on June 3rd. Michael Slapnik of Scott and Co. went through everything in detail with them.
 - Scott and Co. are issuing an unmodified opinion.

Velasco moved to approve the FY23 Audit, Velasco seconded, m/c unanimous.

- FY25 Budget:
 - Budget presented to Finance Committee on June 3rd. Increasing budgeted revenues and expenditures by 11%. \$1M of the increase comes from state funding that we anticipate receiving in FY25. State funding was not included in the previous budgets.

Reeves moved the FY25 Budget, Williams seconded, m/c unanimous.

President & CEO Report:

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Would like to include Commissioners Velasco and Williams in future meetings with City Council members.
- Three new council members in Lexington County. Request Commissioners Reeves, Shockley, and Stamps to contact new council members.
- The third and final reading of Lexington County's operational budget is Tuesday, June 25th.
- Richland County Council voted to reduce millage from 1.4 down to 0.7 and fund the difference from Hospitality Tax.
- The State Senate has committed \$1M from their budget to apply to the list of infrastructure needs previously presented to Senator Setzler. A proposal has been submitted for recurring fund from the state education budget.

Chief Administrative Officer Report:

Chief Administrative Officer Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- On Wednesday, June 26th we're holding our end-of-year Town Hall celebration in person. Will feature a "Why Riverbanks" presentation video, slider bar, mocktails, golden tickets to redeem for gift cards, and other surprises. All full-time staff will receive a \$1000.00 bonus and all part-time staff will receive a \$500.00 bonus. In addition, there will be a 4% salary increase.
- Dates & Reminders
 - Members Night Out - June 28
 - Bond Ratings - July 16
 - July Commission Meeting – July 18
 - Brew at the Zoo – August 2
- Riverbanks hosted the 2024 ECHO Conference in early June. 35 of our peers from around the country came to learn from guest speakers and each other about how to innovate within the guest experience. Nate Ennis and the SSA team did a phenomenal job making the event beautiful and the park never looked better.

Chief Operating Officer Report:

Chief Operating Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Nate Ennis is moving on and will be missed! Tasker Hewitt will be replacing Ennis, coming from Zoo Atlanta. Hewitt has lots of experience in operational knowledge in addition to a deep commitment to community partnerships.
- The new bird curator starts next month -- Antonio Fernandez from Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa. Fernandez is a 25-year veteran of the industry.
- We have five Black Tree Monitor hatchlings, the first for Riverbanks!
- Performed second blood draw from Bruce. Pleased to prove the blood draw is repeatable and will be sustainable venture.
- Karyn Wheatley and her team headed up the Gopher Frog program expansion and performed a release into the wild last week. They will be tracked over time.
- We've had over 700 admissions on the first two Toucan Tuesdays. Amounts to around \$9,000 in discounted admission and hundreds of pounds of food.

- FYTD Attendance Results - we're down compared to overall projected attendance, but we're up relative to every other year.
- Riverbanks welcomed their 40 millionth visitor on June 14th. Stringfellow took a photo with the family and gifted a membership and behind the scenes tour.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 18 day of July 2024.


_____, Secretary