

**Riverbanks Park Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
16 February 2023**

**Attendance Report**

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

**Commissioners Absent:** n/a

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

**Call to Order**

Chairwoman Stamps called the meeting to order.

**Reading of the Minutes**

The January 19, 2023 Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

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

**Chairman's Remarks**

- Chairwoman Stamps remarked that the momentum around the opening of the Aquarium and Reptile Conservation Center has been very exciting.
- Stamps shared that she has appointed a committee to review salary compensation. The committee consists of Jeff Reeves and Cliff Bourke.

**VP of Finance Report:**

VP of Finance Ashley Harris provided the following report:

- Harris reviewed the January financial statements:
  - Memberships are up over budget through January. Total households increased by 589 since December.
  - We saw strong attendance in January. Total attendance as of December was under budget by just over 10K and we finished January under budget by only 126. We had a high Free Friday turn out in January compared to prior year.
  - Our cash investment in the Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP) managed through the State Treasurer's Office earned an average interest rate of 4.58% in January.
  - The increased attendance contributed to a spike in Concession and Retail Commissions, as well as revenue generated from Rides and Attractions.
  - Richland County property tax revenue jumped up in January as we received a large payment in the amount of \$961,786 in mid-January.
- Scott + Co., Public Accounting Firm, plans to present the FY22 Audited Financial Statements in the March Commission board meeting. They will meet preliminarily with the Audit Committee to review prior to their presentation to the full board.

**President & CEO Report:**

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Stringfellow indicated that in both Richland County and the City of Columbia, the County or City must vote on the second term appointment of Commissioners. While you're able to serve two terms, both terms must be appointed. There is an application requirement for reconsideration.
- Stringfellow is planning to meet with Don Weaver, Richland County Council - District 6 representative, soon to share future goals and plans for the zoo.
- Riverbanks is requesting recurring State funding for the zoo, as well as a non-recurring appropriation for capital.

- Stringfellow is awaiting a quote for the Aerial tram and is working with First Tryon to explore whether this capital investment could be secured through a loan from a financial institution.

**Administrative Officer Report:**

Administrative Officer Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Vondrak shared the following “save the dates”:
  - Staff family preview of the ARCC – 2/23
  - ARCC Member Preview – 2/27 and 2/28
  - ARCC Grand Opening – 3/2 Ribbon Cutting
  - Breakfast with Bunny – 4/2
  - Wine Tasting – 4/28
  - Midlands Gives – 5/2
- Vondrak shared that the Riverbanks staff just had their first “in person” Town Hall meeting in our renovated Discovery Center Education theatre. Town Hall meetings are held monthly but have been virtual since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Canopy, Strategic Planning partner, held a Strategic Planning working group meeting with a selected staff engagement team this past Friday, 2/10.


**Operating Officer Report:**

Operating Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Wooten shared that she attended the SC Annual Governor’s Conference on Tourism and Travel earlier in the week.
- Staffing updates: Greg Peccie has enthusiastically accepted the position of Director of Animal Care & Welfare. He was previously the Curator of Mammals, here at Riverbanks.
- Wooten shared that we honored John Davis’s retirement from the Director of Animal Care & Welfare after 34 years with Riverbanks at our last Town Hall. She shared some old pastime photos of John over his years with the zoo.
- Animal updates: Riverbanks welcomed a new Black Footed Cat and a new Fishing Cat.
- Wooten shared an initiative to increase staff engagement by asking employees to vote on which conservation outreach groups will receive grant contributions through the Satch Krantz Conservation Fund. She shared the recent organizations that received these grants which were the Carolina Wetlands Association, the Zoo Conservation Outreach Program & The Ocean Cleanup.
- Wooten shared a graph to depict that we’ve seen a major spike in memberships in January compared to prior years, due to the announcement of the ARCC opening.
- Wooten shared that the zoo is currently working to roll out a “zoo for all program” to offer a discounted admission price to eligible families. This will launch March 2<sup>nd</sup>. We’re also planning to implement an admission price increase on that same date.
- Wooten shared a new 25 year recognition plaque that has gone up on display in the park. Staff, board members, and volunteers will be honored for 25 years of service, or more, on this plaque.
- Zoo camp sold out in a record six days!

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of March 2023.

, Secretary