MINUTES
BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS
OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES
VIRTUAL MEETING*
TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021, – 10:00 AM

* IN CONFORMITY WITH THE GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER N-29-20 (MARCH 17, 2020)
AND DUE TO CONCERNS OVER COVID-19, THIS BOARD MEETING WAS HELD ENTIRELY
TELEPHONICALLY VIA ZOOM.

“Creating
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to connect
people and
animals”

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Eric Garcetti
Mayor

Nithya Raman
Council Member
4th District

Zoo Commissioners
Karen B. Winnick
President

Bernardo Silva
Vice President

Margot Armbruster

Christopher Hopkins

Daryl Smith

Richard Lichtenstein
ex officio member

Denise M. Verret
Chief Executive Officer
& Zoo Director

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Association of Zoos and Aquarium

AGENDA ITEM 1
CALL TO ORDER
Commission President Winnick called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

AGENDA ITEM 2
APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF JUNE 15, 2021
Commission President Winnick moved to approve June 15, 2021 minutes. Commissioner
Hopkins so moved, Commission Vice President Silva seconded, and the motion passed.

AGENDA ITEM 3
GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT
No Comments

LOBBYING NOTICE
No Comments

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
No Comments
AGENDA ITEM 4
ELECTION OF COMMISSION OFFICERS
Vice President Silva nominated President Winnick to continue as the Commission President and Commissioner Hopkins seconded. By unanimous vote, Mrs. Winnick was re-elected as the Commission’s President. President Winnick nominated Vice President Silva to continue as the Commission Vice President and Commissioner Hopkins seconded. By unanimous vote, Mr. Silva was re-elected as the Commission’s Vice President.

AGENDA ITEM 5
LOS ANGELES ZOO – UCLA DAVID GEFFEN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE COLLABORATION: SPECIES-SPANNING MEDICINE AND ANIMAL INSIGHTS FOR HUMAN HEALTH PRESENTATION
Zoo Director Denise Verret introduced Dr. Dominique Keller, Zoo Chief Veterinarian & Director of Animal Wellness Programs and Dr. Barbara Natterson-Horowitz, Cardiologist and Professor at UCLA and a member of the Zoo’s Medical Advisory Board. Dr. Natterson-Horowitz discussed the new course offered this past semester at UCLA for medical students that she and Dr. Keller developed. The concept of “Zoobiquity” focuses on the one health initiative of animal and human wellness being one in the same and now it includes environmental health. The first Zoobiquity Conference was held in 2011 at the Zoo. Dr. Natterson-Horowitz explained the basic premise of the course: The field of medicine has mainly centered around humans and has not recognized medical connections that span multiple species and the planet as a whole. One of the main objectives of the course is to educate the medical field that connections exist and are critically important. Other objectives include educating the community, increasing insight and connections and reviewing similar illnesses seen in multi-species including humans. Discussions between medical and veterinary professionals about diseases found in multi-species such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and behavioral medicine as well as infectious disease and medical ethics is beneficial for both field of medicine. This course is the first of its kind in the Country but the idea of sharing medicine with species is not new.

Dr. Keller mentioned that as a zoo veterinarian, staff has to work as a collaborative team due the variety of species under their care which can include assistance from human medical field professionals. These current students will be future collaborators to build and grow this network.

Commission President Winnick thanked Dr. Natterson-Horowitz for the presentation and her insight. She inquired if this course would be offered to veterinary students. Dr. Keller noted it would beneficial to be offered at veterinary schools and is something to consider for the future.

AGENDA ITEM 6
ZOO PROGRAMS AND OPERATIONS
Deputy Director Mei Kwan provided a presentation about her history and background with the City and Zoo. As Deputy Director she oversees the following Divisions - Administration & Operations, Learning & Engagement, Communications, Construction & Maintenance and Planning and Development. Ms. Kwan provided a brief overview of these divisions and their functions.

Vice President Silva inquired about the vacant Director of Administration & Operations position and the plans to fill the position. Ms. Kwan replied that the City’s hiring freeze was lifted so she and the Zoo Director have developed a priority hiring plan that is within our financial constraints. There are several positions in various divisions that are being requested to meet the Zoo’s needs. It is hopeful that this position can be filled soon within our hiring plan and the Civil Service process.
AGENDA ITEM 7
GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS
A. Animal Updates
Beth Schaefer, Director of Animal Programs, gave the following transaction updates:
- Cape vulture going to Houston Zoo
- Catalina Island rattlesnakes going to Abilene Zoo in Texas
- Lowland paca going to Elmwood Park Zoo in Pennsylvania
- Sarus crane chick that hatched last year is going to Hemker Park Zoo
- A total of 17 Mangrove pitvipers will be sent to various facilities
- New births/hatchings include a blue billed curassow which is critically endangered and another Chinese goral

B. GLAZA Update
GLAZA President Tom Jacobson gave the following update:
- Restricted fundraising and non-capital fundraising surpassed goals
- Membership continues to increase – now at 37,000+
- Attendance continues to steadily increase since reopening
- Have recruited 13 new Board members over the last two years
- Almost reached sufficient funding for first two phases of Angela Collier Gardens which will proceed after City approval
- Talks will resume next month about operating agreement with City
- Thanked everyone for their support over the past year

C. Zoo Director Update
Zoo Director Denise Verret provided an update on operational adjustments due to increase of COVID-19 cases in the community. The Zoo has decided to treat all mammals as susceptible species so we have closed the contact yard as of this past weekend. The Zoo will continue to adapt our protocols according to LA County guidelines which include wearing masks in indoor locations. Online reservations are available or tickets can be purchased on site. Attendance continues to be strong and exceeding 2019 attendance for the same period. The Zoo continues to support vaccinations and testing by providing walk up clinics on Saturdays in July in partnership with Mayor’s office & LAFD. The Zoo will continue to be responsive and flexible as we continue to move through this pandemic.

Conservation Strategic Plan keynote launch is scheduled for Thursday at 10am. This keynote event will be led by Dr. Jake Owens and includes prerecorded videos from Mayor Garcetti & Councilmember Raman. The creation of this plan has been a team effort for the past two years and it’s exciting to reach this milestone.

Mrs. Verret reported she traveled to AZA Board of Directors’ meeting in Atlanta, GA last week where a variety of topics were discussed including a coordinative legislative strategy to build partnerships, finalization of the AZA Climate Change position paper and updates about conservation efforts and diversity initiatives.

Commission Vice President Silva asked for an update on the Zoo’s Vision Plan EIR report. Mrs. Verret responded that it will be transmitted to Council later this month.
AGENDA ITEM 8
OLD BUSINESS
None

AGENDA ITEM 9
ADJOURNMENT
There being no more business to come before, President Winnick motioned to adjourn the meeting; Vice President Silva so moved and Commissioner Hopkins seconded; the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.

ATTEST:

_______________________________  ______________________________
PRESIDENT                                                              SECRETARY