

**Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
28 February 2019**

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Bud Tibshrary, Jan Stamps, Alana Williams, Bob Davidson, Mike Velasco, Mary Howard

Commissioners Absent: Phil Bartlett

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Breta Rheney, Katie McCoy

Call to Order

Chairman Tibshrary called the meeting to order

Reading of the Minutes

The January 2019 minutes were approved as distributed.
Velasco moved, Stamps seconded, m/c unanimous.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Tibshrary wanted to extend his compliments and congratulations to Commissioner Phil Bartlett. Bartlett was recently awarded the University of South Carolina's "M. Stuart Hunter Award for Outstanding Teaching in University 101."

Chief Financial Officer's Report

Attendance

Budgeted attendance for the month of January was 49,500; actual attendance was 58,535, up 9,035 visitors. Year to date budgeted attendance is down by 5,197. Membership visits are ahead of budgeted numbers which is helping with the paid attendance deficit. Paid attendance represented 37%, membership visits represented 58%, and free represented 5% of the total.

Revenue

Year to date budgeted revenue through January was \$8,005,173; actual revenue was \$8,509,531 resulting in a \$504,358 increase compared to budget.

Despite paid attendance being down due to inclement weather, the primary contributor in the revenue increase is due to the Lexington County escrowed funds that were received in November. General Admission revenues are down primarily due to a decline in paid attendance due to weather factors as well as a softness in per cap spending of \$.73. The per cap decrease is found across all ticket types, which began trending this way in the month of October. With the planned increase in group and corporate ticket categories in January we are seeing our budgeted per cap rebound slightly and expect it to continue.

Expenses

Year to date through January budgeted expenses were \$9,712,402; actual expenses were \$9,343,626 resulting in \$368,776 savings compared to budget.

Primary contributors to the savings are due to timing of invoices, savings in open or unfilled positions, and reduced staffing expenses during bad weather days.

Society

Annual budgeted membership households is 38,000; Year to date actual membership is 40,894. Actual membership revenue through December was \$2,539,700 compared to budget of \$2,350,127, resulting in an increase of \$189,573 in Society membership revenues. The increase is primarily due to the message of renewing before dues increase in January.

Davidson motion to approve the financials, Howard second, m/c unanimous.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

President and CEO Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Animal Naming:
 - The newest baby gorilla was named “Moyo” by his keepers. This name means “heart” in Swahili, which is fitting as both his mother and grandmother have a heart shaped imprint on their nose. The name was announced through social media on Valentine’s day.
 - The youngest two lion cubs were named via a social media campaign. Guests were encouraged to come in person to drop off their name suggestions for the cubs in person. Out of those submissions (about 825), the keepers chose three name options for each cub, and those options were available online to vote on. The chosen names were “Cleopatra” and “Hasira.”
- The Wine Tasting event has sold out. The events team is considering making it a “members only” event in the future.
- Last weekend Riverbanks partnered with Richland County, Lexington County and the City of Columbia to host a “Wild About Recycling” event on site. Residents of the area were able to drop off used cooking oil, scrap metal, paper to be shredded, household items, electronics, and other hard to recycle items at Riverbanks.
- Wild Burger opened this month. This restaurant replaced Solo’s Market to be a burger focused concession option with gourmet burgers, fried pickles, tater tots, etc.
- Lexington County Budget- Joe Mergo contacted Tommy about preparing budgets for the upcoming fiscal year
- Society By-laws Vote- Society had their by-laws reviewed and discovered that to change anything in the by-laws, it requires the membership (40,000 households) to vote. Riverbanks put a notice in the magazine to host a public vote to update the voting requirements to give the board autonomy to edit their own by-laws.
- Farm Update- Construction is well underway in the new farm experience area. There are currently 10 dwarf goats on site, the goat climbing structure is underway, and the prefabricated buildings have been placed on the site.

- Stringfellow shared a WIS “Beyond the Banks” segment that featured the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA). Riverbanks partners with the TSA and the Turtle Alliance Center to help establish a colony for the Sulawesi Forest Turtle population.
- Zoo Atlanta will be coming tomorrow for an elephant site visit.
- Gondola Update- Tommy, Eric, and Dave went to Oakland Zoo to research their Gondola system. They spoke with guests who were riding, went behind the scenes to look at operational aspects, took measurements, etc. The manufacturer will be onsite to look at the final cost to build and annual operational costs. Tommy will present to the Commission once all number estimates are finalized.
- Dinosaur Update- This Sunday Riverbanks will have a presence at the USC baseball game. This will be one of four games in which Dino Dave will be at the ballpark to create media buzz about our coming dino exhibit. The dinosaur exhibit should be open the week before spring break through October. We will also have adult events with dinos.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 21st day of March 2019.

 _____, Secretary