

# Audubon Commission Minutes

June 10, 2021

A video conference meeting of the Audubon Commission was called to order on Thursday, June 10, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. by President Duncan.

Attending were: Kelly Duncan, Gayle Benson, Xavier Angel, Storey Charbonnet, Frances Fayard, Troy Glover, Bruce Hoefler, Lex Kelso, Diedre Kelly, Freddie King, Catherine Morrell, Field Ogden, Sally Shushan, Jermaine Smith, Emily Vuxton, Minh Nguyen, Leila Eames, Ashley Francis, Brent Wood

Excused were: Coleman Ridley, Daniel Conwill, Victor Jones, Dolfinette Martin, Charles Teamer

President Duncan opened the meeting with a reminder that it is being held by video conference due to pandemic regulations and proclamation JBE 2020-30.

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously accepted as distributed (Kelly/Ogden).

Mr. Duncan then requested a motion to amend the agenda to move public comment to the end. The Commission has received a significant amount of feedback from the public regarding tennis. Although there is no vote related to tennis on the agenda, Ms. Rebecca Dietz will give an update in her report. Therefore, it would be best to save any public comments on tennis for after that update so as not to interfere with other official business. Motion was unanimously approved, moving public comment to the end of the agenda (Shushan/Benson).

President Duncan followed by asking if there were any members of the public wishing to make a comment. While there were several members of the public present, only Mr. Scott Howard identified himself by name and address for the record to later make a public comment.

## **Finance Report**

Ms. Laurie Conkerton, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, was introduced to give a quick financial update. The April dashboard below was shared with the board before the meeting. Earned revenue through April was \$10.6M which is 46% above budget. Operating expenses were down 10% from budget at \$10M. The overall net was \$3.3M and 397% over budget. Salaries were 14% lower than budget at \$4.5M. We are slowly and strategically rebuilding staff. Attendance through April is 52% higher than budget, and admissions revenue is 150% higher than budget. Opportunities in the second quarter include the Shuttered Venue Operating Grant, municipal and state stimulus fund under ARPA, renewing lines of credit, hiring additional staff in guest experience and revenue-impacting departments, and special events sales for fall 2021 and 2022. Mr. Forman briefly mentioned that since having the vaccine available, people are eager to get back out and enjoy the city again.

The audited financial statements for the Commission were sent to Commissioners prior to the meeting. These statements, dated December 31, 2020 and 2019, were reviewed and accepted by the Executive/Financial/Audit committees on June 3, 2021. The committees recommend the full Commission approve the statements as presented. Ms. Conkerton noted it was a clean audit. Mr. Duncan commented on the success of the audit and requested a motion to approve the Commission's 2020 audited financial statements. Motion was unanimously approved (Shushan/Benson).

APRIL YTD 2021 FINANCIAL DASHBOARD (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS)							
NET OPERATING RESULTS BY FACILITY:							
FACILITY	YTD ACTUAL 2021	YTD BUDGET 2021	BUDGET VARIANCE	YTD ACTUAL 2020	PRIOR YEAR VARIANCE	TOTAL FORECAST 2021	TOTAL BUDGET 2021
Aquarium	\$2,534	\$174	2,360	\$2,592	(58)	2,702	342
Zoo & Park	\$903	(\$1,142)	2,045	(\$3,459)	4,362	(1,497)	(3,543)
Butterfly Garden & Insectarium	(\$13)	\$0	(13)	(\$226)	213	(13)	-
FMASSC	(\$96)	(\$147)	51	(\$125)	29	(547)	(599)
Louisiana Nature Center	(\$11)	(\$1)	(10)	(\$120)	109	(10)	-
<b>NET OPERATING RESULTS</b>	<b>\$3,317</b>	<b>(\$1,116)</b>	<b>\$4,433</b>	<b>(\$1,338)</b>	<b>\$4,655</b>	<b>\$635</b>	<b>(\$3,800)</b>
Excludes capital revenues and expenses.							

## President's Reports

Mr. Ron Forman, President and CEO, then began his report by introducing Ms. Rebecca Dietz, EVP of Public Affairs and General Counsel. Ms. Dietz began with an update on Advancement and Public Affairs update. Community Connect participation continues to increase. Through May, 25K guests have visited for free through the SNAP program, 6K on Orleans Parish appreciation days, and over 1,400 have used the library pass program. We are partnering with New Orleans Business Alliance on a public art grant for Joe Brown Park, which is adjacent to the Nature Center. Our NORDC summer camp partnership has been reactivated. Their summer camps visit our facilities for free. On June 4, we welcomed over 900 Taylor Scholars and their families and offered free COVID vaccines through a partnership with the City of New Orleans. We serve over 220K Taylor Scholars throughout the State. A few weeks ago, we partnered with Children's Hospital New Orleans to help name our new infant orangutan. They named her Madu, which means honey. Zoo-to-Do tickets are on sale. As volunteers, Commissioners can now receive a discount on Zoo-to-Do tickets and memberships. More information to come following the meeting.

Ms. Dietz then gave an update on tennis. She reminded the group that at the last Commission meeting, they approved Audubon staff entering into talks with Tulane about a partnership to upgrade the tennis facilities. Discussions are ongoing, being sure to focus on all of the issues raised during public meetings. No plans have been finalized. We continue to engage stakeholders throughout the community and will also be gathering usage data. She then mentioned the importance of making sure that our long-term use partnerships reflect Audubon's standards. These will be included in any agreements going forward.

Ms. Dietz then stated a motion was needed to authorize the President of the Audubon Commission or the CEO of the Audubon Nature Institute to execute contracts for post-disaster fencing. The company is unknown at this time and would be selected through public bid process. Successful bidder(s) shall provide post-disaster services required for fence work to remove damaged fencing, temporarily secure existing fencing, and purchase and install new fencing. A multi-year-pre-event contract will be awarded, but no

obligation exists until a Notice to Proceed is issued following a natural disaster. Audubon may award multiple contracts if it is deemed necessary and/or cost beneficial. These costs are generally reimbursed by FEMA. Motion passed unanimously (Shushan/Benson).

Dr. Kyle Burks, EVP and Chief Operating Officer, was introduced. He began by requesting a motion to authorize the President of the Audubon Commission or the President of Audubon Nature Institute to execute a contract with the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, as determined consistent with Louisiana Public Bid Law, for renovations and upgrades to the Capital One Stage at Audubon Zoo. Estimated cost is \$465K. Project is being funded by private donor and bonds. Motion passed unanimously (Smith/Benson).

Dr. Burks then gave some updates on Audubon facilities. He started with the Aquarium, announcing that the new shark touch pool exhibit will finally be opening this summer. Our Coastal Wildlife Network team was able to rescue another dolphin recently. San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance leadership will be in town next week for a Species Survival Center visit and to discuss our ongoing partnership to breed large endangered species. At the Zoo, Madu, our newest orangutan infant is out. Tapir baby watch continues. Zoobilation was hosted last night. The reptile and nocturnal house have opened to the public for the first time since the start of the pandemic. We have secured five new sloths at the Zoo.

Dr. Burks introduced Mr. Daine Appleberry, who was recently promoted to Sr. VP of Guest Services. Mr. Appleberry gave the group an update on Cool Zoo opening. Cool Zoo is opening June 16. It will have two daily sessions to allow for cleaning between groups. Tickets must be booked in advance.

Mr. Forman gave an update on capital funding. There are several projects that have been identified as needing upgrades in order to come back stronger. Some of those projects include renovating our downtown facilities, Woldenberg Park, tropical bird house at the Zoo, water retention in the Park, Riverview improvements, and the Nature Center for a total of \$95-\$105M. We have great potential for federal money, private donations, and state funding. The state legislative session ends today and because of some new leadership we may not be in the capital outlay bill for this year. He finished his report by asking the board to think about going back to in-person meetings and rotating through Audubon's various facilities.

Mr. Duncan then introduced Mr. Scott Howard to give his public comment. He made it known that is he not speaking for "Parks for All". They do not have a position on the tennis courts. He recognizes that the tennis courts partnership could be a win-win. But he is curious about the details and worries about a special arrangement and privatization of public space. Mrs. Dietz just reminded him and the group that this is not a Tulane takeover. It will always remain a public facility. More details will come as they are available.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.