

Audubon Commission Minutes

November 16, 2022

Audubon Zoo Presidents' Room

Attending: Kelly Duncan, Field Ogden, Bruce Hoefler, Xavier Angel, Frances Fayard, Peter Wenstrup, Emily Vuxton, Minh Thanh Nguyen, Aaron Miller, Joe Connelly, Catherine Morrell, Victor Jones, Jermaine Smith, Storey Charbonnet, Lex Kelso

Excused: Coleman Ridley, Dolfinette Martin, Danny Conwill, Gayle Benson, Ashley Francis, Sally Shushan, Leila Eames

President Kelly Duncan called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm. The minutes of the September meeting were unanimously accepted as distributed. There were no members of the public present.

Mr. Duncan introduced Mr. Ron Forman, President and CEO, to present a motion to amend the Audubon Commission By-Laws, article IV, section III. The original text reads: "The regular annual meeting of the Commission shall be held on the last Wednesday of January of each year." The requested new text would read: "The regular annual meeting of the Commission shall be the first meeting of each year." Mr. Forman and Mr. Duncan explained that this change is to allow for more flexibility for meeting dates.

The motion to amend the by-laws as presented passed unanimously (Charbonnet/Smith).

Ms. Laurie Conkerton, EVP and CAO, to present the following motion to the group. Motion carried (Kelso/Angel/Unanimous).

1. *In accordance with Section 4.1.9 of the Management Agreement between Audubon Commission and Audubon Nature Institute, we are seeking Commission approval of the transfer to Audubon Nature Institute of funds collected from the following millages in excess of the amount approved by the Board and Commission in the 2022 Facilities Operating Budget.*

\$9,354 in funds from APC Special Tax Fund .40 mill (zoo)

\$11,550 in funds from Aquarium Tax Fund 3.8 mill

\$174,384 in funds from the APC Limited Tax Fund

The transfer will total \$195,288.

Next, Ms. Conkerton presented three proposed 2023 budgets. The first was the Audubon Nature Institute facilities operating budget.

Audubon Nature Institute Proposed 2023 Operating Budget FINANCIAL DASHBOARD (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS)						
NET OPERATING RESULTS BY FACILITY:						
FACILITY	BUDGET 2023	BUDGET 2022	VARIANCE 2023 Budget To 2022 Budget	FORECAST 2022	ACTUAL 2021	ACTUAL 2019
Aquarium, Butterfly Garden & Insectarium	\$1,791	\$2,215	(424)	\$2,271	5,679	8,016
Zoo & Park	(\$4,087)	(\$3,648)	(439)	(\$3,953)	(1,005)	(6,726)
FMASSC	(\$1,010)	(\$651)	(359)	(\$648)	(314)	(594)
Louisiana Nature Center	(\$189)	(\$112)	(77)	(\$104)	(69)	(335)
NET OPERATING RESULTS	(\$3,495)	(\$2,196)	(\$1,299)	(\$2,434)	\$4,291	\$361

She began by reminding the group of where Audubon is in the recovery plan. The city still is not back to pre-covid tourism levels and is not expected to be until at least 2024. With the Aquarium expected to be closed for almost half of 2023 and insurance and salaries being higher, there is a conservatively projected loss of \$3.5M.

Mr. Ron Forman assured everyone that Audubon is in a good financial position. Audubon is not currently into their lines of credit and has endowment funds available to cover any losses for the year. The goal is to have a positive year for 2024.

After some questions and discussion, the Commission unanimously approved the presented 2023 Audubon Facilities Operating Budget (Executive/Finance Committees/Fayard).

Next, Ms. Conkerton presented the 2023 Commission operating budget below.

Audubon Commission - Operations SUMMARY				
	2023 BUDGET	2022 BUDGET	VARIANCE 2023 Budget to 2022 Budget	2022 FORECAST
OPERATING & NON OPERATING REVENUES				
Lease Revenue	\$900,000	\$633,720	\$266,280	\$892,000
Tax Millage	5,000,000	4,633,720	366,280	4,776,000
Total Revenues	5,900,000	5,267,440	632,560	5,668,000
EXPENSES				
Transfer of Tax Millage to ANI Operations	5,000,000	4,633,720	366,280	4,634,000
Total Expenses	5,000,000	4,633,720	366,280	4,634,000
Net results	900,000	633,720	266,280	1,034,000

After further discussion, the Commission unanimously approved the 2023 Audubon Commission Operating Budget (Executive/Finance Committees/Ogden).

Finally, Ms. Conkerton presented the updated 2022-2026 capital plan below. This plan was approved previously, but there have been some additional funding and projects added since then.

The Commission unanimously approved updates to the 2022-2026 Capital Projects Plan (Executive/Finance Committees/Fayard).

2022-26 Capital Plan Audubon Facilities		
Sources of Funds	2023	Total
2020 Bond Proceeds	\$0.000	\$3.624
2021 Bond Proceeds	\$7.614	\$40.393
State Capital Outlay	\$4.500	\$19.000
City Capital Outlay	\$5.000	\$19.240
Federal HUD CDBG Community Project	\$1.000	\$3.000
Federal NOAA Community Project	\$0.450	\$0.450
Federal EDA Tourism Grant	\$5.000	\$5.000
Gov Nicholls/Esplanade Wharf Park Escrow	\$0.650	\$14.654
Private Donations	\$0.610	\$3.976
2021 Cash Reserve	\$0.000	\$0.735
Future Operating Reserve/Capital Campaign	\$0.000	\$6.000
Total Sources of Funding for Capital	\$24.825	\$116.073
Uses of Funds		
Major Construction of \$250K+ (in Millions)	\$22.721	\$104.182
Mid-Level Construction (\$50K - \$249k)	\$1.250	\$9.347
Larger Repair/Maintenance (\$10K - \$49K)	\$0.000	\$0.551
Capital Equipment (\$10K+)	\$0.450	\$1.185
Capital Projects Staff	\$0.404	\$0.808
Total Uses of Funding for Capital	\$24.825	\$116.073

Amounts are in Millions

Mr. Forman introduced Toni Mobley, Executive Vice President and Chief Service and Inclusion Officer, to give an update on Service Initiatives. She started her report with some updated Community Connect numbers for the year. Through this program, the Aquarium has welcomed over 27K guests, and the Zoo has welcomed over 45K. Next, she shared some of the recent community engagement activities. These included November being military appreciation month, the UNCF Walk for Education, Stake Out for Justice Luncheon, and a partnership with NOCCA that offers animal enrichment. She explained that NOCCA students came to the Zoo recently to play some music for our orangutans. Video can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNW-DXZ2FZI>.

Finally, she updated the group on DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion) milestones. Audubon is at 30.5% supplier diversity spending, exceeding its goal of 20% for 2022. Audubon has also conducted business with 29 new diverse suppliers for 2022, exceeding its goal of 15 for the year. Lastly, she explained Audubon's efforts to increase accessibility and recruitment for employees with disabilities.

There were several questions from Commissioners that Ms. Mobley will investigate further and follow up on after the meeting.

Last, Dr. Kyle Burks, Executive Vice President and COO, was introduced to update the group on important operational and facilities updates. He began by sharing that the Aquarium renovations are going great. The facility will be closing at the end of November and reopening when construction is complete in mid-2023. The targeted opening date is June 1. The RTA landscaping improvements will create a greener and more seamless and welcoming riverfront aesthetic. Tulane is finalizing the tennis facility agreement and will be moving forward soon with design. Education staff from the Aquarium will be redeployed to the Zoo during closure. That department is coming back strong and now offering holiday camps at the Zoo. Out at the Species Survival Center on the west bank, the new okapi calf is doing well. Audubon now houses 7 of the 80 okapi in the US. Audubon is very active in their partnership with LDWF to release whooping cranes. The most recent dolphin rescue attempt was not successful. But the team was able to assess that the dolphins were healthy and there was plenty of food in the area for them to survive. The team will attempt again in January. At the Zoo, the three new black bear cubs are doing great. They will be celebrated during Swamp Fete in early December.

After more questions and discussion, and there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned shortly after 5:00 pm.