

Audubon Commission Minutes

September 28, 2022

Audubon Zoo Presidents' Room

Attending: Dr. Field Ogden, Gayle Benson, Ashley Francis, Sally Shushan, Bruce Hoefler, Xavier Angel, Frances Fayard, Peter Wenstrup, Emily Vuxton, Leila Eames, Minh Thanh Nguyen, Aaron Miller, Dr. Joe Connelly

Excused: Kelly Duncan, Coleman Ridley, Catherine Morrell, Victor Jones, Dolfinette Martin, Jermaine Smith, Storey Charbonnet, Lex Kelso, Danny Conwill

First Vice President Dr. Field Ogden called the meeting order at 4:00 pm. He then welcomed two new Commissioners, Rev. Aaron Miller and Dr. Joe Connelly. Both introduced themselves and said a few words. The minutes of the May meeting were unanimously accepted as distributed (Shushan/Francis). There were no members of the public present.

Dr. Ogden introduced Ms. Laurie Conkerton, EVP and CAO, to present the following motions to the group. All passed unanimously.

- 1. The audited financial statements for the Commission were sent to Commissioners prior to the meeting. These statements, dated December 31, 2021 and 2020, were reviewed and accepted by the Executive/Financial/Audit committees on June 22, 2022. The committees recommend the full Commission approve the statements as presented. The Commission approves the Commission's 2021 audited financial statements (Vuxton/Benson).*
- 2. In accordance with Section 4.1.9 of the Management Agreement between Audubon Commission and Audubon Nature Institute, the Commission approves 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.*

\$7,987 in funds from APC Special Tax Fund .40 mill (zoo)

\$82,224 in funds from Aquarium Tax Fund 3.8 mill

\$51,789 in funds from the APC Limited Tax Fund

The transfer will total \$142,000 (Shushan/Francis).

- 3. WHEREAS, beginning in 2021, the City began to levy a separate ad valorem tax of 6.31 mills (the "2021 Tax") pursuant to the following proposition approved by a majority of the electorate voting at a special election held in the City on May 4, 2019:*

In lieu of 3.00 mills currently levied for Parkway and Parks Commission and New Orleans Recreation Department and 0.32 mills and 2.99 mills levied for Audubon Commission ("Prior Taxes"), shall the City be authorized to levy a special tax of 6.31 mills ("Tax") for twenty years, January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2040 (estimated at \$22,150,000 in the first year) with proceeds dedicated first to payment of debt service obligations secured by the Prior Taxes then to improving park safety and accessibility, capturing stormwater to reduce flooding, repairing and

upgrading playgrounds and recreation centers, conserving natural areas, and constructing, improving, maintaining, and operating parks, recreational, and wildlife conservation facilities in the City, except that a portion of collections shall be remitted to certain state and statewide retirement systems as required by law, allocated pro-rata as follows: 1.95 mills to New Orleans Recreation Development Commission; 1.80 mills to New Orleans Department of Parks and Parkways; 0.61 mills to City Park Improvement Association; and 1.95 mills to Audubon Commission, supplemental to and not in lieu of City general fund appropriations budgeted for 2020, subject to requirements provided by Ordinance Calendar Number 32,501 and with expenditures subject to public disclosure through annual audit; and

WHEREAS, the Audubon Commission intends for the millage to be levied at its authorized rate;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the following millage is hereby levied on the 2023 tax roll on all property subject to taxation by the Audubon Commission:

Audubon Commission

1.95 mills

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the proper administrative officials of the Parish of Orleans, State of Louisiana, be and they are hereby empowered, authorized, and directed to spread said taxes, as hereinabove set forth, upon the assessment roll of said Parish for the year 2023, and to make the collection of the taxes imposed for and on behalf of the taxing authority, according to law, and that the taxes herein levied shall become a permanent lien and privilege on all property subject to taxation as herein set forth, and collection thereof shall be enforceable in the manner provided by law (Benson/Fayard).

- 4. The Commission authorizes the President of the Audubon Commission to sign a lease-purchase agreement with Wells Fargo Equipment Finance for golf maintenance equipment. The equipment includes but is not limited to tractors, precision cut mowers, riding mowers and rollers valued at \$480,000. The lease term is 48 months at approximately \$11,505.42. Equipment is being lease-purchased from state contract suppliers and low bid suppliers (Francis/Vuxton).*

Dr. Kyle Burks, EVP and COO, then presented the following motions. All were passed unanimously.

- 5. The Commission authorizes the President of the Commission or the President and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to execute a contract with Eskew Dumez Ripple, one of the architectural firms selected to be in a service pool through a request for proposals process, for design services related to Woldenberg Park Improvements. Contract amount is \$577,020, to be paid from bond sale proceeds (Eames/Fayard).*
- 6. The Commission authorizes the President of the Audubon Commission or the CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to agree to an amendment of the existing Construction Manager at Risk Agreement with Broadmoor, LLC to increase the project cost by \$5,579,577 to a new total amount of \$31,179,679. This increased amount will fund the construction of additional scope in the project including upgrades and renovation of the Mississippi Gallery, creating a new experience to allow Guests access to the Top of the Gulf exhibit, upgrades and renovations to the Amazon Gallery and upgrades and renovations to the former Parakeet Pointe exhibit. Funding for this agreement will come from a \$5 Million grant from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation (ARPA Tourism) through the Economic Development*

Agency (EDA), Department of Commerce. These funds flow through the State of Louisiana's Division of Administration (Benson/Fayard).

7. *The Commission authorizes the President of the Commission or the President and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to execute a contract with the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, as determined by Louisiana Public Bid Law for repair of 106 Bienville Street Wharf columns. The estimated cost is \$1 million and being paid with 2021 bond sale proceeds (Shushan/Vuxton).*
8. *The Commission authorizes the President of the Commission or the President and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to execute a contract with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for Audubon to support the Louisiana seafood industry in their sustainability efforts. The contract is for a term of one year and a fee of \$70K (Francis/Shushan).*
9. *The Commission authorizes the President of the Audubon Commission or the CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to enter into a Cooperative Endeavour Agreement with RTA to fund improvements to the Canal Street Ferry Terminal site, adding planters and landscaping to the existing project with a total design and construction budget not to exceed \$1,226,374.00. Following construction, Audubon Nature Institute would then be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the improvements included in this scope. Funding for this agreement will come from private funds (Shushan/Angel).*

Dr. Burks further elaborated on the plan for Riverfront development and Woldenberg Park upgrades.

Mr. Ron Forman, President and CEO, began his report by reminding everyone of the three-year plan for COVID recovery. The tourism community is optimistic that 2024 is going to be a great year with a lot of exciting new city attractions. He then presented the below list of major capital projects. He also shared some renderings of the Aquarium updates and what the current construction progress looks like.

2022-26 Major Capital Projects (\$250K+)

Audubon Zoo and Park (\$40M)

Tropical Birdhouse (\$4.0M)
 Jaguar Jungle Phase III (\$7.7M)
 Earth Lab/Animal Ambassador Experience (\$5.0M)
 Odenheimer Stabilization/Reptile House Renovation (\$12.7M)
 Capital One Stage (\$0.58M)
 Riverview Improvements Promenade, Shelters, etc. (\$3.5M)
 Riverview Erosion Control/River Pathway (\$1.2M)
 Audubon Park Stormwater Management (\$9.8M)

Aquarium, Insectarium, Woldenberg Riverfront Park (\$56M)

Aquarium Shared Lobby/BGI Move w/ EGST Repurpose (\$28.0M)
 Amazon Rainforest (\$1.0M)
 Mississippi/Wetlands Gallery (\$1.2M)
 AoA Structural/Exterior Restoration (\$0.6M)
 Gulf Gallery (\$0.8M)
 Event Space Updates (\$0.6M)
 GNEW Wharf to Park Transformation (\$14.65M)
 Woldenberg Riverfront Park Improvements (\$6.3M)
 Woldenberg Wharf Repair Phase II (\$1.0M)
 Wharf Fire Suppression System (\$1.0M)

Mr. Forman further explained the importance of revitalizing the Riverfront and transforming tourism for the city.

Ms. Conkerton gave a brief financial report. The Commission and Institute August year-to-date dashboards below were shared with the group.

Audubon Commission - Operations
August YTD 2022 Financial Dashboard
 (Amounts in Thousands)

	YTD ACTUAL 2022	YTD BUDGET 2022	Budget Variance	TOTAL FORECAST 2022	TOTAL BUDGET 2022
OPERATING & NON OPERATING REVENUES					
Lease Revenue	680	422	258	892	634
Tax Millage	4,776	4,634	142	4,776	4,634
Total Revenues	\$ 5,456	\$ 5,056	\$ 400	\$ 5,668	\$ 5,268
EXPENSES					
Transfer of Tax Millage to ANI Operations	4,634	4,634	-	4,634	4,634
Total Expenses	\$ 4,634	\$ 4,634	\$ -	\$ 4,634	\$ 4,634
Net Results	\$ 822	\$ 422	\$ 400	\$ 1,034	\$ 634

Audubon Nature Institute

AUGUST YTD 2022 FINANCIAL DASHBOARD
 (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS)

	YTD	YTD	BUDGET VARIANCE	YTD	PRIOR YEAR VARIANCE	TOTAL	TOTAL
	ACTUAL 2022	BUDGET 2022		ACTUAL 2021		FORECAST 2022	BUDGET 2022
NET OPERATING RESULTS BY FACILITY							
Aquarium	\$4,086	\$4,033	53	\$7,229	(3,143)	2,270	2,215
Zoo & Park	(\$1,160)	(\$855)	(305)	\$1,458	(2,618)	(3,953)	(3,648)
Butterfly Garden & Insectarium	\$0	(\$2)	2	(\$17)	17	-	-
FMASSC	(\$364)	(\$367)	3	(\$299)	(65)	(648)	(651)
Louisiana Nature Center	(\$10)	(\$18)	8	531	(41)	(104)	(112)
NET OPERATING RESULTS	\$2,552	\$2,791	(\$239)	\$8,402	(\$5,850)	(\$2,435)	(\$2,196)

Excludes capital revenues and expenses.

She went over the highlights of each dashboard. The Commission revenue is from leases and tax millage. The only Commission expenses are the transfer of millage to Audubon Nature Institute to operate facilities. On the Institute side, she noted that May, June, and July revenue and attendance were below budget. However, August and September were running ahead of what was budgeted. Audubon continues to monitor expenses closely. Some of the exciting fall promotions include Boo at the Zoo, Mermaids, and our new Black Bear cubs. She also shared some of the new marketing and ad campaigns that are running featuring awesome and aww-inspiring animals.

Ms. Toni Mobley, Executive Vice President and Chief Service and Inclusion Officer, was introduced to give an update on Service Initiatives. She began by sharing the Community Connect numbers for the year. Through this program, the Aquarium has welcomed over 22K guests, and the Zoo has welcomed over 34K. Lastly, she updated the group on DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion) efforts. Audubon is at 27% supplier diversity spending, exceeding its goal of 20% for 2022. She also shared some of Audubon's DEAI hiring partnerships and strategies.

Dr. Burks updated the group on important operational and facilities updates. He reported on renovations happening at Hyams Fountain, horticultural improvements at the Zoo and Park, and Tropical Bird House is nearing completion and expected to open in the spring. Dr. Burks also shared some of Audubon's adorable new animals. The Zoo recently welcomed an orphaned Louisiana Black Bear cub named Sassafras. There are two more orphaned bear cubs coming from Alaska as soon as travel arrangements can be made. A rare Dwarf Mexican Hairy Porcupine was received at the Zoo after it was found in a tree near Whole Foods. A newborn baby Owl Monkey has been receiving around the clock care by our animal team because its mother sadly died shortly after giving birth. Over on the west bank at FMASSC, two new giraffes were born over the summer. He also announced that the partnership with San Diego has ended, but the conservation work will continue. The new downtown lobby will be able to highlight all the wonderful conservation work that Audubon does.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned shortly after 5:00 pm.