



November 16, 2021

A meeting of the Audubon Nature Institute Board was held on Tuesday, November 16, at 12 pm by video conference, Chairman Poco Sloss presiding.

In attendance: Poco Sloss, Chris Bardell, Willard Dumas, Leslie Gottsegen, Ludovico Feoli, Bernard Van der Linden, Susu Stall, Anne Long, Peter Moss, Qi Wiggins, Linda Baum, Dennis Lauscha, Leah Brown, Beth Lambert, Megan Eustis, Hunter Cazes, Edgar Chase, Bart Farris, Tommy Westfeldt, John Payne, Mark Romig

Excused: Julie Quinn, Vincent Palumbo, Henry Coaxum, John Nickens, Beau Box, Caroline Calhoun, Joe Jaeger, Wil Jacobs, Angus Cooper

The minutes of the September meeting were unanimously accepted as distributed (Dumas/Romig).

Mr. Sloss then introduced Ms. Laurie Conkerton, EVP and CAO, to present the proposed 2022 budgets. Ms. Conkerton began her presentation with background information. Audubon sees 2022 as a transitional year, and the organization is not where it was pre-COVID. However, great progress is being made as Audubon rebuilds with purpose. General assumptions for 2022 include a five day per week operating schedule of Thursday through Monday for the Zoo and Aquarium, six days a week of operations for spring break (March 16-April 20, adding Wednesdays), Aquarium construction closures are scheduled for six weeks in January and February and all of December; groups will be admitted again; Community Connect and Taylor Audubon Scholars programs will be offered to increase community access; and the team will remain flexible should COVID restrictions return.

Ms. Conkerton then shared some of the operating priorities for 2022. Those include reintroduction of education programs, a conservation program with dedicated funding, continued living wage implementation and talent development, new website and employee intranet, timely management of capital projects, PR campaign for Aquarium project, capital campaign, implement updated management agreement changes, and business planning for downtown transformation and beyond. She went on to explain salary adjustments and positions included in 2022 baseline budget. Before COVID, Audubon had a total of 869 employees and as of September 30, 2021 has 415.

Next, Ms. Conkerton shared the summary of Audubon Facilities Operating budget for 2022. The net results of the proposed operating budget are -\$2.2M, however, based on positive 2021 results we are expecting to exceed this conservative budget and end the year with positive net operating results. The net results for development and public affairs budget are -\$578K since much of the funding raised through development is restricted to capital and is not reflected in this operating budget.

The total attendance projection for next year is 843K. That number is based on past performance and conversations with New Orleans and Louisiana tourism leaders who are optimistic about the return of leisure tourism in 2022. The admissions revenue projection total is about \$14M. Ms. Conkerton then explained the use of dynamic pricing next year. Using this variable pricing encourages online purchasing and allows our guests to get the best price. The proposed pricing for 2022 is a range of \$15.20-\$35.95 for all ticket categories at the Zoo and a range of \$19.96-\$39.95 for the Aquarium. Membership prices will not be changing. Next, she went over group pricing.

Audubon Nature Institute- Operating Budget						
FINANCIAL DASHBOARD						
DRAFT AS OF NOVEMBER 10						
<i>(AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS)</i>						
NET OPERATING RESULTS BY FACILITY:						
FACILITY	BUDGET 2022	BUDGET 2021	VARIANCE 2022 Budget To 2021 Budget	FORECAST 2021	ACTUAL 2020	ACTUAL 2019
Aquarium	\$2,215	\$342	1,873	\$5,598	2,904	7,493
Zoo & Park	(\$3,648)	(\$3,543)	(105)	(\$1,439)	(5,988)	(6,726)
Butterfly Garden & Insectarium	\$0	\$0	0	(\$13)	(375)	523
FMASSC	(\$651)	(\$599)	(52)	(\$620)	(163)	(594)
Louisiana Nature Center	(\$112)	\$0	(112)	(\$25)	(230)	(335)
NET OPERATING RESULTS	(\$2,196)	(\$3,800)	\$1,604	\$3,501	(\$3,852)	\$361
Excludes capital revenues and expenses.						

The capital plan for 2022-2026 was then shared with the group. The total budget for 2022 is \$48M with the primary source of funding being bond proceeds. The total for 2022-2026 is \$107.8M. It is important to note that expenditures are dependent on funding availability. Mr. Ron Forman, President and CEO, reviewed the major capital projects planned through 2026, including \$40M of projects at the Zoo and Park, and \$56M in downtown projects. In response to some questions, Ms. Conkerton explained that improvements to the Riverview park were included in approved City capital outlay. She also stated that Digonex would be getting 25 cents per online ticket order.

Mr. Sloss asked for motion to approve the 2022 Audubon facilities operating budget (including Development and Public Affairs). The Executive and Finance committees recommend this budget for approval. Motion passed unanimously (Bardell/Lauscha).

He then asked for a motion to approve the capital projects plan for 2022-2026. This plan is also recommended by the Executive and Finance committees. Motion passed unanimously (Dumas/Farris).

Ms. Conkerton then explained that because of changes to the management agreement, the Audubon Nature Institute needs to open a new bank account. The resolution would create the new account, giving signature authority to the following Audubon staff: Laurie Conkerton, Ron Forman, Rebecca Dietz, Kyle Burks, and Caroline Tierney. Motion carried (Dumas/Farris/Unanimous).

Mr. Ron Forman began his report by recognizing Leslie Gottsegen for being Whitney Hancock Zoo-to-Do Queen for the last two years. That event and the Children's Hospital Zoo-to-Do for Kids were both very successful events. He then recognized John Nickens and recommended everyone go see the wonderful Children's Hospital transformation. He then acknowledged Bernard Vanderlinden for his successful orangutan exhibit. Lastly, the Board of Liquidation meets tomorrow after our bond sale.

Dr. Kyle Burks, EVP and Chief Operating Officer, was introduced by Mr. Forman to give his report on Audubon Facilities. The Nature now has a staff of four and is able to reopen the interpretive center and reintroduce some educational programming for that community. The Aquarium project is moving forward, with demolition starting December 1. There have been six ray births in the last three weeks. He then presented some facility and program updates. This is the time of year our team releases whooping cranes into Louisiana habitats. They are then tracked for research purposes. Menari, a Sumatran orangutan at the Zoo, is expecting twins. Because she will not be able to care for both babies, our animal care team is prepared to assist with rearing. To have four orangutan births in a two-year span is spectacular. All of our great apes have received their covid vaccine. Pacha, our young tapir is out on exhibit in Jaguar Jungle. Another new addition is a pair of maned wolves. A couple of months ago, we were contacted by US Fish and Wildlife Service about taking a young jaguar cub that was confiscated at the Texas-Mexico border. She is now in our care after very poor treatment from her previous private owner. Someone asked about covid testing for non-primates. Dr. Burks stated that due to our safety protocols we have not had a reason for testing. However, data and information are constantly evolving so we are ready to make changes to our procedures as needed.

Mr. Forman then mentioned that there should be another public meeting on tennis court upgrades soon with recommendations coming out early next year. He also mentioned the year-end giving campaign. We hope to have 100% board participation. Ms. Qi Wiggins asked about being diversity when we choose our Zoo-to-Do queens. Mr. Forman stated that yes, Audubon is working to improve diversity in all aspects of the organization. He then noted that this is Ms. Wiggins last board meeting since she has moved away. He thanked her for her service, and she will be greatly missed.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:50 pm.