

Audubon Commission & Audubon Nature Institute Board Joint Executive/Finance Committee Meeting

Thursday, November 11, 2021

11:00 AM

Zoom Video Conference

President Duncan from the Audubon Commission began the meeting by introducing Chairman Poco Sloss from the Audubon Nature Institute Board and reminded everyone that the meeting was open to the public. No members of the public were in attendance to make public comment. Attending from the Commission were Kelly Duncan, Danny Conwill, Brent Wood, Xavier Angel, Lex Kelso, Ashley Francis, and Field Ogden. From the Audubon Nature Institute Board were Poco Sloss, Vincent Palumbo, Dennis Lauscha, Mark Romig, Leslie Gottsegen, Ludovico Feoli, and Tommy Westfeldt.

President Duncan then introduced Ms. Laurie Conkerton, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, to present the proposed 2022 budgets.

Ms. Conkerton began her presentation with some background information. This is a transitional year and Audubon is not where it was pre-COVID. However, great progress is being made and the organization is rebuilding with purpose. After showing Institute cash reserves and where Audubon was financially in 2020 and 2021, she went on to share 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 hoping to exceed that. The net results for development and public affairs budget are -\$578K due to the fact that much of the funding raised through development is restricted to capital and is not reflected in this operating budget.

Ms. Conkerton then presented the 2022 Commission Operating budget. Under the new management agreement, this is the first year for the Commission to have its own budget. Tax millage and leases are the primary revenue. All tax millage is transferred to the Institute for operating expenses. That leaves a net of \$634K.

Some general assumptions for 2022 include a five days 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 scheduled for six weeks in January and February and all of December, groups will be admitted again, still offering Community Connect and Taylor Audubon Scholars programs, and 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, 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.

The total attendance projection for next year is roughly 843K. That number is based on past performance and conversations with New Orleans and Louisiana tourism leaders. The admissions 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.

Both the Institute board and the Commission are also being asked to approve the capital plan and budget. The total budget for 2022 is \$48M with the primary source of funding being bond proceeds. The total for 2022-2026 is \$107.8M. Preliminary bond sale calculations will be sent to the group after the meeting.

After some discussion, Chairman Poco Sloss asked the Audubon Nature Institute Board to recommend the proposed 2022 budgets for full board approval. Motion passed unanimously (Lauscha/Gottsegen). President Kelly Duncan then asked the Commissioners present for a motion recommend the proposed 2022 budgets for full Commission approval. Motion passed unanimously (Kelso/Ogden).

Finally, Mr. Ron Forman, President and CEO, ended the meeting on a positive note with some updates on City improvements and other great things to look forward to for 2022 and beyond. And then he thanked Ms. Conkerton for all of her hard work on the budgets. Ms. Conkerton in turn thanked Ms. Caroline Tierney, VP of Finance, and her team for all of their assistance.