



Audubon Nature Institute
Celebrating the Wonders of Nature

January 26, 2021

A meeting of the Audubon Nature Institute Board was held on Tuesday, January 26, at 8:00 AM by video conference, Chairman Poco Sloss presiding.

In attendance: Poco Sloss, Chris Bardell, Quentin Messer, Vincent Palumbo, Caroline Calhoun, Leslie Gottsegen, Steve Kupperman, Peter Moss, Tommy Westfeldt, Wil Jacobs, Ludovico Feoli, Dennis Lauscha, Hunter Cazes, Willard Dumas, Linda Baum, Beau Box, Leah Brown, Edgar Chase, Henry Coaxum, Anne Long, Nolan Marshall, Steve Perry, Mark Romig, Susu Stall, Bernard Van der Linden, Qiana Wiggins

Excused: Bart Farris, John Nickens, John Payne, Julie Quinn, Joe Jaeger

The minutes of November 2020 meeting were unanimously accepted as distributed.

Mr. Sloss then presented an honorary resolution remembering the late Mr. James “Jim Bob” Moffett for his service to the community and Audubon. The entire board and Audubon family extend their deepest appreciation for his great leadership and vision.

Nominating Committee Report

Mr. Sloss introduced Ms. Susu Stall, Chair of the Nominating Committee. She reported that the committee met the week prior. They agreed that in order to keep continuity in leadership during the current pandemic it is the unanimous recommendation of the Nominating Committee to the Audubon Nature Institute Board that the bylaws be amended to allow officers to serve no more than three (3) consecutive one (1) year terms in the same office. The recommendation was considered and approved (Jacobs/Messer/unanimous).

It is the unanimous recommendation of the Nominating Committee that the following slate of officers be elected by the Board to serve in 2021: Chairman – Poco Sloss; 1st VC – Willard Dumas; 2nd VC – Dennis Lauscha; Rec. Secretary - Vincent Palumbo; Corres. Secretary – Quentin Messer; Treasurer - Leslie Gottsegen; Parliamentarian – Ludovico Feoli; Immediate Past Chair - Chris Bardell. The recommendation for the slate of officers was unanimously approved (Jacobs/Moss).

Finally, it is the unanimous recommendation of the Nominating Committee that Ms. Beth Lambert be elected by the Board to fill the vacancy of Nathalie Simon. The recommendation was unanimously approved (Dumas/Westfeldt).

Finance Report

NOVEMBER YTD 2020 FINANCIAL DASHBOARD (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS)						
NET OPERATING RESULTS BY FACILITY:						
FACILITY	YTD ACTUAL 2020	YTD BUDGET 2020	BUDGET VARIANCE	YTD ACTUAL 2019	PRIOR YEAR VARIANCE	TOTAL BUDGET 2020
Aquarium/EGST	\$1,919	\$7,587	(5,668)	\$6,796	(4,877)	7,492
Zoo & Park	(\$6,500)	(\$5,376)	(1,124)	(\$6,078)	(422)	(6,344)
Butterfly Garden & Insectarium	(\$583)	\$337	(920)	\$483	(1,066)	368
FMASSC	(\$246)	(\$590)	344	(\$730)	484	(615)
Louisiana Nature Center	(\$216)	(\$511)	295	(\$297)	81	(551)
NET OPERATING RESULTS	(\$5,626)	\$1,447	(\$7,073)	\$174	(\$5,800)	\$350
Excludes capital revenues and expenses.						

Mr. Sloss introduced Ms. Laurie Conkerton, EVP and CAO, to give a finance update. She presented a high-level overview comparing 2020 original budget, revised budget, and 2021 budget and opportunities. The 2020 original budget included \$57M in total revenues and a \$350K net income. When facilities were forced to close, drastic changes were made to match cash availability; Audubon furloughed or laid off over 500 employees, applied pay cuts to most positions, cut operating budget to essential needs only, kept lines of credit intact, made Foundation draw downs, launched a recovery campaign, and deferred major payments when possible. The post-COVID budget estimated a \$9.8 M loss for the year. The forecast loss for 2020 is \$6.6M based on actuals through November and revised budget for December. Total attendance was 500K, 2% below revised projections, with the Aquarium significantly outperforming the revised projection. The 2021 budget is anticipating a \$3.8M loss with a slightly higher total attendance of 630K. Admissions per cap for 2020 was \$13.61 with an original budget of \$9.53. This is largely because of fewer discounts than normal. Possible financial opportunities for 2021 include eligibility for up to \$10M from the Shuttered Venue Operator Grant, the employee retention tax credit, and renewing lines of credit.

After some discussion on tourism and travel predictions for 2021 and beyond, Ms. Conkerton presented a motion authorizing the Chairman of the Audubon Nature Institute to sign an engagement letter with LaPorte CPA's to perform Audubon's annual audit. (Dumas/Jacobs/unanimous)

Ms. Conkerton presented a second motion stating that The Audubon Nature Institute Board attests that the Louisiana Compliance Questionnaire for Audit Engagements of Quasi-Public Agencies was presented to and adopted by the governing body, by request of Louisiana Legislative Auditor, Daryl G. Pupera, CPA, CFE. Chairman of the Board, Treasurer and Secretary of the Audubon Nature Institute Board are hereby authorized to execute the aforementioned questionnaire. (Moss/Westfeldt/unanimous)

President's Report

Mr. Ron Forman, President and CEO, gave a brief update to the group. He reported in three parts. The first being an overview of 2020 and last year operating in crisis mode. Unfortunately, we aren't out of crisis mode yet. 2021 will be much like last year. We still have 500 fewer employees and COVID numbers are unpredictable. However, the team will continue to move forward in 2021 with a focus on planning for the future of the organization. The hope is to come out of this better and stronger. For 2022 and beyond, our downtown facilities will be transformed and part of the rebirth of tourism and that area of the city. Mr. Jacobs asked about Magazine St. construction. Mr. Forman stated this should be starting late summer of this year and Audubon will do its very best to manage any disruption and impact it may cause.

He then introduced Ms. Rebecca Dietz, EVP of Public Affairs and General Counsel, to give her report on development, and advocacy. Since launching the recovery fund back in March, Audubon has accepted over \$900K in new gifts. This doesn't include other redirected gifts. \$200K of that total came from the year-end campaign, including 71% of board and commission giving. We will have a re-imagined Zoo-To-Do. She thanked Leslie and Betsy Laborde for continuing as queens for 2021 and they are looking at fall for an event date. For advocacy, she and others worked very hard to have zoos and aquariums added to the shuttered venues grant opportunity. They will continue to work with officials to ensure such facilities are included to receive any future assistance. Mr. Forman is meeting with the Problems Solvers Caucus tomorrow to thank them for passing the grant but to ask them to continue to support zoos and aquariums. Finally, she reported that after hearing from the community, we are evaluating ways to upgrade the tennis courts possibly using key partnerships and will keep everyone posted if there are any updates.

Dr. Kyle Burks, EVP and COO, then gave an update on our education and volunteers department. They have continued to educate and do outreach through the entire year by pivoting and quickly evolving to virtual programming. They have been working with title I schools and looking to branch out to libraries and hospitals. The teen volunteers are very passionate and have taken the initiative to educate themselves on specific topics and educate others. The survival center is still caring for 30 cold-stunned turtles in hopes of releasing them as it gets warmer. Through some hard work from development and animal team, we have secured a grant of \$1M for whooping crane conservation. We have some new babies including a giraffe. The tropical bird house is still under construction and expected to be complete by the end of the year. The lion cubs just celebrated their first birthday. One of the female orangutans is also pregnant and expecting this summer. Finally, we were able to collect 1,200 pounds of old Christmas lights for lion conservation.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 AM.