



Audubon Nature Institute  
*Celebrating the Wonders of Nature*

March 23, 2021

A meeting of the Audubon Nature Institute Board was held on Tuesday, March 23, at 12:00 PM by video conference, Chairman Poco Sloss presiding.

In attendance: Poco Sloss, Chris Bardell, Quentin Messer, Leslie Gottsegen, Steve Kupperman, Peter Moss, Tommy Westfeldt, Wil Jacobs, Ludovico Feoli, Dennis Lauscha, Hunter Cazes, Linda Baum, Beau Box, Edgar Chase, Henry Coaxum, Anne Long, Mark Romig, Bernard Van der Linden, Qiana Wiggins, Joe Jaeger, John Nickens, John Payne, Beth Lambert

Excused: Bart Farris, Julie Quinn, Vincent Palumbo, Caroline Calhoun, Leah Brown, Willard Dumas, Nolan Marshall, Steve Perry, Susu Stall

Mr. Sloss open the meeting by introducing Beth Lambert, the newest member of the board. The minutes of January 2021 meeting were unanimously accepted as distributed.

### **Mission Moment**

Mr. Rich Toth, Vice President & Managing Director of Downtown Facilities, gave an update on Audubon's Coastal Wildlife Network and their recent efforts to rehab and release of sea turtles. In November 2020, the team took in 30 cold stunned sea turtles from New England. The first 13 of those were released off Grand Isle last week. The next release is targeted for April pending final health checks. The future of the Coastal Wildlife Network is a five-year project with NOAA to begin increasing marine mammal stranding capacity in Louisiana, expanding the volunteer corps and outreach to coastal communities, and enhance rehab capabilities through supplies and infrastructure improvements. If you see an injured or sick marine mammal or sea turtle call 504-235-3005.

### **Finance Report**

Ms. Laurie Conkerton, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, was introduced to give a quick financial update. The January dashboard below was shared with the board before the meeting. Earned income through January of this year is up 48% over what was budgeted, and operating expenses are 12% below what was budgeted. Attendance for the year through March 21 is at 154,300 which is 47% higher than budget. Admissions revenue through March 21 is \$2.9M and 129% higher than budget. Admissions per cap for the first quarter is \$19.02. Some of the second quarter opportunities are the Shuttered Venue Operating Grant, potential CARES act funds submitted last year, renewing lines of credit, hiring seasonal staff, and implementing key recommendations from Living HR.

JANUARY YTD 2021 FINANCIAL DASHBOARD (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS)						
NET OPERATING RESULTS BY FACILITY:						
FACILITY	YTD ACTUAL 2021	YTD BUDGET 2021	BUDGET VARIANCE	YTD ACTUAL 2020	PRIOR YEAR VARIANCE	TOTAL BUDGET 2021
Aquarium/EGST	(\$129)	(\$442)	313	\$186	(315)	342
Zoo & Park	(\$550)	(\$1,026)	476	(\$1,088)	538	(3,543)
Butterfly Garden & Insectarium	(\$5)	\$0	(5)	(\$70)	65	-
FMASSC	\$8	(\$13)	21	(\$16)	24	(599)
Louisiana Nature Center	(\$23)	(\$12)	(11)	(\$37)	14	-
<b>NET OPERATING RESULTS</b>	<b>(\$699)</b>	<b>(\$1,493)</b>	<b>\$794</b>	<b>(\$1,025)</b>	<b>\$326</b>	<b>(\$3,800)</b>
Excludes capital revenues and expenses.						

Mr. Ron Forman, President and CEO, reminded everyone that although the numbers for the year are better than budgeted, Audubon is still far behind where they need to be and will continue working to increase revenue and focus on the future.

### **President's Report**

Mr. Ron Forman continued by giving a brief update to the group. He reminded the group of the three-year plan. 2020 was the survival year with animal welfare and guest safety being top priorities. 2021 is focused on recovery and planning for a better future. This includes planning for major renovations to our downtown facilities as part of greater revitalization of the area's tourism and hospitality in 2022 and beyond. Another improvement project is the Audubon tennis courts. He then introduced Ms. Rebecca Dietz, EVP of Public Affairs and General Counsel to talk more about that project and give her report.

Ms. Dietz gave some background on the tennis improvements process. Public engagement and meetings were started back in 2019 and it's time to start discussing again. Through community input, the highest priorities identified were lighting, maintain a set of clay courts, improve the clubhouse facilities and amenities, create an online reservation system, increase opportunities for youth and greater diversity. For all this, funding is needed but is not available. And community partnerships are key to improving outreach goals. As one of the key stakeholders, Audubon has been in communication with Tulane University. Through a generous donation, Tulane has access to funding for use in tennis programming. The proposal and discussions are in the very early stages. But there are some specific parameters that have been put in place. First and foremost is that Audubon will always remain an open and public community facility. However, an agreement on shared usage is expected. Tulane usage generally would not conflict with normal community usage times. Youth outreach and programs are also being explored.

Ms. Dietz then asked for a motion to approve Audubon Nature Institute advancing the request to upgrade Audubon community tennis facilities to the Audubon Commission, which will include a request to enter into negotiations with Tulane University regarding the funding of upgrades to Audubon community tennis.

During discussion, Ms. Qi Wiggins asked what assurances we had that one partner won't completely take over the program. Ms. Dietz said that one of the highest priorities is that the tennis courts remain an Audubon facility. There will be a contract in place to hold each party accountable. Ms. Wiggins further explained that maintenance needs to be considered while pointing out the decline of other tennis facilities in the area. Mr. Forman reassured that the tennis facilities are being improved for the community and public, not just for Tulane. Ms. Wiggins commented that it currently feels very segregated and not open to all members of the community and hopes this will improve with the partnership efforts. Ms. Dietz thanked Ms. Wiggins for her feedback and assured her that being more inclusive is part of a holistic approach to improving the tennis facilities. Mr. Dennis Lauscha also wanted to make sure NORD and others would be partners for getting youth involved. Ms. Dietz said that youth partnerships would go forward with or without Tulane funding. Mr. Wil Jacobs asked about any opposition to lighting from the neighbors. Ms. Dietz said there were not a lot comments against the lighting, especially given that newer lighting options would be of lower impact on the neighborhood.

Mr. Ludovico Feoli then recused himself from voting due to a conflict of interest. The motion otherwise passed unanimously (Payne/Westfeldt).

Mr. Forman also mentioned how tennis could be a great partnership with Children's Hospital.

Ms. Toni Mobley, EVP and Chief Service and Inclusion Officer, was introduced to give an update on diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (DEAI) efforts. She thanked Qi and Dennis for their dialogue on inclusivity in tennis. Like many other organizations, Audubon has been doing some self-reflection on DEAI practices. While there are some things Audubon does well there is always room for improvement. We have partnered with Living HR to help in the DEAI journey. A DEAI committee is being established to help institutionalize our diversity plan and ensure that it's sustainable. They will also be focused on making sure Audubon team members have a safe space to discuss issues related to diversity and identity. We have already identified areas of immediate attention, including: increase minority owned business participation, enhance commitment to recruiting and developing diversity across all departments including management and animal care teams, focus on participating in community efforts that work to eradicate racial and social injustices, and also work on cultural training for staff. A survey was already sent out to staff to gauge current sentiment of staff. Once data is collected, the DEAI committee will work with Living HR to set 4-6 goals to accomplish in the next year, and 2-3 goals to accomplish in the next 2-3 years. There will be many more details to come, and we look forward to engaging our board and commission members in the process.

Dr. Kyle Burks, EVP and Chief Operating Officer, then gave an update on our facilities. We have a new baby orangutan and pregnant tapir. The tropical bird house is currently being renovated thanks to capital funding. Unfortunately, one of the Zoo's giraffes, Chui, was humanely euthanized recently. We also have a new VP and General Curator for the Zoo, Bob Lessnau. At the Aquarium, Rich's team is doing a great job with marine rescue efforts. And planning is underway for renovations to that facility. Public engagement is upcoming for that project. At the west bank facility, there have been some giraffe births and a lot of crane eggs being laid right now that will be raised up to be released into the wild. Finally, registration is open for summer camp at the Zoo.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.