

Audubon Commission Minutes

January 23, 2020

A meeting of the Audubon Commission was called to order on Thursday, January 23, 2020 at 4:10 p.m. in the Presidents' Room at the Audubon Zoo by President Duncan.

Attending were: Kelly Duncan, Linda Baum, Bruce Hoefer, Beth Lambert, Minh Nguyen, Field Ogden, Sally Shushan, Brent Wood, Ashley Francis, Lex Kelso

Excused were: Gayle Benson, Storey Charbonnet, Leila Eames, Olivia Manning, Coleman Ridley, Norma Jane Sabiston, Boysie Bollinger, Danny Conwill, Frances Fayard, Catherine Morrell, Charles Teamer, Freddie King

President Duncan opened the meeting and welcomed two members of the public. The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously accepted as distributed.

Mr. Forman, President and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute, explained that going forward, each meeting would begin with a Mission Moment to highlight Audubon's different mission-related programs and initiatives.

For this meeting's Mission Moment, Ms. Dietz, EVP of Public Affairs and General Counsel, introduced Caroline Aleman and Shiloh Sanders. They are both members of Audubon's Youth Volunteer Council. They explained some of the projects the Council is working on and explained that they help mentor and train youth volunteers and educate guests about conservation and sustainability initiatives.

Nominating Committee Report

Beth Lambert, Nominating Committee Chair, reported that the Nominating Committee recommends the following slate for officers in 2020: President – Kelly Duncan, 1st Vice President – Danny Conwill, 2nd Vice President – Boysie Bollinger, Secretary – Ashley Francis, Treasurer – Brent Wood, Immediate Past President – vacant. The motion was considered and approved unanimously by the Commission. (Shushan/Ogden/unanimous)

Finance Report

Ms. Conkerton, EVP and CAO, reviewed the November 2019 Operating Budget:

NOVEMBER 2019 FINANCIAL DASHBOARD (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS)						
NET OPERATING RESULTS BY FACILITY:						
FACILITY	YTD ACTUAL 2019	YTD BUDGET 2019	BUDGET VARIANCE	YTD ACTUAL 2018	PRIOR YEAR VARIANCE	TOTAL BUDGET 2019
Aquarium/EGST	\$6,791	\$6,661	130	\$7,875	(1,084)	6,839
Zoo & Park	(\$6,075)	(\$5,174)	(901)	(\$4,577)	(1,498)	(5,702)
Butterfly Garden & Insectarium	\$483	\$368	115	\$600	(117)	387
FMASSC	(\$730)	(\$787)	57	(\$123)	(607)	(828)
Louisiana Nature Center	(\$297)	(\$327)	30	(\$257)	(40)	(349)
NET OPERATING RESULTS	\$172	\$741	(\$569)	\$3,518	(\$3,346)	\$347
Excludes capital revenues and expenses.						

Ms. Conkerton reported that total revenue through November 2019 was running 5% lower than budgeted and 2% greater than 2018 actual. She further reported that attendance through November 30, 2019 is 1.9 M with a year-end target of 2.2 million. She then reported that total expenses are 4% lower than budgeted and 5% greater than 2018 actual. Closures from Barry made quite an impact on revenue, but staff has done a good job of keeping expenses down.

When asked about Community Connect's impact on revenue and admissions, Ms. Dietz explained that Audubon had 39K visitors participate in the free admission days in 2019. That represents about 3% of Audubon's total attendance. Additionally, they will be comparing retail and concessions for Wednesdays in 2018 and 2019 to see if there was an increase.

Ms. Conkerton further reported that a resolution was needed authorizing the President of the Audubon Commission to sign an audit engagement letter with LaPorte CPAs & Business Advisors to complete the yearly external audit. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Shushan/Wood/unanimous)

Ms. Conkerton reported that a resolution was needed stating that the Audubon Commission attests that the Louisiana Compliance Questionnaire for Audit Engagements of Government Agencies was presented to and adopted by the governing body, by request of Louisiana Legislative Auditor, Daryl G. Pupera, CPA, CFE. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Ogden/Lambert/unanimous)

Olmsted Legacy Campaign Update

Mr. Brent Wood gave a brief update on the Park's Olmsted Legacy Campaign. This is a 3-year \$10M campaign aimed to improve areas of the Park that were not addressed during Olmsted Renewed, including renovation of the Riverview pavilions. He encouraged board members to learn more about the campaign specifics and to help reach their goal of full-board participation.

Staff Reports

Dr. Kyle Burks, EVP & Chief Operating Officer, reported that the Nature Center and Planetarium has been open now for two years. Visitation was up in 2019 over 2018, and alligators moving into the area are a sign of a thriving ecosystem. He then went on to report that the FMASSC facility has a female giraffe that is expecting very soon. A new male giraffe named Gus will be joining the herd, and Boudin the male bongo is leaving and being replaced by a new male named Leroy. Dr. Burks further reported on some of the other conservation efforts such as the crane reintroduction program. He also mentioned that Audubon is currently partnered with San Diego but is actively looking for other zoos and facilities as partners.

Dr. Burks went on to report that the Aquarium has been reproducing a record number of cownose stingrays, which will soon be on exhibit in the new touch pool. The Butterfly Garden and Insectarium has also been working to boost the monarch butterfly population, which is dwindling. They hope to encourage guests to plant native milkweed, the only plant that monarchs use to lay their eggs. Finally, he reported on the continued success of the Coastal Wildlife Network. LDWF has asked Audubon to take the lead on this going forward.

Finally, Dr. Burks elaborated on the birth of two new male lion cubs at the Zoo. The two are healthy and active. The lions are part of the Species Survival Program and will be out on exhibit in about 12 weeks. Since the Lion King was released in the 90's, the world's lion population has decreased by 50%.

Ms. Dietz closed the meeting with an update on the recent OIG report and Mr. Forman gave an update on the Governor Nicholls and Esplanade wharves project. He expects public meetings will begin again soon.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.