

Audubon Commission Minutes

January 23, 2018

A meeting of the Audubon Commission was called to order on Tuesday, January 23, 2018, at 4:00 p.m. in the Presidents' Room at the Audubon Zoo by President Duncan.

Attending were: Linda Baum, Storey Charbonnet, Kelly Duncan, Leila Eames, Deborah Harkins, Bruce Hoefler, Beth Lambert, Olivia Manning, Coleman Ridley, Norma Jane Sabiston, Ravi Sangisetty, Charles Teamer, Carol Wise, Brent Wood

Excused were: Gayle Benson, Boysie Bollinger, Danny Conwill, Frances Fayard, Ludovico Feoli, Ashley Francis, Christopher Meeks, Catherine Morrell, Field Ogden, Pamela Ryan. Also attending: Henry Kinney and Kelly Staples, legal counsel.

President Duncan opened the meeting and welcomed Norma Jane Sabiston to her first meeting of the Audubon Commission. The minutes of October 24, 2017, meeting were unanimously accepted as distributed. Mr. Duncan welcomed the public in attendance and asked if anyone wanted to speak and they declined.

Nominating Committee Report

Beth Lambert, Nominating Committee Chair, reported that the Nominating Committee recommends the following slate for officers in 2017: President – Kelly Duncan, 1st Vice President – Danny Conwill, 2nd Vice President – Boysie Bollinger, Secretary – Linda Baum, Treasurer – Brent Wood, Immediate Past President – vacant. The motion was considered and approved unanimously by the Commission. Mr. Forman reported that a list of Audubon Committees has been prepared and a planning committee has been added. If anyone would like to be on a different committee please let us know.

Finance Report

Ms. Conkerton, EVP, and CAO reviewed the November 2017 Operating Budget:

Ms. Conkerton reported that overall revenue through November 2017 was running 5% lower but expenses were running about 8% under budget. Ms. Conkerton stated that the loss of revenue is mostly due to weather as there have been several cold and rainy weekends. She further stated that staff stayed on top of expenses by keeping salaries in line and watching overtime closely.

Mr. Forman, President, and CEO reported that 2017 was a rough year for tourism in New Orleans. He stated that Audubon felt that impact along with weather-related issues. He reported that there are big opportunities for attendance and revenue in 2018 including Jaguar Jungle II opening and new projects opening at the Aquarium.

November Operating Budget (in thousands)

2018 BUDGET FINANCIAL DASHBOARD (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS)						
NET OPERATING RESULTS BY FACILITY:						
FACILITY	BUDGET 2018	BUDGET 2017	BUDGET VARIANCE	FORECAST* 2017	FORECAST VARIANCE	ACTUAL 2016
Aquarium/EGST	6,501	6,292	209	7,208	(707)	6,995
Zoo & Park	(5,283)	(4,955)	(328)	(5,191)	(92)	(5,450)
Butterfly Garden & Insectarium	65	39	26	353	(288)	(116)
FMASSC	(548)	(748)	200	(532)	(16)	(755)
Louisiana Nature Center	(355)	(257)	(98)	(120)	(235)	0
TOTAL	\$380	\$371	\$9	\$1,718	(\$1,338)	\$674
Excludes capital revenues and expenses.						

Staff Reports

Mr. John Fallon, Direct of Sustainable Conservation Initiatives reported that a motion was needed authorizing the President of the Commission or the President & CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to execute a contract and any related documents with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for the continued management of the G.U.L.F. Responsible Fisheries Management Scheme and to perform related Louisiana seafood industry support. This is a one year fixed fee contract of \$250,000. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Ridley/Charbonnet/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. (Sabiston/Lambert/unanimous)

Mr. Rich Toth reported that a motion was needed authorizing the President of the Commission or President and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to execute a contract and any related documents for the lowest qualified bidder for Aquarium Security Camera Upgrades and alternates including Card Access Control with a cost estimate of \$106,000. Mr. Forman stated that they are requesting the motion to go out to bid but need some further review on whether they are actually going to go forward with the system. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Charbonnet/Manning/unanimous)

Mr. Toth further reported that a motion was needed authorizing the President of the Commission or President and CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to execute a contract and any related documents with the lowest qualified bidder for replacement of 19 obsolete electronic components necessary to maintain control of the HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning) BAS (Building Automation System) with an estimated cost of \$166,000. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Baum/Harkins/unanimous)

Mr. Toth asked for a motion authorizing the President of the Commission or the President & CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to execute a contract and any related documents with Centaur, LLC for the temporary repair of 34 dock columns supporting the wharf adjacent to the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, estimated at

\$148,596. Mr. Duncan asked why it was a temporary repair and Mr. Toth stated that it's a lower cost to repair it temporarily while a long-term solution is researched. Mr. Forman stated that as we go forward looking for a long-term solution for repair of the wharves it may be something that Audubon needs to go back to the taxpayers for. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Baum/Wood/unanimous)

Mr. Toth asked for a motion authorizing the President of the Commission or the President & CEO of Audubon Nature Institute to execute a contract amendment to the February 1990 Audubon Park Commission Contract with NOPB, and other related documents to widen the Woldenberg Park railroad crossing at Conti Street by eight (8) feet. Widening this crossing will allow school busses traveling in the downriver direction to safely turn and cross the railroad tracks at Conti Street. Mr. Duncan asked if Audubon is responsible for the cost of the widening and Mr. Forman stated that it was the responsibility of the parking lot owner. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Eames/Baum/unanimous)

Mr. Forman reported on the riverfront projects. He stated that the New Orleans City Council has approved Governor Nicholls and Esplanade Wharf Redevelopment Project between the City of New Orleans and the Audubon Commission. This project will connect 3 miles of riverfront from Canal Street through Crescent City Park opening up the riverfront for public park access and recreational facilities.

Mr. Forman stated that Audubon was asked to be a facilitator to design, build and operate the park. The agreement with the City requires several public meetings to gather public input. The first phase of the project will cost approximately \$15,000,000 with funding from the Convention Center (\$9 million), Convention and Visitors Bureau (\$2 million), Audubon (\$2 million) and the Port of New Orleans (\$2 million). The Commission is getting approval today to enter into the agreements and begin the process.

Mr. Duncan stated that this is a transformative project and that will benefit everyone from New Orleans, surrounding areas, and tourists alike.

Mr. Duncan asked for a motion to authorize the President of the Commission to enter into a CEA with the City of New Orleans, including an escrow agreement, relative to the use of the Esplanade Wharf and Governor Nichols Wharf to facilitate the operation of said locations as a public park and recreational facilities. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Wood/Eames/unanimous)

Mr. Duncan asked for a motion to authorize the President of the Commission to enter into a CEA between the Convention Center Exhibition Hall Authority, New Orleans CVB, Port of New Orleans and the Audubon Commission for cooperative funding for the development of the Governor Nicholls and Esplanade wharves and riparian land. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Charbonnet/Baum/unanimous)

Mr. Forman then discussed the Pedestrian Bridge Cooperative Endeavor Agreement. Mr. Forman stated that the City Council also approved the Ferry Terminal Bridge between the City, RTA, and Audubon to construct a pedestrian access bridge that provides pedestrian access from Canal Street across the existing railroad tracks to the riverfront. He stated that Algiers leadership requested a crossing in order to support pedestrian traffic for those getting off the ferry and heading to work. The City approached Audubon and the RTA to facilitate the project. Audubon requested that if the bridge was to be located on Audubon property that Audubon would request about \$1.5 million added to the budget to design an attractive entrance to enhance the Aquarium. He stated that it is roughly a \$7 million dollar project for design and construction. Mr. Forman said one public meeting has already been held in regards to this project, one more is scheduled and a third will be forthcoming. He further reported that at the first meeting several requested that the bridge be covered to protect from the weather.

Mr. Duncan asked for a motion to authorize the President of the Commission to enter into a CEA between the City of New Orleans, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority, and the Audubon Commission relative to funding, construction and operation of a bridge to provide pedestrian access to the Canal Street Ferry Terminal. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Charbonnet/Baum/unanimous)

Mr. Kinney, Audubon Legal Counsel, reported on encroachments from property owners in Audubon Park. He stated that these four properties primarily involve structures that overlap the property line of the park. Mr. Duncan asked for a motion to authorize the President of the Commission, with the approval of the Executive and Legal Committees, to execute extensions to previous leases and new leases on Audubon Park property. The leases shall be for the appraised value updated for increases in the Consumer Price Index form time of appraisal. The motion was considered and approved by the Commission. (Lambert/Wood/unanimous)

Dr. Burks, VP and Managing Director Audubon Zoo and Park, reported that prior to Katrina work was done to put together a Park Master Plan and that reached 90%. He stated that Audubon is now moving forward with public comment to complete that master plan. He stated that Audubon has never stopped trying to improve the park and a lot of great things have been done including shelter renovations and the opening of two new playgrounds. He reported that Audubon will be engaging the public to gather their input with three public meetings, an online platform dedicated to the master plan with options to sign up for updates, leave comments, and complete a survey, research and park intercept surveys.

Dr. Burks then reported on animals at the Zoo. He stated that the zoo has a new Western lowland male gorilla named Okpara. He has been introduced to the three females in the exhibit and the hopes are that he will reenergize the breeding process for Audubon. Mr. Burks stated that a new giraffe was born at Freeport McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center (FMASSC) at the beginning of the year as part of the Alliance for Sustainable Wildlife partnership with San Diego Zoo Global. A critically endangered Eastern Bongo was also born in late 2017. He then stated that 12 whooping cranes reared at the FMASSC were recently released into the wild joining other cranes released by the International Crane Rescue Organization.

Ms. Amanda Adkins presented a 7-month-old Eurasian Eagle Owl named Mr. Miyagi. Mr. Miyagi is an ambassador animal at the Zoo and is currently being trained to participate in a free flight program for our guests.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Linda G. Baum
Secretary