



Dane County

Minutes - Final Unless Amended by Committee

Henry Vilas Zoo Commission

Consider:

Who benefits? Who is burdened?

Who does not have a voice at the table?

How can policymakers mitigate unintended consequences?

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

8:00 AM

702 S. Randall Ave.

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A. Call To Order

Others present: Janine Wachter, Joseph Darcangelo, Kristin Moala, Jess Thompson, Beth Petersen, Eddie Sherman, Jeff Kostelic

A motion was made by ROSS that the Zoo Commission meeting be called to order at 8:03am. The motion carried unanimously.

Present 6 - TAG EVERS, JEFFREY GUNDERSON, SARAH JUSTUS, ANNE ROSS, JASMINE BANKS, and ERIN WELSH

Excused 1 - MICHAEL PETERSEN

B. Consideration of Minutes

[2025](#)
[MIN-598](#)

Attachments: [2025 MIN-598](#)

A motion was made by JUSTUS, seconded by BANKS, that the Minutes be approved. The motion carried by a voice vote.

C. Action Items

2. [2025](#)
[RES-353](#) ACCEPTANCE OF A MADISON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT FOR THE GIRAFFE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Sponsors: ENGELBERGER, WELSH and FRIES

Attachments: [2025 RES-353](#)
[2025-353 FISCAL NOTE](#)
[2025 RES-353 CONTRACT #16154](#)

A motion was made by WELSH, seconded by EVERS, that the Resolution be recommended for approval. The motion carried by a voice vote.

4. [2025 RES-355](#) EXTEND MARKETING CONTRACT TO S/B STRATEGIC MARKETING FOR SERVICES--HENRY VILAS ZOO

Sponsors: ENGELBERGER and WELSH

Attachments: [2025 RES-355](#)
[2025 RES-355 FISCAL NOTE](#)

A motion was made by JUSTUS, seconded by BANKS, that the Resolution be recommended for approval. The motion carried by a voice vote.

5. [2025 RES-358](#) AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE ARCTIC FOX EXHIBIT CONSTRUCTION AT HENRY VILAS ZOO, 702 S. RANDALL AVE., MADISON, WI

Sponsors: ENGELBERGER, FRIES and RYLANDER

Attachments: [2025 RES-358](#)
[2025 RES-358 FISCAL NOTE](#)
[2025 RES-358 CONTRACT #16176](#)

A motion was made by ROSS, seconded by JUSTUS, that the Resolution Requiring 2/3rds Vote be postponed. to the Henry Vilas Zoo Commission, due back by 4/14/2026 The motion carried by a voice vote.

D. Presentations

None

E. Reports to Committee

Zoo Report:

-Operational Updates

-Animal Updates

-Conservation/Education Updates

-Event/Marketing Updates

Operations updates from Eddie Sherman:

The zoo just completed construction on the permanent seal shade structure. There were no costs overruns. There is still some minor finishing work that should be completed in the next few days. The carousel will be opening officially on April 1st, but the zoo trains in new staff during MMSD spring break so there will be times that is open the last week of March.

Animal updates from Beth Petersen:

The zoo observed successful breeding between Siku and Nora over a 4-day period at the end of February so we will be watching Nora over the summer to see if she is showing any signs of being pregnant. The seals handled the construction work at their exhibit well. The baby goats born at the end of 2025 have been successfully integrated with the rest of the herd. Shipping season is coming up and we have some animal moves planned for this year. Two notable moves are that we may be sending a GLT to Canada and a lemur to South America. Moves are dependant on pre-shipment exams and permits so we do not have exact dates yet.

Conservation updates from Jess Thompson:

The education department continues to work on two grants - ACE grant and a Party for the Planet grant. The summer zoo camp lottery just closed. Over 2600 applications were submitted for 300 spots. The lottery increases equity. We are looking at ways to increase capacity but space is the largest factor on how many children we can accept. The zoo does offer scholarships for all camp programs. Behind the Scenes tours will be opening again later this month for the summer.

Event updates from Kristin Moala:

Invited commissioners to stay and attend the Tundra Buggy reopening that happened directly after Zoo Commission. Upcoming events include a blood drive and a PRIDE event at the end of May.

Updates from Interim Zoo Director Janine Wachter:

The Zoo is currently in the process of hiring a new executive chef for the grille. We are working with the Grille to increase revenue opportunities in 2026. The County Executive has been holding listening sessions with zoo staff to learn more about what staff are hoping to see in a new executive director.

F. Future Meeting Items and Dates

The next meeting will take place on April 14th at 8am

G. Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda

Erik Andersen requested that future meetings be held as hybrid with a Zoom option for the public to make them more transparent and accessible.

H. Such Other Business as Allowed by Law

None

I. Adjourn

A motion was made by JUSTUS, seconded by EVERS, that the Zoo Commission meeting be adjourned at 9:33am. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Kristin Moala, pending approval from the Zoo Commission.