



# 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?*

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Tuesday, July 7, 2020

7:30 AM

Remote Meeting: Call 1-646-749-3122 Access Code:  
930-656-549

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Remote Meeting: Call 1-646-749-3122 Access Code: 930-656-549

The July 7th Zoo Commission meeting is being held remotely. The public can access the meeting by calling the number below. Once prompted, enter in the access code and you will be connected to the meeting.

NOTE: You will be placed on hold until the host joins.

United States (Toll Free): 1-646-749-3122  
Access Code: 930-656-549

If you would like to register to speak, please fill out a registration form by clicking on the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WTKH9NW>

Registrations will be accepted until 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the meeting. Staff will then call you into the meeting when the item is before the committee.

#### A. Call To Order

*Others present: Ronda Schwetz, Kristin Moala, Jess Thompson*

The meeting was called to order by ANNE ROSS at 7:36am.

**Present** 7 - JONATHAN BECKER, Supervisor CHUCK ERICKSON, TAG EVERS, JEFFREY GUNDERSON, SARAH JUSTUS, MICHAEL PETERSEN, and ANNE ROSS

#### B. Consideration of Minutes

[2020  
MIN-083](#)

Minutes of the June 11, 2020 Zoo Commission meeting

**Attachments:** [2020 MIN-083](#)

A motion was made by ERICKSON, seconded by EVERS, that the Minutes of the 6/11/2020 Zoo Commission meeting be approved. The motion carried by a voice vote.

**C. Action Items**

*None*

**D. Presentations**

*None*

**E. Reports to Committee**

### Zoo Report

Ronda talked about how the 2021 budget process is starting. The County asked the zoo to reduce GPR by 2.5%. The budget will be worked on over the next two months and the Commission will be able to see proposals at the next commission meeting. Ronda anticipates the Capital budget, which contains money for paving, HVAC, and other deferred maintenance costs, to remain roughly the same. The Zoo will be asking for \$75k in medical equipment based on recommendations from the UW Veterinary School. Other anticipated costs include money to replace food storage coolers in the big cat and primate buildings and money for HVAC in the main gift shop.

ROSS asked about on ground revenue and what the loss has been due to the zoo's closure.

Ronda noted that zoo attendance since we reopened is about half of what it was last summer. While attendance numbers are down, gift shop revenue per person is up. We believe this is partly because product was moved outside to improve social distancing and reduce touch points. The Chocolate Shoppe per person revenue is also up, but sales in the Grille are down. It's still too early to know if these trends will hold all summer. The zoo has only been open since June 18. The Grille is working on improving contactless ordering/food pick up. The Grille has moved to 100% compostable packaging even while taking measures to keep customers safe during COVID.

ERICKSON asked about how donations have been since the zoo reopened.

Ronda said that donations have been up since we reopened and it is clear that guests are trying to help the zoo. We have a very supportive community. We have had almost 32,000 visitors since we reopened. The recent hot weather has resulted in lower attendance during the past week, but that is consistent with past years. Weather drives attendance.

ERICKSON asked if guests have been cooperative with the COVID measures the zoo put in place to reopen.

Ronda said most guests have been very cooperative. The zoo has been working with the County and the Department of Public Health and we do have free masks available for any guest who requests one. Animal masks are also available for purchase in the gift shop.

Ronda talked about how a 'We Missed You at the Zoo' campaign has just started to generate some of the revenue lost during our closure, but it just started so it is hard to project what the revenue will be. The zoo has decided to turn our September Zoo Run into a virtual race. Participants will be mailed a run t-shirt and will run their own course. Other zoos have had some success with this model because it allows people to participate from anywhere in the world.

Ronda said the zoo is still hopeful that we will be able to start a capital campaign next year for the Heart of the Zoo. We will need to focus on giraffe and rhino exhibits if we want to keep those animals in the zoo and maintain our AZA accreditation.

ROSS asked about what County support the zoo was getting.

Ronda said the County has been very supportive but understandably their main focus is on COVID issues at this time.

Ronda gave a staffing update. Two of our current staff members got bumped because of the Alliant layoffs, but the County came up with a plan to allow anyone laid off to work at COVID testing sites until the end of the year. We were able to move forward with hiring a second vet tech, which we have needed for some time. The County is also allowing the three previously approved animal care positions to continue.

Ronda gave an animal update. The giraffe SSP recommended moving one of our giraffes to a different facility, which leaves us with one giraffe currently.

ROSS asked if giraffes can be alone.

Ronda said it was typical of how a young, male giraffe would live in the wild and this arrangement gives our remaining giraffe more space. Ronda also talked about how we just got a second Bactrian camel, which is good because our current camel has been alone since his mom passed away last year.

ERICKSON asked about how the neighborhood has reacted to the zoo reopening.

Ronda said we have had about a dozen neighbors that we know of come through the zoo and we have had very positive feedback. We have increased trash receptacles and trash collection schedules to address their concerns from last year. We have a full time janitor now so our capacity to monitor parking lots has improved. We are very happy with how our relationship with the Madison City Parks Department is developing.

## **F. Future Meeting Items and Dates**

The Commission scheduled the next meeting for August 11, 2020 at 7:30am.

## **G. Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda**

None

## **H. Such Other Business as Allowed by Law**

ERICKSON asked if there was a way to hold a virtual neighborhood meeting. Ronda said we would need the County's help to set that up and make sure the technical aspects were handled properly.

## **I. Adjourn**

A motion was made by ERICKSON, seconded by GUNDERSON, that the zoo commission meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:27am.

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