

**Riverbanks Park Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**20 February 2025**

*In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the agenda is available to radio and TV stations, newspapers, and persons requesting notification; was posted in the lobby of Riverbanks' administration building and was uploaded to Riverbanks' webpage.*

**Attendance Report**

**Commissioners Present:** Cliff Bourke, Bob Davidson, Chip Huggins, Jeff Reeves, Deneen Shockley, Alana Williams.

**Commissioners Absent:** Mike Velasco.

**Staff Present:** Tommy Stringfellow, Lochlan Wooten, Christie Vondrak, Ashley Harris, Jessica Austin.

**Guests Present:** Terri Wilson, Member of Assurance and Advisory Services – Scott & Company, LLC

**Call to Order**

Chairwoman Williams called the meeting to order at 12:30pm.

**Reading of the Minutes**

The January 16, 2025, Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

Huggins motioned to approve the minutes, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous.

**Chairwoman's Remarks:**

- Congratulations to Stringfellow for being inducted into the hall of fame for Columbia Business Monthly's 50 Most Influential People
- Thank you to Shockley, Reeves, and Huggins for attending Lexington County night.

**Finance Report:**

Terri Wilson, CPA, Member of Assurance and Advisory Services with Scott & Company, LLC provided the following report:

- FY24 Audit:
  - The Audit Committee met on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Terri Wilson, CPA of Scott and Co. and VP of Finance Ashley Harris went through everything in detail with them.
  - Scott and Co. are issuing an unmodified opinion, indicating the financial statements were presented fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with GAAP.

Reeves moved to approve the FY24 Audit, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous.

VP of Finance Ashley Harris provided the following report:

- January Dashboard Report:
  - Through January we are running 18% under anticipated attendance and 11% below the prior year.
  - Seeing strong attendance in the first half of February. Free Friday attendance in January was up over prior year.
  - Through Jan-25 we are exceeding budgeted revenues by \$285,995 (3.4%) largely due to interest income generated from cash reserves and the fact that events revenues generated well over budget and prior year.
  - Wild Lights generated \$158k over budgeted revenues, with Members now paying and the addition of Igloos rentals. Wild Lights net \$184k over prior year and \$103k over budget.
  - The difference in Governmental support seen YOY is due to having received \$5M in state funding in FY24 and \$1M in FY25, yielding a \$4M variance.

- IRF issued \$56k in insurance proceeds for damage caused by Hurricane Helene
- January Balance Sheet:
  - Cash balance is invested in the local government investment pool (LGIP) with the State Treasurer's Office. The average interest rate for January was earning 4.6%.
  - Larger projects that make up the Due from Capital fund asset balance include the Birdhouse HVAC, the front cedar fence, HVAC replacements, and the current fiscal year spend towards the Rivermont renovation.

Huggins motioned to approve the financials, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous.

Harris proposed the purchase of a new hospital van for \$60,000, HVAC replacements for \$281,000, totaling \$341,000.

Reeves motioned to approve the purchase of a new hospital van and HVAC replacements at \$341,000, Huggins seconded, m/c unanimous.

### **President & CEO Report:**

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Will be applying with City of Columbia for hospitality and accommodations tax dollars
- Riverbanks is looking forward to hosting the Council of Mayors on April 24<sup>th</sup>
- Attended Lexington County Night
- Hosted a lunch for three new Lexington County council members. Another lunch is planned with the two new Richland County council members.
- Presenting at Richland and Lexington County council meetings on construction and upcoming events
- Requesting \$5M in infrastructure needs to the State. Still reviewing the potential for education dollars.

### **Chief Administrative Officer Report:**

Chief Administrative Officer Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Dates and Reminders
  - March 20 - Commission Meeting
  - March 24 – 28 – AZA Midyear Conference
  - April 11-20 – Spring Break
  - April 17 - Commission Meeting
  - Full list of 2025 Riverbanks events included in folder
- Nominated for USA Today's Best Zoo and Best Zoo Membership
- AZA Director's Policy Conference recap
- Congratulations to Matt Perron for completing the Communicating Coral Climate Stories Course that is tailored to the SAFE Coral Program.
- Holding Focus Groups and Collaborations:
  - Town Hall refresh
  - Saluda Skyride Project
  - Directors' Meeting reformat
  - Bundling/Packaging stakeholder sessions
  - Social Media staff meetings

### **Chief Operating Officer Report:**


Chief Operating Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Reviewed jellyfish propagation program and how it aligns with the conservation objective of our strategic plan

- Juvenile male gorilla gave his first voluntary blood draw
- Riverbanks will get a sand cat in the next few weeks
- Received an IMLS Grant for Wildlife Trafficking messaging. Surveys will go out shortly.
- Discussed intersection between conservation and construction:
  - No land disturbance
  - Pollinator habitat will be created
  - All electric system
- Reviewed site plans with new lion habitat and other construction projects

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 20 day of March 2025.

, Secretary