

**Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
16 November 2023**

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Jan Stamps, Jeff Reeves, Deneen Shockley, Bob Davidson, Alana Williams, Mike Velasco

Commissioners Absent: Cliff Bourke

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Lochlan Wooten, Christie Vondrak, Jessica Austin

Call to Order

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

Reading of the Minutes

The October 19, 2023 Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

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

Chairman's Remarks

- Richland County voted 10-1 to approve the first reading of the bond and public hearing. Thank you to Rebecca Best and Damon Jeter for your hard work.
- Davidson – emphasize incentives and discounts for Richland and Lexington County residents.
- Wild Lights VIP night is tonight!
- May not have December commission meeting – will reevaluate in early December.

Finance Report:

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- Stringfellow reviewed the October financial statements:
 - October attendance is down 5.2% from budgeted but up 13.6% over the previous year.
 - Earned revenue 8.1% over budgeted, 16.2% over previous year.
 - Government support – Richland County ahead of projections.
 - Expenditures – timing issues w/invoices being paid. Anticipate an increase in the coming months.
 - General admission visits increasing, 12.2% ahead of 2022.
 - Dynamic pricing with the new software system is going well.
 - SSA (concessions and facility rental) is very strong. Up over budgeted and previous year.
 - Miscellaneous revenue is up due to Ashley Harris investing in high yield savings.
 - Reeves motioned to approve the financials, Williams seconded, m/c unanimous.

President & CEO Report:

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- The second reading of Richland County bond is tentatively set for December 5th. We have a running list of speakers for the public hearing. Public hearing speakers should discuss different topics like education, conservation, and economic impact.
- Commissioner Reeves suggested thanking all Richland council members for voting “yes” across social media platforms.
- Commissioner Davidson suggested going on a podcast to discuss the bond.
- Call for a motion to spend up to 8 million dollars on the Gondola project - Davidson moved, Shockley seconded, m/c unanimous.

Chief Administrative Officer Report:

Chief Administrative Officer Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Ashley and Hopper are doing well, baby Hopper is getting tall!
- Wild Lights VIP Party is tonight – hope to see all commissioners there!
- Will send an email with more details for Richland County public hearing.
- Riverbanks has just qualified for Public Service Loan Forgiveness. Staff are very excited to take advantage of the new perk.
- Staff Saluda River Sweep was a success.
- The Horticulture team went to Mast General Store to spruce up the courtyard. Will refresh several times a year moving forward.

Chief Operating Officer Report:

Chief Operating Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Komodo dragon project is progressing.
- Interviewed two architects for Education construction project.
- Boo at the Zoo went wonderfully. Nearly 30,000 people attended. Revenue greatly outpaced projected, largely due to dynamic pricing.
- Wild Lights commercial presentation.
- October membership was the strongest month on record.
- Attendance – behind budget by only 59 guests, but up from previous year.
- Returned from Tanzania. RBZ hosting trip in September 2024. Met with African People and Wildlife to investigate human animal conflict deterrents. (Living fences, bee walls etc.)

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 18 day of January 2024.

 _____, Secretary