

MINUTES OF THE METROPOLITAN SERVICE DISTRICT

COUNCIL ZOO PLANNING COMMITTEE

December 18, 1987

Zoo Meeting Center

Committee Members Present: Tom DeJardin, Mike Bonner, Corky Kirkpatrick

Staff Present: McKay Rich, Jane Hartline, Ellen Lanier Phillips, Dennis Pate, Gayle Rathbun, Don Carlson

Chair Kirkpatrick called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m.

1. Consideration of Ordinance No. 87-235, for the Purpose of Amending the Metro Code Section 4.01.60 Revising Admission Fees and Policies at the Washington Park Zoo

Chair Kirkpatrick said Don Carlson, Council Administrator, would make an opening statement and then Zoo staff would make their statements.

Mr. Carlson referred to the staff report included in the Council agenda packet for the full Council meeting of December 10, 1987. He also referred to his memorandum dated December 9, 1987, entitled "Council Meeting, December 10, 1987, Agenda Item 8.1." Mr. Carlson said the memorandum addressed three issues: 1) Need for Fee Increase; 2) Policy Changes; and 3) Effective Date of Ordinance. He stated for the past three years, the operating policy of the Zoo has been met by 50 percent tax revenue and 50 percent non-tax revenues. Mr. Carlson said that was a major policy to keep in mind when considering the Master Plan. Another major policy to remember was historically the Zoo has transferred surplus revenues to its Capital fund.

Mr. Carlson said he had prepared a Table II which followed the same format as the Table I attached to his memorandum which showed year-to-date expenditures such as the ratio of non-tax revenue to operating costs through November 30, 1987. Table II shows actual attendance, operating and maintenance costs, and transfer of funds. Nontax revenue showed itself to be 61 percent of the operating and maintenance costs year-to-date. The balance remaining, Mr. Carlson said, was a projection of what remained in the budget.

Mr. Kay Rich, Acting Zoo Director, gave his reasons for a Zoo admission increase. Mr. Rich said the 61 percent figure was representative of the "best part of the year." Mr. Rich said in 1983 the Zoo earned 55 percent of its net income. In 1983-84, 52 percent; 1985, 54 percent; 1986, 51 percent; and in 1987 (to-date) 57 percent. Mr. Rich said, "1987 was the most exceptional year since I have been here."

Mr. Rich handed out estimated projections of next year's Zoo attendance. Originally, he said, an attendance of 820,000 was projected; that figure was expanded to 890,000. Mr. Rich said although attendance was high in 1987, staff expected attendance to drop by comparison next year for a variety of reasons. Attendance would seem low in 1988 compared to the large volume of visitors who came to the Zoo to see the Golden Monkey exhibit, the new baby elephant, the polar bear exhibit, the Zoo's centennial celebration, the newly constructed elephant museum, and the American Association of Zoos and Public Aquariums (AAZPA) conference. Mr. Rich said a baby elephant birth was not expected this year and neither were any other "unusual births."

Staff corroborated Mr. Rich's testimony. Dennis Pate, General Curator, said the Golden Monkey birth was an "exceptional birth." Ellen Lanier Phelps, Development Director, said the average attendance on the same date of the Polar Bear Exhibit opening in 1987 in 1986 was 3,500. The Polar Bear Exhibit drew 8,000 people. Roger Yerke, Educational Services Specialist, said last year was the end of an El Nino cycle, which was responsible for the exceptionally good weather, and another cycle is not be expected for seven years. Mr. Rich said after this intended rate increase, another one was projected, but if the increase requested now was approved, the next one could be postponed to January 1990.

Mr. Rich said the Highway Department planned to rework the ramp leading to the Zoo. He said there were some increased costs that were not previously expected, including the anticipated increase in minimum wages, expenditures on the Visitor Services Building, and other Zoo maintenance costs. The other Zoo maintenance costs include a new elephant barn roof, new roofs for other buildings, paving, utility costs, new equipment, and a needed soil stabilization, Mr. Rich said. For these reasons, he preferred to have an increase in the Zoo admission price. If there were extra funds left over, they could be transferred to the capital fund and used for the necessary costs explained by staff.

Councilors and staff discussed when the Zoo admission price would increase. Staff did not want admission rates raised in summer because it would cause public bad feeling. Councilors asked if it would be possible to institute new rates in April. Staff said that was a problem -- a great deal of attendance was generated by students on Spring vacation. Also, staff wanted to generate the new admission rate information before Spring vacation so teachers would be informed. Councilor Bonner mentioned the 90-day emergency clause. Mr. Carlson said without the emergency clause, the rate increase would take place

65 working days after date of approval. Mr. Carlson said if an emergency clause were invoked to obtain an earlier date, Councilors would have to vote unanimously.

February 1, 1988, was decided upon as the first day of the new rates.

Motion: ' Councilor DeJardin moved that
 Zoo admission rates increase as
 of February 1, 1988.

Vote: Councilor Kirkpatrick seconded
 on the condition that legal
 counsel approved use of the
 emergency clause. Councilors
 were unanimous and the motion
 passed.

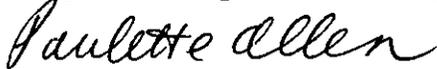
Item Three of Mr. Carlson's memorandum concerned the date of the beginning of the rate increase, so the issue was resolved, Councilor Kirkpatrick noted, in Councilors' motion to approve the increased Zoo admission rate.

The next item for discussion was a proposed ordinance change in policy or practices regarding use of Zoo facilities or services. The Zoo policy has been to have the public pay regular Zoo admission rates for whatever activity they chose to attend such as concerts or other special events. Mr. Carlson said the rationale previously was to attract the public to, and have them experience, the Zoo and pay admission fees to increase attention to the facility. Councilors thought the proposed ordinance change would affect the good feeling of the business community who might perceive the Zoo as entering into competition with the hospitality industry. Staff reiterated such a change would make for a total "Zoo experience." Mr. Carlson stated that the Zoo is a tax-supported institution and should not compete with the private sector for catering services. Staff gave examples of several functions the Zoo had hosted which they only felt reflected the total "Zoo experience."

Councilors ultimately decided that Clause (F) of Ordinance No. 87-235 For the Purposes of Amending Metro Code Section 4.01.060 Revising Admission Fees and Policies at the Washington Park Zoo should be deleted. Councilors agreed to restore the original language of Clause (E) of the Ordinance, eliminate proposed new language, and add one sentence to the end -- "The Executive Officer may approve variances to the admission fee schedule to facilitate such ventures."

All business on the agenda having been attended to, Chair Kirkpatrick adjourned the Committee at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Paulette Allen, Clerk
D.1/ZPC.3