

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL ZOO COMMITTEE
OF THE METROPOLITAN SERVICE DISTRICT

January 3, 1991

Council Chamber

Committee Members Present: Ruth McFarland (Chair), Tom DeJardin (Vice Chair), Jim Gardner and David Knowles

Committee Members Absent: David Saucy

Other Councilors Present: Roger Buchanan

Chair McFarland called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

1. Review of RFP No. 90R-138-ZO, for Metro Washington Park Zoo Mapping, as Part of the Master Plan Update

Kay Rich, Assistant Zoo Director, explained the Request for Proposals (RFP) would obtain mapping services for Zoo topography and facilities and said it was essential the mapping services be compatible with Metro's Regional Land Information System (RLIS). He said a topographical map with contours would be useful for future terrain analysis. He said the base budgeted amount of \$15,000 for the RFP was included in the \$100,000 already allocated for the Master Plan.

Chair McFarland said the Committee had the authority to release the RFP, but expressed concern because one Councilor had raised issues about the Committee's authority to release the RFP without full Council review and approval. Councilor DeJardin noted General Counsel Dan Cooper answered questions raised by that Councilor and said he was comfortable with Mr. Cooper's response. Chair McFarland said the funds were budgeted and approved. Councilor Gardner said he was comfortable with the process because it was compatible with the Council's contracting oversight authority and the RFP did not involve policy implications. He said the Councilor who raised issues about this particular RFP probably did so because he thought the Zoo Committee chair would release the RFP on her own authority and did not realize Committee action as a whole was necessary. He said if the Council reviewed the RFP, the RFP process would be delayed.

Motion: Councilor Gardner moved that the Committee authorize the release of RFP No. 90R-138-ZO.

Vote: Councilors DeJardin, Gardner, Knowles and McFarland voted aye. Councilor Saucy was absent. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

2. Consideration of Ordinance No. 90-376A, Amending Metro Code Section 4.01.060 Revising Admission Fees and Policies at Metro Washington Park Zoo (Public Hearing)

Chair McFarland noted the Finance Committee considered and recommended Ordinance No. 91-376A to the Zoo Committee for consideration.

Sherry Sheng, Zoo Director explained the impacts of Ballot Measure No. 5 caused Zoo staff to implement current, and plan future, cost cutting measures. She noted staff looked at ways to cut costs before the election took place.

Ms. Sheng said 43 percent of Zoo funding came from property taxes and the other 57 percent was raised through enterprise revenues and donations. She said the change in current Zoo services would be felt by visitors and have negative impact on the Zoo's future revenue raising abilities.

Ms. Sheng said Zoo staff considered closing the Zoo on Mondays and Tuesdays and at how staffing could be shifted five months out of the year. She said staff looked at smaller items in the proposed FY 1991-92 Budget and had already implemented some cuts. She said among services, programs or items to be cut or curtailed were: Interns, security, exhibits such as the Childrens Zoo and Night Country; after-hours animal keepers; elimination of the Zoo Train during slow seasons except during Zoolights; elimination of Zoo staff in management; and elimination of the maps currently given to visitors. She said with these cuts and other items, staff had developed a feasible package for inclusion in the FY 1991-92 Budget.

Ms. Sheng said closing the Childrens Zoo and reassigning staff to other areas would save escalating maintenance costs for that exhibit. She said closing Night Country would save on salaries for the day and after-hours animal keepers. She said those keepers could be used in the Rainforest exhibit. She said the management intern would be cut and security services would be curtailed. She said the Zoo Train would not be run until March 15. She said equipment purchases and some maintenance work would be deferred. She said the Zoo would not attempt another ballot measure at this time and thus save election costs. She said savings for FY 1990-91 for five months would be \$200,000 and noted staff reviewed the Zoo Budget in five-year increments. She said reductions had to be calculated on a five-year basis and noted the Night Country exhibit would still require maintenance.

Councilor Knowles said the cuts proposed by Zoo staff were unfortunate but necessary and directed Council staff draft a

resolution formally stating what the cuts were. He said it should be made clear the Council was not just responding to Ballot Measure No. 5 with increased admission rates, but also with cost cutting measures. The Committee concurred with Councilor Knowles' suggestion.

Motion: Councilor Knowles recommended Council adoption of a resolution which would formally state directives to enact the cuts as proposed by Zoo staff above.

Vote: Councilors DeJardin, Gardner, Knowles and McFarland voted aye. Councilor Saucy was absent. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Casey Short, Council Analyst, said the Finance Committee amended the ordinance at its December 20, 1990, meeting to amend Section 4.01.060(a)(1) and (2) to change the group discount definition in its application to school groups. He said the Finance Committee also amended the ordinance to add an emergency clause so the ordinance would be in effect February 1, 1991.

Main Motion: Councilor Knowles moved to recommend the full Council adopt Ordinance No. 91-376A.

Chair McFarland suggested additional language at the end of Ordinance No. 91-376A, Section 4.01.060(a)(1): "maximum of one chaperon for every four students shall be admitted free."

Councilor Gardner raised two issues related to the free admission policy in Section 4.01.060(d). He reported the Finance Committee's concern that changing from free Tuesday afternoons to a free admission ticket system could keep some people from coming to the Zoo. Chair McFarland said Zoo staff's idea was that free tickets could be distributed to a variety of social service agencies for use throughout the year. She said another idea was offering certain Tuesdays at a discounted rate. She said if too many options were utilized it would be hard to assess their effectiveness.

Chair McFarland opened the public hearing.

Roger Jennings, Friends of the Zoo Board member, testified in support of the admission fee increase. He said the Zoo visitor experience had greatly improved over the last 20 years and said the Zoo needed enough revenue to continue to provide a high quality experience for visitors.

No other persons present appeared to testify and Chair McFarland closed the public hearing.

Chair McFarland asked the Committee to consider her proposed amendment. Councilor Knowles state law required at least one adult to chaperon two preschool children. Chair McFarland asked if preschool fell into school group criteria. Mr. Short the Metro Code included preschools within its "school groups" definition.

Motion to Amend: Councilor Gardner moved to amend line 2 of Section 4.01.060(d) by changing the word "may" to "shall," so that the sentence would read: "A number of free admission tickets shall be distributed annually by the Zoo Director to social service agencies within the Metro area."

Councilor Gardner asked staff making the first Tuesday of each month from 3:00 to closing a free admission time would fiscally impact the Zoo. Ms. Sheng did not encourage mixing free Tuesdays and free ticket distribution. Chair McFarland supported changing language from "may" to "shall," but did not support other amendments at this time. Councilor Gardner said keeping free Tuesdays was consistent with previous Zoo practice. He expressed concern all would not benefit from free ticket distribution.

Vote on Motion to Amend: Councilors Gardner, Knowles and McFarland voted aye. Councilors DeJardin and Saucy were absent. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Vote on Main Motion as Amended: Councilors Knowles and McFarland voted aye. Councilor Gardner abstained from the vote. Councilors DeJardin and Saucy were absent. The vote was 2 to 0 and Ordinance No. 91-376B was recommended to the full Council for adoption.

Chair McFarland adjourned the meeting at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Paulette Allen
Committee Clerk
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