

Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
16 November 2017

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Bob Davidson, Bud Tibshrary, Alana Williams, Jan Stamps, and Mary Howard

Commissioners Absent: Phil Bartlett, Mike Velasco

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Breta Rheney, Katie McCoy

Others Present: Michael Slapnick, Jim Smith

Call to Order

Chairwoman Howard called the meeting to order.

Reading of the Minutes

The October 2017 minutes were approved as distributed.

Tibshrary moved, Stamps seconded, m/c unanimous

Special Presentation

Chairwoman Howard presented the service award and a special gift to Jim Smith for 18 years of service on the Riverbanks Park Commission.

2016/2017 Audit

Michael Slapnick of Scott and Company presented the Report of Audit of Riverbanks Park Commission's Financial Statements for the fiscal year 2016-2017. Slapnick met previously with the audit committee (Tibshrary and Williams) to review the audit draft. He shared that Riverbanks was at a healthy net position and the general fund has a healthy balance. He shared information on two new GASB pronouncements that could have impact in the future. Following the presentation and discussion Tibshrary moved, Stamps seconded, m/c unanimous to accept the audit as presented.

Chief Finance Officer's Report

CFO Breta Rheney provided the following report:

Attendance

Attendance YTD is 430,321. With a YTD budget of 402,200 and prior year actual of 425,772, Riverbanks is currently 28,121 visitors ahead of budget and 4,549 ahead of prior year. The percentage of member visits is 50%. Riverbanks had another great year of Boo at the Zoo, with almost 27,000 in attendance.

Revenue and Departmental Expense

Overall we are running ahead of budget and almost \$225,000 better than last year. Lights will start November 18 and run through December 30. In addition, Riverbanks will be hosting a number of holiday gatherings through the remainder of this year.

Revenue - Net revenues are \$642,645 over budget and \$375,443 over prior year, excluding the Society operating contribution variance of \$50,000.

- In addition to the increases in General Admission Fees and Concession and Retail Commissions, Rides and Attractions have produced the largest increase as it relates to budget and prior year. *Gross revenue* for Rides and Attractions are almost \$58,000 ahead of budget and slightly more than \$58,000 over the prior year. The additional savings in budget for Rides and Attractions are personnel costs.
- Classes and Programs reflect almost \$60,000 additional *gross revenue* and approximately \$47,500 over the prior year.
- Events has an increase in *gross revenue* of approximately \$28,500 over *budgeted gross revenues* and just under \$12,000 less in current year *gross revenue* than earned in the prior year.
- Miscellaneous revenue includes a credit of approximately \$56,000, an apportionment from the State of SC passed through PEBA to Riverbanks as a credit to assist in the 2% increase in employer retirement expense.
- Governmental support is running almost \$35,000 ahead of prior year with almost \$30,000 of this from Richland County property taxes.

Departmental Expense – Total departmental expenses are running \$215,000 ahead of budget and in excess of \$238,000 over the prior year.

- Budget savings is largely from personnel savings. Almost every department has personnel savings. A portion is a result of timing differences; however, the majority is from unfilled positions. All available full-time and permanent part-time positions are budgeted each year. The largest savings are found in Administrative, Animal Care and Facilities Management.
- The current year increase over the prior year is in personnel, other operating and utilities.
- The largest increases in personnel costs are in the Botanical Garden, Habitat Horticulture, and Guest Services departments. Botanical Garden and Habitat Horticulturists were approved for a pay grade change. Guest Services had additional costs related to the eclipse and increased attendance, along with some timing differences. Administrative had a savings in personnel costs related to the timing of filling the CEO position and the now vacant COO position.
- Overall the increase in other operating expenses can be attributed to timing differences in when the expenses are paid from year to year. Marketing & Public Relations has the largest increase in other operating expenses. Administrative has the second largest increase, mostly attributed

to IT. Some of this will be timing differences, with the remaining associated with additional costs to operate.

Chief Operating Officer's Report

COO report was provided by Tommy Stringfellow:

- Boo at the Zoo- Attendance came in under budget, but revenue exceeded budget by about \$15,000.
- The 30th Lights Before Christmas begins this Saturday, November 18. For this event we have budgeted for 63,000 in attendance, which can be weather dependent. A new attraction this year will be a high tech digital Christmas tree in the main plaza. The tree will feature “shows” and “screen savers” every 15 minutes. Also new this year will be a parade every evening at 5:15 p.m. to kick off the start of Lights. The parade will begin in Carousel Plaza and escort Santa to Safari Camp.
- The 2nd annual Riverbanks Run 5K, is this Saturday, November 18 at 7:30 a.m.
- Riverbanks’ beverage agreement was up for bid this year. Service Systems Associates managed the process. Coca-Cola won the contract, effective January 1. Part of the agreement was to remove plastic water bottles to maintain conservation messaging. They will convert vending machines to canned water. They also provided sponsor dollars to look into boxed water options.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

President and CEO Stringfellow provided the following report:

- One of President Stringfellow’s initiatives was to improve park-wide communication with more frequent meetings. As a result, the Riverbanks Town Hall concept was created. Town Hall will be a monthly meeting open to all staff and volunteers. It will consist of a “housekeeping” update followed by a panel of Riverbanks’ senior leadership to discuss topics of interest in an open dialogue format. The topic each month will be sent to all staff and Commissioners two weeks in advance. Meetings take place in the Discovery Center Theater.
- On November 1st, Stringfellow and all Riverbanks’ directors met offsite for the first annual Leadership Summit meeting. The meeting was facilitated by Chernoff Newman to look at the Riverbanks’ brand and mission. The first half of the meeting focused on internal perceptions, and the second half examined strategic planning options. In the New Year, president Stringfellow will begin looking into a company to do Riverbanks’ planning.
- Stringfellow provided an update on the COO search. There is one internal candidate who will be interviewed next week, and an external candidate will be coming in tomorrow from West Palm Beach Zoo.
- The lorikeet exhibit is temporarily closed due to an upper respiratory infection that is potentially zoonotic. A second sample has been sent to two labs for further testing. Riverbanks veterinary staff is awaiting results. If positive, state vet requires all birds to be sampled.
- The Gold Circle Reception is on December 5.

- Stringfellow shared a copy of *The Story of a Zoo*, written by Don Barton, with each Commissioner.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 18 day of January 2018.

Jan Stamp, Secretary