

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 2/10/2026

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director *Amos D Morris, Jr.*

Subject: From the Executive Zoo Director, requesting authorization to execute a Professional Services Agreement with Traditions LLC for the installation of event décor for the Zoo’s Wild Lights Event

File Type: Action Report

REQUEST

The Executive Zoo Director is seeking approval to enter into a professional services agreement for the Zoo’s Wild Lights event with Traditions LLC for installation of event décor, lights, sound and design services beginning in 2026 from the effective date through February 28, 2027, and totals \$300,000. The Zoo anticipates that the total available funding for these services for Fiscal Year 2027 shall be approximately \$300,000; however, this amount is subject to the adoption of Milwaukee County’s Fiscal Year budgets for 2027-2030.

POLICY

Wis. Stats 59.52(31)(c) requires County Board approval for any single contract or group of contracts between the same parties with a value or aggregate value of more than \$300,000 and Wis. Stats 59.50(12) requires approval by the County Board for each contract requiring the payment of funds from the appropriations of a later fiscal year or of more than one fiscal year. In accordance with these rules, the Milwaukee County Zoo is submitting a contract for approval with these rules, the Milwaukee County Zoo is submitting a contract for approval with Traditions LLC for the period of February xx, 2026 and shall continue in full force and effect until February 28, 2027, with three additional one-year extension options to provide installation of décor for the Zoo’s Wild Lights event.

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| Wisconsin State Statutes: | 59.52(31)(c); 59.60(12) |
| Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances: | |
| Specific Adopted Budget: | 2026 Budget; File No.25-668 |
| Specific Adopted Budget Amendment: | |
| Specific Adopted Capital Project: | |

BACKGROUND

The Milwaukee County Zoo retains a lighting and décor agency to manage the installation and removal of holiday lights, animal sculptures, audio and décor elements

along approximately a 1.5-mile pathway throughout the Zoo for Wild Lights.

Wild Lights is held in the evenings over 25 days throughout November and December and has become one of the premier holiday light experiences in the area. The event attracted 48,676 guests in 2025 and is a critical part of achieving the Zoo's attendance and revenue goals.

This holiday lights agency also provides design services to enhance the event and create a memorable experience for the community. They provide maintenance on the lights and decor throughout the six weeks the event takes place. All staff and equipment (trucks, arial lifts, etc.) to produce the event are also provided by this agency.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government: Through this contract, we work with the agency to design an event that is inclusive and respectful of our diverse community.

3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability: The Zoo's Wild Lights event helps the Zoo reach its 2026 strategic overall attendance goal of 1,302,379 guests. Reaching or exceeding the attendance goal for this event has a direct impact on the Zoo's revenue and fiscal health budget and the County's overall fiscal outlook.

3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities: To make Wild Lights accessible to all audiences, the Zoo will be working to secure sponsorship or underwriting to provide free event admission to underserved zip codes and audiences within Milwaukee County.

FISCAL EFFECT

Annually, the Zoo allocates funds for décor installation for Wild Lights. The total for the initial contract term shall not exceed \$300,000, which is included in the 2026 Adopted Budget. This agreement is essential to meeting the event's revenue goal of \$1,019,218.

The Zoo anticipates budgeting \$300,000 in the years 2027-2029 for this service; however, the amount is subject to the adoption of the Fiscal Year budgets for 2027-2029.

TERMS

The term of the agreement is from the effective date through February 28, 2027, with three (3) additional one-year renewal terms.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

1. Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director, Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov

2. Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director, Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov
3. Emily Salentine, Director of Marketing and Communications,
Emily.Salentine@milwaukeecountywi.gov

PREPARED BY:

Emily Salentine, Director of Marketing and Communications
Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director

APPROVED BY:

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution, Fiscal Note, Draft Contract

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk
Allyson R. Smith, Finance Committee Coordinator
David Crowley, County Executive
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive
Liz Sumner, Comptroller
Aaron Hertzberg, Executive Director Administrative Services
Isaac Rowlett, Interim Director of Strategy Budget and Performance
Jim Moon, Deputy Comptroller
Steve Cady, Director Research and Policy, Comptroller's Office
Anthony Rux, Sr Analyst Budget and Management, DAS-SBP
Emily Salentine, Director of Marketing and Communications, Zoo
Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director