

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 4/21/2022

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

From: Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director, Zoological Department

Subject: From the Executive Zoo Director submitting the Milwaukee County Zoo's Roles and Responsibilities

File Type: Informational Report

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This information report provides a report on the roles and responsibilities of the Milwaukee County Zoo (MCZ) and its strategic partner, the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (Society).

**POLICY**

Wisconsin State Statutes:	63.03(3)(a)
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 50
Specific Adopted Budget:	Organizational Unit 9500

The MCZ is created under Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances Chapter 50 and the Executive Zoo Director is appointed pursuant to Wisconsin State Statutes 63.03(3)(a).

**BACKGROUND**

The Zoo's Mission, Vision and Purpose are as followings:

*Mission:* The MCZ will inspire public understanding, support and participation in global conservation of animal species and their environment by creating a unifying bond between our visitors and the living earth and provide an environment for personal renewal and enjoyment for our guests.

*Vision:* The MCZ will be a zoo of renown with a reputation in animal management, conservation, research and education within a wholesome recreational environment enjoying the admiration of the citizens of Milwaukee County as well as all Zoo guests and other zoos of the world.

*The Statement of Purpose:* The MCZ will:

- Contribute to worldwide animal management, conservation and research efforts
- Foster sound physical, psychological and social development for the animal groups in our care

- Share knowledge with the intent to reinforce the human-animal-earth bond
- Provide an enjoyable experience at the Zoo for our guests
- Strive for the financial self-sufficiency of the organization

The MCZ has been accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) since 1976. This accreditation process takes place every five years to make sure the Zoo meets AZA standards in the following areas: Animal Welfare, Care & Management, Veterinary Care, Conservation, Education and Interpretation, Scientific Advancement, Governing Authority, Staff, Support Organization, Finance, Physical Facilities, Safety/Security, Guest Services, and Master and Strategic Planning. The next accreditation process takes place in 2024.

MCZ is home to more than 2,000 animals representing 330 species (see table below). MCZ serves wildlife and their habitats by working to save endangered animals and providing them with exceptional professional care. In 2021, animal staff participated in 117 Species Survival Plans® (SSPs) and 46 Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) programs.

On Zoo Grounds	Species	Specimens
Mammals	72	324
Birds	91	309
Reptiles	40	70
Amphibians	7	11
Fish	81	1,280
Invertebrates	39	116
Total	330	2,110

Animal care professionals at MCZ contribute to a diverse portfolio of conservation, research and reproduction programs at local, national and international levels. The MCZ's collaborations with other conservation-focused organizations are of significance bringing strength and stability to the programs as well as to the conservation community. In 2021, the MCZ in collaboration with the Society, supported 56 projects.

The MCZ is broken down into the following four divisions: Administration, Finance and Operations; Marketing and Communications; Maintenance, Grounds and Environmental Services; and Animal Management and Health.

### **Partnership with the Society**

For more than a century, the Society has been the proud charity partner of the MCZ. They are committed to working together to advance our shared vision for the Zoo and

our community. Importantly, the Society also contributes to the MCZ's accreditation to the AZA. The partnership between the MCZ and the Society is recognized as one of the more successful public/private partnerships in the region.

The Society is an award-winning organization. Its mission is to conserve wildlife and endangered species, educate people about the importance of wildlife and the environment, and support the MCZ.

### Support

The Society supports the MCZ by providing financial support as well as in-kind contributions and donated services to the Zoo. Financially, the Society contributes more than \$4.5 million to the Zoo in annual operating support and covers 50% of the cost of major capital improvements. Operating revenue is generated through the Zoo Pass program, procuring sponsorship for attractions and Zoo events, and securing donations for various Zoo projects. Recent capital projects include the renovations of Adventure Africa. The Society is a 50/50 partner with the County and committed to raise more than \$25 million to design and build new exhibits for the elephants, hippos, and rhinos. In addition to providing cash support directly to the Zoo, the Society covers the cost for various Zoo priorities including the salaries for two veterinary residents at the animal hospital and zookeeper conservation projects.

In-kind support includes operating and running Zoo Pride, the volunteer program. On average, 500 volunteers provide 50,000 hours of valuable assistance to zookeepers, guest services and events. The Society provides a professional creative department that designs and creates signs, promotional materials and other graphics found around the MCZ. As needed, the Society also secures budget-relieving donations of goods and services for the Zoo. This may include equipment for the animal hospital or power tools to maintain Zoo grounds.

### Educate

Educational programming is important to both organizations and helps the Zoo in its AZA accreditation. Through age-appropriate natural science education, the Society fosters empathy for animals and create a connection to the natural world. Our joint goal is to empower and inspire all members of our community to take conservation action. To achieve this, the Society-run Conservation Education Department holds Zoo Classes and Camps throughout the year in addition to school programs and its theater program – Kohl's Wild Theater. These programs reach on average 200,000 children and adults each year. The Society also focuses on children in low-income families by providing free or discounted programs to thousands of children each year.

### Conserve

The Society has a long history of working on local and global conservation programs. Our joint goal is to inspire and fund conservation action. Today, the Society helps cover the costs of zookeeper conservation initiatives around the world ranging from helping protect polar bears, penguins, and nearly extinct iguanas in the wild, to studying the migration of birds and helping the Belize Zoo learn and grow. The Society is also

teaming with the Zoo and other conservation organizations to participate in local clean-up efforts and to spread the message about protecting bees and all pollinators.

### **Cross-County Collaborations**

The MCZ partners with many County departments. Below are some of those partners along with their function.

- Department of Administrative Services (DAS)– Facilities Management: Staff from DAS-Facilities Management Architect and Engineering are heavily involved as Project Managers for Zoo capital projects. The Project Manager role is shared with Zoo staff who have expertise in animal exhibits and operations.
- MCDOT – Fleet Management: Fleet Management services over 30 vehicles for the Zoo including pickup trucks, snowplow and a VAC-All.
- Human Resources – The Department of Human Resources has a Business Partner assigned and housed at the Zoo.
- DAS – Information Management Services Division: The Zoo directly pays for one IT Specialist to administer the point-of-sale system in regard to connectivity, hardware and troubleshooting.
- DAS-Risk Management: A Risk Management Safety Specialist is assigned and housed at the Zoo to provide support for the AZA Accreditation Standard related to safety.
- Parks Department: The MCZ and the Parks share in the County's annual music license fees. Both departments also collaborate and work together to share equipment and Parks provides forestry services when available.

### **Revenue Share Partners**

A major revenue partner is Service Systems Associates Group (SSA) that provides all retail and concessions for the Zoo. In addition, SSA is an approved caterer and can be hired for private events. SSA commission fees range from 30% for retail to 25-28% for concessions. In addition, SSA pays a 15% for catering commission fee, as do other approved caterers. SSA's contract includes \$3.2 million for improvements to Zoo facilities, including a major renovation of the Zoo's main Gift Shop.

The MCZ has additional revenue share partners for pony rides, the sea lion show, face painting, caricatures, entrance photos and various vending, including penny presses and Mold-a-Rama. In 2022, the Zoo will be adding a new revenue share partner for a Virtual Reality theater titled Gorilla Trek by Immotion.

### **Zoo Operations**

Guests can choose to purchase a wide variety of experiences from train, skyride, zoomobile, carousel rides to feeding the goats, giraffes and koi. Guests can also test their skills on the zip line and ropes course. On an annual basis, to boost attendance and revenues, the Zoo hosts a special exhibit. For 2022, the special exhibit is Dragon Kingdom. The Wild Connections program is an opportunity for an up-close animal encounter. Guests can rent strollers and electric wheelchairs. Non-motorized wheelchairs are free of charge.

## **Special Events**

Throughout the year, the Zoo hosts special events to increase attendance, visibility and provide educational opportunities. Special Events include the annual Samson Stomp Run and Walk, Free Days, Inside the Zoo, various animal appreciation days, Mother's and Father's Days, Sunset Zoofari (4 evening in summer at reduced rates), Celebrate Diversity, which is new for 2022, Military and Veteran's Day, a la Carte, Senior Celebration, Boo at the Zoo and Wild Lights.

## **Group Sales**

The Group Sales section of the Marketing and Communications Division coordinates events for eight rental facilities and six picnic areas throughout the Zoo. On an annual basis, Group Sales manages more than 600 events annually (pre-COVID). These events are a mix of corporate, non-profit and private events including weddings, quinceañera celebrations and birthday parties.

## **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

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

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3A: Invest "upstream" to address root causes of health disparities
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

Per AZA accreditation standards, the Zoo must follow a written diversity, equity, access and inclusion (DEAI) program. Programs must be proactive and transparent, with measurable goals for assessing progress, and must have a paid staff member(s) or committee responsible for oversight. Below are some of the ways we measure our DEAI progress.

- Surveys: On annual basis staff performs an annual exit survey to gain guest feedback and demographic information. That information is used as a performance metrics and provides vital guest demographics. Other surveys for events and exhibits are performed as needed.
- Accessibility Programs: The MCZ and the Society participate in many accessibility programs from free admissions/programming to reduced fees. For a complete list, see attachment #1.

- Guest Experience Committee: The GEC brings together employees from all departments at the MCZ, Society and SSA. The members of the GEC share information, collaborate and identify ways to improve guest experience, with a special singular commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion for all Zoo visitors.
- Marketing Strategy: The Zoo has continued to shift a greater portion of its advertising budget and marketing strategy to attracting visitors from underserved markets and populations.
- New for 2022, the Zoo is hiring a Program Coordinator with a focus on DEAI efforts.

### **Strategic Plan**

The MCZ and the Society are partnering to create an enterprise-wide strategic plan for both entities. The plan will be a holistic look at a shared vision and commitment to the Zoo and our community while honoring the respective roles and governance models of each organization. It will be used jointly by the Society and the Zoo to guide the strategic direction over the next 7-10 years. The project will include the completion of a strategic plan, refresh the existing master plan (facilities plan) and a business plan. The plan will align to the County-wide strategic focus areas of inclusion, influence and integrity. The goal is to have a completed plan by year-end.

### **FISCAL EFFECT**

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

### **VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

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### **PREPARED BY:**

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### **APPROVED BY:**

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director

*Amos D Morris, Jr.*

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Milwaukee County Zoo Department Overview (PDF)

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk  
David Crowley, County Executive

Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive  
Scott Manske, Comptroller  
Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services  
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