

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 2/12/2025

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 the creation of 1.0 FTE Zoological Medicine and Surgery Resident position

File Type: Action Report

REQUEST

The Executive Zoo Director is requesting the creation of one position of Zoological Medicine and Surgery Resident to participate in the American College of Zoological Medicine (ACZM) zoological medicine residency program.

POLICY

Wisconsin State Statutes:	Chapter 59.17
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 17.05 (1)
Specific Adopted Budget:	2025 & 2026
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

BACKGROUND

Since 2001, the Milwaukee County Zoo and the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine in conjunction with the International Crane Foundation, have had a successful zoo veterinary residency program. This program has trained 13 residents in zoological medicine and surgery. The University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine has elected to discontinue the Zoological Medicine and Surgery residency program.

The zoo veterinary community is facing a shortage of well-trained zoo veterinarians as there are a limited number of American College of Zoological Medicine (ACZM) approved zoological medicine residency programs. Given that the Milwaukee County Zoo has already been integral in a combined residency program in the past, this institution is perfectly positioned to continue to train a veterinary resident, and training these individuals is well within the expertise of the current veterinary staff. Being able to create a new Zoo veterinary residency program will help alleviate the zoo veterinarian shortage, advance the profession, and support the Zoo's mission by continuing to train and develop veterinary residents.

Although the primary reason to create this position is to educate zoo veterinarians and enhance the profession, having a veterinary resident will provide additional support, in conjunction with the current veterinary staff, to provide care for over 2,000 specimens which require care 365 days per year, often after regular business hours. Beyond veterinary care, the Zoo's veterinary team advances the profession. It supports the Zoo's mission by mentoring and training veterinary students, publishing peer-reviewed research, collaborating on research with other zoos and university partners, participating in education programs for zoo guests, and working in the field with wildlife conservation projects. Adding a Zoological Medicine and Surgery Veterinary Resident will help support these activities.

The American College of Zoological Residency (ACZM) Training Program Committee is charged with evaluating residency or graduate programs in zoological medicine to determine if they meet the appropriate standards for qualifying trainees for the ACZM board examination. ACZM approval will be required before starting this program but must be applied for in advance. To meet the timeline, the position of Zoological Medicine and Surgery Resident needs to be created in 2025 so the paperwork for the accreditation process can be completed and ready for July 2026 which would be the anticipated start date for this position. In addition, although the individual will not start until July 2026, the application process for this position through the ACZM will begin in November 2025 with the applicant being informed of their acceptance into the program in March 2026.

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: Having a veterinary resident will provide additional veterinary support for the collection. Beyond veterinary care, the Zoo's veterinary team advances the profession. It supports the Zoo's mission by mentoring and training veterinary students, publishing peer-reviewed research, collaborating on research with other zoos and university partners, participating in education programs for zoo guests, and working in the field with wildlife conservation projects. Adding a Zoological Medicine and Surgery Veterinary Resident will help support these activities.
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability: Having a qualified pool of veterinarians helps when a vacancy occurs to avoid the more costly option of hiring consultants to assist with veterinary care for 24/7 coverage.
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities: Being part of the residency program alleviates the zoo veterinarian shortage, advances the profession, and supports the Zoo's mission by continuing to train and develop veterinary residents. It also reinforces that we are a teaching hospital and an educational resource for the community.

FISCAL EFFECT

There is no fiscal effect on the 2025 budget as the new position of Zoological Medicine and Surgery Resident will be filled in July of 2026. The annual salary will be \$41,000 and will be jointly funded between the Milwaukee County Zoo and the Zoological Society of Milwaukee. The costs associated with this position will be included in the Zoo's 2026 budget, which will also reflect the funding from the Zoological Society of Milwaukee.

Position Description	Pay Grade	FTE	2026 Salary and Social Impact (estimated start date 7/20/2026)	Annualized Impact
Zoological Medicine & Surgery Resident	12	1.00	\$18,672	\$44,137

TERMS

The creation of this position is requested for this year in order to apply to the ACZM for the residency program. The position's start date will be in July 2026. The Zoological Medicine and Surgery Resident is a three-year position, which will be filled by a new individual every three years.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

1. Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov
2. Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov
3. Christy Rettenmund, Senior Staff Veterinarian Christy.Rettenmund@milwaukeecountywi.gov
4. Tracey Dolphin, Director of Animal Management and Health Tracey.Dolphin@milwaukeecountywi.gov

PREPARED BY:

Christy Rettenmund, Senior Staff Veterinarian
 Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director (Admin/Finance/Operations)

APPROVED BY:

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution, Fiscal Note, DHR Report, JEQ, OSBP Report

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
Margo Franklin, Chief Human Resources Officer
Tony Maze, Director of Total Rewards
Christine Carlson, HR Compensation Manager
Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director
Tracey Dolphin, Director of Animal Management and Health, Zoo
Christy Rettenmund, Senior Staff Veterinarian, Zoo
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director, Office of Comptroller
Joe Lamers, Director, Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance (SBP)
Anthony Rux, Budget and Management Analyst
Mary Polaris, HR Business Partner