

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 12/29/2025

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 authorization to execute a Professional Service Agreement with Culture by Design, LLC d/b/a Culture x Design for entertainment booking services for the Zoo's Milwaukee A La Carte event

File Type: Action Report

REQUEST

The Executive Zoo Director is seeking approval to enter into a professional services agreement for the Zoo's Milwaukee a la Carte event with Culture x Design for entertainment services beginning in 2026, for a term from February 16, 2026, through December 31, 2027, with three (3) additional one-year renewal terms. The 2026 agreement amount 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 Culture x Design for the period of February 16, 2026, and shall continue in full force and effect until December 31, 2027, with three additional one-year extension options to provide entertainment booking services for the Zoo's Milwaukee a la Carte event.

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 an entertainment services agency to secure and

manage all aspects of local, regional and national bands for its food and music festival, A La Carte. A La Carte has been held over four days in August for 40 years.

The entertainment agency provides a range of services, including booking and managing over 64 bands, production needs (audio and lighting), providing staging, staffing the event, band security, entertainment transportation and band hospitality. The agency also manages contract negotiations with the bands and production.

These efforts aim to attract over 55,000 guests each year to A La Carte and are a critical part of achieving the Zoo's revenue goal.

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, the Zoo is committed to reaching diverse audiences and working with minority entertainers to foster an inclusive culture within County government. The Zoo actively promotes inclusiveness by collaborating with people in the community from all backgrounds in the production of the event. Milwaukee a la Carte is one of the Zoo's largest and most diverse yearly events.
- 2C: [Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions](#): This agency provides a racial equity lens by creating an entertainment plan that is inclusive of the entertainment secured, respectful of our diverse community, and in the messaging for our audiences. This contract will incorporate inclusive entertainment, so the community feels welcomed at this festival.
- 3B: [Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability](#): The Milwaukee a la Carte 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](#): All entertainment provided at the event is included in the regular Zoo admission cost, making it an affordable way to enjoy the Zoo and a wide variety of music and food. Advanced, reduced admission tickets are available at locations throughout the Milwaukee County area, providing an opportunity for all communities to attend the event.

FISCAL EFFECT

Annually, the Zoo allocates funds for entertainment services. The total for this agreement is \$300,000, which is included in the 2026 Adopted Budget. This agreement is essential to meeting the Milwaukee a la Carte event revenue goal of \$1.4 M.

The Zoo anticipates budgeting \$300,000 in 2027 for this service; however, the amount is subject to the adoption of the Fiscal Year budgets for 2027-2030.

TERMS

The term of the fourth amendment to the professional services contract with Culture x Design is from February 1, 2026, to December 31, 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