

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 2/17/2022

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

From: Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director

Subject: From the Executive Zoo Director requesting authorization to enter into a contract with Immotion for a Virtual Reality Theater at the Milwaukee County Zoo

File Type: Action Item

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**REQUEST**

The Milwaukee County Zoo requests authorization to enter into a contract with Immotion for a virtual reality (VR) theater that combines educational VR experiences with state-of-the-art motion-platform technology for an immersive edutainment experience that will engage visitors and increase revenues for the Zoo. This is a 50%/50% revenue share contract.

**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 59.60(12) requires approval by the County Board of each contract requiring the payment of funds from the appropriations of a later fiscal year or more than one fiscal year. In accordance with these rules, the Milwaukee County Zoo is submitting a contract for approval with Immotion for the period of April 1, 2022 to December 31, 2026 to provide the Zoo with a virtual reality theater experience. Funding for a theater experience is included in the 2022 Budget.

Wisconsin State Statutes:	59.52(31)(c); 59.60(12)
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	
Specific Adopted Budget:	2022; File No. 21-920
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

**BACKGROUND**

The 2022 Budget included funds for a 4D theater experience. After further research it was determined that a virtual reality experience would better maximize revenue while also providing an immersive animal educational experience. The VR 36-seat theater will be presented in the Zoo's Special Exhibit building as a first-class turnkey on-mission attraction at no capital expense to the Zoo. The overall experience will last 15 minutes, including a pre-show as you walk through the building prior to the VR film. Zoo staff will

operate the exhibit with 24/7 support if needed from the vendor at no additional cost to the Zoo. The vendor will also replace any defective or damaged VR headsets free of charge.

Immotion teamed up with the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund to create its latest live action VR piece, Gorilla Trek. Lead by world-renowned primatologist and CEO of the Funds, Dr. Tara Stoinski and Immotion's team traveled to the mountains of Rwanda to investigate and film the family dynamics of the seldom seen and highly endangered mountain gorilla. Being immersed in this family will be a truly breathtaking and unforgettable experience for Zoo guests. What makes this even more exciting is that during the pre-show, the Zoo's gorillas will also be highlighted creating a link to our Gorilla exhibit. The pre-show will include flat screen monitors, projection through "framed windows" with colored gobo lighting effects, ambient sound and touch-screen interactive displays. Some of the information panels will be customized to highlight the Zoo's primate conservation efforts.

The Zoo will also have access to seasonal films that can be played during the Zoo's Halloween event and Wild Lights in December. This attraction provides a year-round experience.

#### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

#### **FISCAL EFFECT**

The 2022 Adopted Operating Budget includes \$278,213 in expenses and \$359,840 in revenues for a 4D theater experience. The VR theater experience has the potential to generate additional revenues and may increase expenditures and revenues for the Zoo (see Fiscal Note for details). If this should occur, the Zoo requests that the Comptroller's Office in conjunction with the Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance (SBP) and the Zoo be directed to process an appropriation transfer to recognize the revenue and align expenditures as needed for the operation of the theater. There are no capital expenditures for the Zoo with this contract.

Revenue generated from the virtual theater for the out years will be included during the annual budget process.

#### **TERMS**

The term of this contract is April 1, 2022 through December 31, 2026. A five-year contract is needed due to the vendor's investment of \$1M.

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Amos Morris will present but please include Vera Westphal and Andrew Stockel in the virtual meeting invite. Email addresses as follows:

[Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov), [Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov),  
[Andrew.Stockel@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Andrew.Stockel@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

**PREPARED BY:**

Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director

**APPROVED BY:**

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director, Zoological Department

*Amos D. Morris, Jr*

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Fiscal Note, Resolution, 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  
David Crowley, County Executive  
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive  
Scott Manske, Comptroller  
Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services  
Joseph Lamers, Director of Performance, Strategy & Budget  
Michelle Nate, Deputy Comptroller  
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director, Comptroller's Office  
Ciara Miller, Research Analyst, Comptroller's Office  
Anthony Rux, Budget and Management Analyst, PSB  
Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director  
Andrew Stockel, Business Operations Manager