



"Creating a just and sustainable world where people and wildlife thrive together."

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April 23, 2024

Honorable Members of the Budget, Finance and Innovation Committee
Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUBJECT: ZOO DEPARTMENT RESPONSE TO THE MAYOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-25 (COUNCIL FILE 24-0600)

Honorable Councilmembers:

The Zoo Department appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the Mayor's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25. The Zoo continues to build its capacity as a resource to the community and as a leader in conservation both locally and globally. Our efforts remain focused on building a better Zoo that is committed to the animals in our care and their wellbeing, to the conservation of wildlife, to being a trusted and valued community resource, and ensuring programs and services are grounded in equity, access and belonging.

As such, the Zoo Department provides the following for consideration in the review of its proposed budget in response to the letter from the Chair, Budget, Finance, and Innovation Committee.

Five Department Achievements with the Allocation in the Mayor's Proposed Budget

The resources being proposed for the Zoo for Fiscal Year 2024-25 will allow the Department to achieve the following:

1. Reach an attendance goal of 1.5 million visitors ensuring a welcoming and inclusive environment and engaging experiences that generate new and repeat visitation;
2. Engage the diverse communities of Los Angeles about conservation with a focus on urban biodiversity and building connections with the Zoo in connection with our community outreach efforts with a goal of reaching 6,000 participants, especially those in high and very-high park need areas;
3. Increase equity and accessibility through opportunities to connect 20,000 members of our community to nature and wildlife through the following programs:
 - *Zoo Camp* Scholarship Program which provides scholarships to under-resourced families to attend a week of summer camp;
 - Partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) *Beyond the Bell Program* which provides summer enrichment for migrant, immigrant & refugee students;
 - *ZooPals Program* which provides scholarships for classroom programming and field trips for kindergarten to fifth grade classes at Title I schools;

- Measure A *Safari Days Program*, the second year of a three-year grant, which provides transportation and programming for LAUSD eligible second and third grade students to increase access to nature via the Zoo; and
 - Participation in the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) *Discover & Go Program* which provides free Zoo admission tickets through reservations for City of Los Angeles residents with a LAPL library card.
4. Continue to build upon the goals of the Conservation Strategic Plan (CSP) to further advance local CSP initiatives such as Project Pollinator and the Griffith Park Habitat Restoration project, as well as larger scale projects such as the Oak Woodland Restoration and Workforce Development Program, and continuing our signature species-saving efforts with the California condor and southern mountain yellow-legged frog that further our conservation impact;
 5. Continue progress on improvements to address deferred maintenance and maintain a safe facility to reduce risk and liability, ensure compliance with regulatory and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation standards, as well as coordinate with other Departments to develop and execute capital infrastructure improvement plans.

Using Equity as Lens in the Department's Budget Requests

In addition to the programs mentioned above, the Department continues to build upon its equity initiatives that were introduced in the last two years such as the Teen Council for Conservation (TCC) and the Paid Internship Program (PIP) which provides opportunities for youth and young adults to gain hands on paid experience in zoo science and conservation fields while building stewardship for environmental justice and sustainability. We will also continue to strengthen our outreach in the community through broad and diverse partnerships with organizations such as Plaza de la Raza, Outdoor Afro, Outward Bound Adventures, the Los Angeles Public Library and others whose values uplift and prioritize equity and belonging.

Finally, the Department also continues to work with the Personnel Department and utilize hiring tools to diversify the workforce with programs like the Targeted Local Hire (TLH) and the Bridget to Jobs (BTJ) programs whenever applicable and to date we have hired 32 employees through these programs.

Critically Needed Positions that can be Filled by Repurposing Existing Positions or Restructuring

The Department requests restoration and reclassification of a vacant Park Services Attendant II (Class Code 2412-2) position currently being proposed for deletion in the Mayor's Proposed Budget to an Animal Keeper (Class Code 4304) authority to address a classification issue that was recommended by the Personnel Department. This action will support the critical operations of the Animal Nutrition Program that supports the daily care and wellbeing of the animals through daily diet preparation and nutritional health

assessment. The Department proposes absorbing the funding for the authority should this request be approved.

Department Proposed Changes

Aside from the restoration and reclassification of the position mentioned above, the Department has no other proposed changes.

Given the City's current financial constraints, the 2024-25 Proposed Budget for the Zoo Department is appreciated. The Department will leverage the resources included in the Mayor's Proposed Budget to maximize revenue and continue to make progress towards the Zoo's mission of saving wildlife, enriching our communities, and creating connections to nature through the lens of equity, access and inclusion.

My staff and I look forward to working with your Committee, and the entire City Council, during this budget deliberation process.

Respectfully Submitted,



Denise M. Verret
General Manager

DMV:MK

cc: Carolyn Webb de Macias, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Jacqueline Hamilton, Deputy Mayor for Neighborhood Services
Mayor's Office Matthew Hale, Deputy Mayor of Finance
Mayor's Office Matthew Szabo, City Administrative Officer
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