

**Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
16 October 2025**

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the agenda is available to radio and TV stations, newspapers, and persons requesting notification; was posted in the lobby of Riverbanks' administration building and was uploaded to Riverbanks' webpage.

Attendance Report

Commissioners Present: Cliff Bourke, Bob Davidson, Chip Huggins, Jeff Reeves, Deneen Shockley, Mike Velasco (via phone), Alana Williams.

Staff Present: Tommy Stringfellow, Christie Vondrak, Lochlan Wooten, Jessica Austin.

Call to Order

Chairwoman Williams called the meeting to order at 12:30pm.

Reading of the Minutes

The September 25, 2025, Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed.
Bourke motioned to approve the minutes, Davidson seconded, m/c unanimous.

Chairwoman's Remarks:

- Happy birthday to Jeff!

Executive Session:

Shockley motioned to enter executive session, Davidson seconded, m/c unanimous.

- Commissioners entered executive session to discuss an issue pursuant to SC Code § 30-4-70
(a) (1), (3).

No vote was taken after Executive Session.

Finance Report:

VP of Finance Ashley Harris provided the following report:

- September Dashboard Report:
 - Through September, memberships increased by 807 households since 8/31, bringing us up to 41,269 as of 9/30. Budgeted memberships are set at 42,500 in FY26. We are seeing memberships come back up since the opening of the Saluda Skyride.
 - Attendance through September year to date reported 4.3% below budget, yet 10.7% above prior year, welcoming 23,459 more guests in the current fiscal year vs. the last. We're continuing to close the gap between budget vs. actual that originated back from July. Like in August, we did track above budgeted attendance for the month of September.
 - Overall, net revenues over expenditures are running \$582K better than budget and \$868K better than prior year. As a reminder, we received \$750K in recurring state funding in August.
 - The largest driver of earned revenues reporting over budget is from the Miscellaneous revenues line. This is where both interest income is recorded and insurance proceeds. We received \$250,585 in insurance proceeds from the burnt tram in September. Interest income was reporting \$104K over projections through September.
 - The main driver of departmental expenditures reporting under budget is from utilities running \$147K below budget, due to the large credit placed on the main City of Columbia water zoo account (associated with 500 Wildlife Parkway) for \$140K

- September Balance Sheet:
 - LGIP's average interest rate for September was 4.4%
 - Final capital transfer not yet recorded, will lower balance in Due from Capital Projects in November.

Shockley motioned to approve the financials, Bourke seconded, m/c unanimous.

President & CEO Report:

President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- City and county are coming back into session. Expect to have more conversations in the coming months.
- Lander Hiott and Stringfellow have been working together to form a possible partnership with the Department of Commerce. Will be hosting a small group to showcase what the zoo has to offer for families and business owners considering a move to South Carolina.
- Will have a visit from the Department of Education in October to see the zoo's facilities and education programming
- DNR meeting also in the works
- Presenting to Central SC Alliance on October 23rd
- Elections for mayor and governor are approaching. Please take the opportunity to reach out to candidates you may know and establish rapport.

Chief Administrative Officer Report:

Chief Administrative Officer Christie Vondrak provided the following report:

- Dates and Reminders
 - September 26 – ZOOafari
 - October 14 – Town Hall
 - October 17 – 30 – Boo at the Zoo
 - November 20 – Wild Lights VIP Preview
- Inclusion and Belonging Survey results
- RBZ Gun Team training overview
- Saluda Skyride Staff & Family Preview Night was a big success with over 400 in attendance
- September Town Hall recap

Chief Operating Officer Report:

Chief Operating Officer Lochlan Wooten provided the following report:

- Kamari the giraffe is expected on October 16th
- Huntington the sea turtle will be released to the wild in a few weeks
- Sensory Sensitivity Day was a huge success. Will plan to have more in the future.
- Boo at the Zoo begins on the 17th. Newest addition is Haunted Hideaway igloos.
- ZOOafari raised a historic amount. Very successful event.
- Seeing an uptick in memberships through September. Members are visiting multiple times, indicating they find value in their membership.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 26 day of November 2025.

 _____, Secretary