

**INGHAM COUNTY POTTER PARK ZOO\COUNTY PARKS TASK FORCE
MEETING ON POTENTIAL BALLOT ISSUES**

**Wednesday, June 28, 2006, 5:00 p.m., in the Personnel Conference Room (D&E) at
the Human Services Building, 5303 S. Cedar St., Lansing**

Agenda

Call to Order
June 14, 2006 Minutes
Additions to the Agenda
Limited Public Comment

1. Discussion on Regionalism – Potential Regional Discussion with Delta Township Supervisor Joe Drolett
2. Controller's Office – Information on the Formation of Authorities and Special Districts (to be distributed at the meeting.)
3. Topics for Future Meetings
 - Regional Approach, Do We Attempt to Include Eaton and Clinton Counties and Other Municipalities in Those Counties?
 - Will the Zoo Millage Be a Stand Alone Millage or Tied to Other Things, i.e. County Parks Millage, Agricultural Preservation Board Millage?
 - Governance Issues: If the Millage Passes Who Will Operate the Zoo and Under What Circumstances?
4. Other Items

Announcements
Public Comment
Adjournment

INGHAM COUNTY POTTER PARK ZOO/COUNTY PARKS TASK FORCE

June 14, 2006

Task Force Members Present: Chairperson Bahar-Cook, Board Chairperson Celentino, Comm. Mike Severino, Comm. Dale Copedge, Jerry Ambrose, John Czarnecki, William Matt, Comm. Curtis Hertel, Comm. Tina Weatherwax-Grant and Harold Leeman, Jr.

Task Force Members Absent: Comm. Debbie DeLeon, Comm. Andy Schor,

Others Present: Ed Dore, Gerry Brady, Carol Wood, John Baron, Larry Murdock Jemerson, Scott Dedic, Rick Kibbey, Diane McNeil, Mayor Virg Bernero, Janice Tomlian, Mark Marquardt, Stacy Sheridan, Dallas Henney and others

The meeting was called to order at 4:34 p.m. in the Safari Room inside the Education Discovery Building at the Potter Park Zoo, 1301 South Pennsylvania Avenue, Lansing.

Approval of the May 17 and May 30, 2006 Minutes

MOVED BY COMM. SEVERINO, SUPPORTED BY WILLIAM MATT, TO APPROVE THE MAY 17 AND THE MAY 30, 2006 MINUTES AS SUBMITTED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Absent: Comms. DeLeon and Schor

Additions to the Agenda

3c. Additional Information

Chairperson Bahar-Cook introduced Mr. Ed Dore, Ingham County Controller, to the Task Force.

Limited Public Comment: None

1. Discussion on Regionalism – Potential Regional Discussion with Delta Township Supervisor Joe Drolett

Chairperson Bahar-Cook informed the Task Force that Mr. Drolett would not be present this evening; however, he has been scheduled to attend the June 28, 2006 meeting.

2. Attachments

a. Roster for Zoo Task Force – Update

This is an informational item.

b. Communication from Tara M. Harrison, DVM, MPVM, Potter Park Zoo Veterinarian/Curator

Chairperson Bahar-Cook stated Dr. Harrison submitted her letter regarding accreditation, animal care and daily duties at the Zoo for the Task Force's review. She had to leave the last Task Force meeting before she could address any questions from the Task Force.

3. Reports

- a. Potter Park Zoo – Basic Information About the Zoo Accreditation Process
- b. City of Lansing – City Council Positions on the Zoo and the Waverly and Red Cedar Golf Courses
- c. Controller's Office – Proposed Millage Scenario Information

Additional information was distributed to the Task Force.

Ms. Wood informed the Task Force the Lansing City Council would like to develop a partnership/authority for the Potter Park Zoo. She then reminded the Task Force of the investment the City residents initially made into the Park. The Council will support efforts to determine a feasible financial arrangement.

Lansing City Mayor Virg Bernero stated he was delighted to hear Ms. Wood's report from the City Council regarding the development of a partnership. He then expressed his appreciation to the Ingham County Board of Commissioners for their efforts to date and for the approach they have taken toward this matter. Mayor Bernero applauded the County's leadership.

Mayor Bernero further stated the City cannot sustain the operation of the Zoo from its general fund. He then expressed his commitment to ensure the Zoo employees are treated fairly during this process. He looks forward to speaking with his constituents regarding this issue. Time is of the essence. To maintain the quality of the Zoo, this process should move forward quickly.

Chairperson Celentino thanked Mayor Bernero for his comments. The City Council and the Board of Commissioners have always been open-minded. He then stated Mr. Drolett, Delta Township Supervisor, will be present at the Task Force's June 28 meeting. Chairperson Celentino stated approximately 70% of the Zoo's visitors come from outside the Lansing area. He thanked Mayor Bernero and Ms. Wood for their comments and participation in this discussion.

Ms. Wood stated the City Council did speak with other jurisdictions regarding their possible involvement in a partnership. She stated she is anxious to see what arrangement is developed concerning the Zoo. Regarding the City's golf courses, she stated Mr. Leeman said "thanks, but no thanks" to a statement made at the Task Force's previous meeting.

Chairperson Bahar-Cook stated the members of this Task Force have done a good job providing input on this matter. She expressed her appreciation to the members for their involvement to this point. In response to Chairperson Bahar-Cook's request, Mr. Dore provided clarification regarding the information that was submitted to the Task Force earlier during this meeting. In response to questions from Mr. Czarnecki, Mr. Dore

explained the information contains arbitrary funding arrangements for discussion.

Chairperson Bahar-Cook stated it is important for the Task Force to review the information contained in agenda item 3c. The Task Force should move forward with the .46 funding scenario as it would allow the Zoo to make some capital improvements.

4. Other Items

Comm. Severino expresses his apology to the Task Force for not being in attendance during the first few meetings. He then stated he believes it would be unlikely that other entities would come forward in time to save the Zoo. The Task Force should develop a Plan B for this scenario. It will be the job of the City Council and the Mayor to ensure this matter is resolved in a timely manner.

Comm. Severino asked for the Task Force's plans if the proposed millage fails. Mayor Bernero stated it is difficult to have governmental entities focus on an issue unless it is deemed an emergency. The Zoo and the City are not in a financial crisis. The City has had some difficult budget years. It would be unfair for the City to pay for the Zoo when 70% of its visitors reside outside of the City.

Mayor Bernero explained a Plan B would include the continued operation of the Zoo with its accreditation. In the long run, he stated he fears for the quality of the Zoo. A regional approach would be best for the Zoo. Ms. Wood agreed the sustainability of the Zoo should be looked at beyond this year.

Comm. Severino stated he feels better after hearing the previous comments from Mayor Bernero and Ms. Wood.

Mr. Leeman stated his colleagues are open to placing a millage on the ballot and to having a 50/50 operational agreement. Chairperson Bahar-Cook stated the County will formally present its proposal to the Lansing City Council. At this time, efforts need to be focused on what is best for all involved in this matter.

Mayor Bernero expressed his view that the County could keep the Zoo open and use City and out-County tax dollars to do so while maintaining the Zoo's present location. The issue of who operates the Zoo is not an issue as long as the Zoo maintains its current quality. The key is to treat people fairly.

Mr. Ambrose stated the City and the County could jointly operate the Zoo with a broad funding structure over time. The City is reluctant to give the Zoo away; however, he understands that to ask the County to fund the Zoo's operation is unfair.

Comm. Hertel suggested staff and others should develop a few options for consideration by the Task Force at its next meeting. Mr. Ambrose stated a few arrangements could be drafted and then legislative mechanisms could be reviewed to determine which would best fit the selected arrangement.

Brief discussion regarding what would happen if a parks millage is not approved.

At this time, an Eagle Owl was brought in for the Task Force to view. A brief presentation was made at this time regarding the Owl and the Zoo's programs.

(Comm. Copedge left the meeting at 5:15 p.m.)

Comm. Weatherwax-Grant stated she thought the Task Force was to receive further information regarding the accreditation process. Chairperson Bahar-Cook stated she would request that Ms. McNeil address Comm. Weatherwax-Grant's questions regarding the accreditation process in a letter. Mr. Ambrose stated there is more information to be submitted to the Task Force regarding this process.

5. Topics for Future Meetings

- Will the Zoo Millage be a Stand Alone Millage or will it be tied to Other Things, i.e. County Parks Millage, Agricultural Preservation Board Millage?
- Regional Approach – Do We Attempt to Include Eaton and Clinton Counties and other Municipalities within those Counties?
- Governance Issues: If the Millage Passes, Who Will Operate the Zoo and Under what Circumstances?

Chairperson Bahar-Cook stated the next meeting will be held at the Human Services Building. The Task Force will begin to move forward with an outline of a plan at that time.

Announcements

Mr. Brady stated that at 6:15 p.m. Ms. Tomlian, the Rhino Keeper, would give the Task Force members an up-close look at the Zoo's rare endangered rhinos. At 6:30 p.m. an MSU Intern will provide a personal tour of the three tiger cubs and will also show how the cubs are trained and conditioned for blood draws and physical exams.

Chairperson Bahar-Cook stated Task Force members will attend the next meeting of the Agricultural Preservation Board.

Mr. Leeman stated Mr. Ambrose will work with Mr. Dore to try and form some type of arrangement.

Public Comment: None

The Task Force adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Neff