

**Riverbanks Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
19 June 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, Chip Huggins, Jeff Reeves, Deneen Shockley, Mike Velasco, Alana Williams.

Commissioners Absent: Bob Davidson.

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

Call to Order

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

Williams proposed to amend the 19 June 2025 agenda to include the FY26 Budget reading. Shockley motioned to amend the 19 June 2025 agenda to include the FY26 Budget reading. Reeves seconded, m/c unanimous.

Reading of the Minutes

The May 15, 2025, Commission Meeting minutes were approved as distributed. Velasco motioned to approve the minutes, Huggins seconded, m/c unanimous.

Chairwoman's Remarks:

- Town Hall will be on June 26th. Commissioners are invited to attend.
- Williams suggested foregoing the July meeting. The Commission unanimously agreed to cancel the July meeting.

Executive Session

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

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

Following the executive session, Commissioners voted unanimously to increase Stringfellow's salary by 2% and issue a 10% bonus.

Finance Report:

VP of Finance Ashley Harris provided the following report:

- May Dashboard Report:
 - Through May we are running 13% under anticipated attendance and 8.4% below the prior year, consistent with prior months. South Carolina had a record rainy May.
 - Despite the lower attendance, earned revenues are still reporting over budget, primarily due to a \$3.00 general admission fee increase when purchasing tickets at the gate vs. online, and strong retail and concession per cap sales.
 - Governmental support is down from prior year due to \$4M more in state funding received in FY24, and a timing difference for Richland County reimbursements funded through a Hospitality tax grant.

- Net Operating transfer of \$4.4M is an interfund transfer to reimburse District's Capital Fund for capital projects that have been spent through this fiscal year. This transfer to the Capital fund will reduce the fund balance Committed for Capital Projects at year end.
- May Balance Sheet:
 - LGIP Cash balance is invested in the local government investment pool (LGIP) with the State Treasurer's Office. The average interest rate for May was earning 4.49%.
- May Statement of Revenues and Expenses:
 - Net revenue over expenditures for the current year is reporting at \$997K, before the net operating transfer to the capital fund mentioned during the Dashboard presentation.
- FY26 Budget:
 - Budget presented to Finance Committee on June 3rd. Presenting a balanced budget, and increasing budgeted revenues and expenditures by 5% over the prior year.
 - Budgeting a conservative attendance estimate of 1.2M - seeing downward trends in the current year, consistent with industry trends. However, with the Saluda Skyride to open in the fall, the new SkyTykes attraction, the Legos exhibit and the free State school groups, we anticipate an uptick in the upcoming fiscal year.
 - Bringing up General Admission revenues by \$300K attributable to an anticipated \$3 gate increase when the Skyride opens, as full access to the ride will be included with admission, and a reduction in admission revenue due to free SC public school groups.
 - Increasing the price of existing attractions by \$1.00.
 - Increasing Events revenue by \$110,000 due to a great turnout seen at Wild Lights this fiscal year and offering two additional nights of Boo at the Zoo in FY26.
 - Operating Support increased by \$600,000, associated with an increase in member dues to go into effect in Oct-25, to support Saluda Skyride operations.
 - Governmental support from Richland and Lexington County is expected to stay the same.
 - Will receive recurring State Department of Education appropriation of \$750,000 to fund the free SC public school groups.
 - Taking a conservative approach to Departmental Expenses by assuming all positions, both open and vacant, remain filled for the whole upcoming year.
 - Guest Services and Facility Maintenance reflect an increase in costs to operate the Saluda Skyride.

Huggins motioned to approve the financials, Velasco seconded, m/c unanimous.

Shockley motioned to approve the FY26 Budget, Huggins seconded, m/c unanimous.

President & CEO Report:

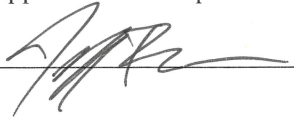
President & CEO Tommy Stringfellow provided the following report:

- City, state, and counties are wrapping up their budgets
- City water negotiations are still ongoing
- Susan the octopus passed away. Working to procure a new octopus. Thanked the Boyd foundation for the donation for transportation and fees.
- Wallaby joey naming contest will go live on social soon
- Penguin mural is complete. Penguins should be back on exhibit in the next few weeks.
- CLR workshop recap
- West campus map overview
- Projects timeline:
 - Sky Tykes – July 2025
 - Saluda Skyride – August 2025
 - Education Center – September 2025
 - AZA Accreditation Application Due – March 2026
 - Lion – March 2026

- Restaurant – July 2027
- West campus animal habitats – August 2028

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted on the 21 day of August 2025.

 _____, Secretary