

Section 3.4: Recreation and Park Commission Representation at Joint Zoo Committee Meetings

- ◆ **Section 16.3 of the Management Agreement specifies that the “Joint Zoo Committee,” which was established in 1982 prior to the Management Agreement and which consists of three members of the Recreation and Park Commission and three members of the Zoological Society’s Board of Directors, shall be maintained throughout the term of the Agreement and shall hold public meetings at least 11 times per calendar year to discuss and hear public testimony regarding major policies affecting the Zoo, including without limitation the setting of fees, new animal exhibits, animal acquisition and disposition policies, land use, and capital and operating budgets.**
- ◆ **Although the Joint Zoo Committee is an advisory committee without any legislative authority, the Budget Analyst considers that a balanced representation between Recreation and Park Commissioners and Zoo Society Board Directors at Joint Zoo Committee meetings is required for effective public/private management of the Zoo. Virtually, all major operational and financial matters and proposals are submitted to the Joint Zoo Committee for recommendation and referral to the full Recreation and Park Commission.**
- ◆ **Analysis of the minutes of the Joint Zoo Committee meetings for calendar years 1997 and 1998 revealed a wide disparity between the attendance by members of the Recreation and Park Commission and attendance by members of the Board of Directors of the Zoological Society. For the 22 meetings reviewed, the Recreation and Park Commission was fully represented by three Commissioners only 13.6 percent of the time whereas the Zoological Society was fully represented by three Directors 95.5 percent of the time. Further, nine of the 22 meetings reviewed included an agenda item that covered budget issues. The Recreation and Park Commission had full representation by three Commissioners at only two of the nine meetings, whereas the Zoological Society had full representation by three Directors at each of the nine meetings. Such poor attendance by Recreation and Park Commissioners does not, in the judgment of the Budget Analyst, provide for effective public/private management of the Zoo.**
- ◆ **Accordingly, we recommend that the Recreation and Park Commissioner members of the Joint Zoo Committee make it a priority to attend every Joint Zoo Committee meeting.**

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Section 16.3 of the Lease and Management Agreement provides that the standing committee known as the Joint Zoo Committee shall be maintained throughout the duration of the Agreement. The Committee consists of three members of the Zoological Society Board of Directors and three members of the Recreation and Park Commission. The responsibilities of the Committee are as follows:

1. To hold regular public meetings at least 11 times per calendar year.
2. To discuss and hear public testimony regarding major policies of the Zoo, such as:
 - a) the setting of fees
 - b) new animal exhibits
 - c) animal acquisition and disposition
 - d) land use, and
 - e) capital and operating budgets.

The Committee can recommend whether or not the policies and issues it considers be presented to the full Recreation and Park Commission for formal approval. The Agenda of each meeting is published in advance of the meeting date and forwarded to the Committee members.

The Committee members of the Recreation and Park Commission and the Board of Directors of the Zoological Society each have a vote to exercise at each Committee meeting. Committee meetings are open to the public and public comments are taken into consideration.

The Joint Zoo Committee is an essential component in the public/private partnership concept of management undertaken through the Lease and Management Agreement between the City and County of San Francisco and the San Francisco Zoological Society. Virtually all major operational and financial reports and proposals affecting the Zoo are first submitted to the Joint Zoo Committee for recommendation and referral to the full Recreation and Park Commission.

Attendance Record of Joint Zoo Committee Members

In our professional judgment, full representation at the Joint Zoo Committee meeting by both Commissioners and Zoological Society Board of Directors is crucial to effective oversight of the Zoo, consistent with the public-private partnership concept of management of the Zoo. Accordingly, we reviewed the minutes of 22 Joint Zoo Committee meetings held from January 1997 through December 1998 and determined the following (See Table 3.4.1 for details):

**Table 3.4.1
Joint Zoo Committee Attendance**

No. of Members Attending Each Meeting	Recreation and Park		Zoological Society	
	No. of Meetings	Attendee Subtotal	No. of Meetings	Attendee Subtotal
0	2	0	0	0
1	7	7	0	0
2	10	20	1	2
3	<u>3</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>63</u>
Number of Meetings	22		22	
Total No. of Attendees for the 22 Meetings		<u>36</u>		<u>65</u>

- The Recreation and Park Commission had three Commissioners in attendance at only three or 13.6 percent of the 22 meetings whereas the Zoological Society was fully represented by three Directors at 21 or 95.4 percent of the 22 meetings.
- For the total 22 meetings the City, represented by the Recreation and Park Commissioners, had a cumulative total of 36 representatives at these meetings compared to a cumulative total of 65 representatives of the Zoological Society at the same meetings. This disparity provided the Zoological Society with a significant advantage in voting power.

Attendance Record Relative to Budget Hearings

On November 20, 1997, the full Recreation and Park Commission considered legislation to formally end its right to review the Zoo Budget amid much public controversy. Section 15.9 of the Lease and Management Agreement authorizes the Commission to provide comments or suggestions to the Zoo Society on a submitted budget, but can disapprove it only if the revenues are projected to be expended for purposes inconsistent with the Management Agreement.

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Based on the discussion recorded in the minutes of the meeting, the Commissioners felt that their power to review was too limited in view of their responsibility to respond to adverse public reaction to budget item detail over which they had no control. Accordingly, the Commission adopted Resolution #9711-156, which states: "Resolved that this Commission does approve to amend Sections 15.9 and 15.10 relating to the Commission approval of the Zoo's Society budget and acceptance of its annual audits."

Apparently no further action was taken on the Resolution, since the Management Agreement of 1993 was automatically extended without modification in 1998.

Because of the Commission's concern over the limited power to review budgets, we examined the role of the Joint Zoo Committee in the budget review process. Under Section 16.3, its power is advisory, but it can raise questions and make recommendations in open public meetings. As a practical matter, more influence can be asserted at the Joint Zoo Committee level prior to the submission of budget to the full Recreation and Park Commission. It is unlikely that the Zoological Society would forward a budget to the Recreation and Park Commission without recommendation for approval by the Committee. For this reason, we reviewed the Joint Zoo Committee's meeting minutes to determine the rate of Recreation and Park Commissioners' attendance when the Meeting Agenda includes budget matters. Our findings are as follows:

- Nine of the 22 meetings reviewed included an Agenda item that covered budget issues. The Recreation and Park Commission had full representation by three Commissioners at only two of the nine meetings whereas the Zoological Society had full representation by three Directors at each of the nine meetings.
- For all nine meetings that covered budgetary issues Recreation and Park Commissioners had a cumulative total of 17 representatives present as compared to a cumulative total of 27 representatives of the Zoological Society by its Directors.
- The relative proportion of the Recreation and Park Commissioners and Zoological Society Directors attending Joint Zoo Committee meetings not covering budget matters was not significantly different than the attendance ratios for meetings covering budget matters (Please refer to Table 3.4.2).

CONCLUSIONS

The Recreation and Park Commissioners, by attending Joint Zoo Committee meetings on a part-time basis, have not fully represented the City.

This disparity in attendance provided the Zoological Society with a significant advantage in influence, which could be utilized to the disadvantage of the City. The checks and balances of the private/public concept of management cannot, in our opinion, be achieved without equal participation of the responsible Joint Zoo committee members.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Recreation and Park Commission:

- 3.4.1 Ensure to the extent possible that three members of the Recreation and Park Commission attend each meeting of the Joint Zoo Committee.

COSTS/BENEFITS

Implementation of our recommendation should improve the effectiveness of the public/private partnership through a full representation of the City's interests at Joint Zoo Committee meetings.

Table 3.4.2