

Metro

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Metro

Minutes

Thursday, February 1, 2024

10:30 AM

**Oregon Zoo's Cascade Crest Ballroom Vista Room, 4001 SW
Canyon Rd., Portland, OR 97221. <https://zoom.us/j/615079992>**

Council meeting

Prior to the February 1 Council Meeting, there will be a legislative breakfast held in the Oregon Zoo Cascade Crest Ballroom at 8:30 AM.

You can join the meeting on your computer or other device by using this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/615079992>

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Present: 7 - Council President Lynn Peterson, Councilor Christine Lewis, Councilor Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Councilor Mary Nolan, Councilor Gerritt Rosenthal, Councilor Duncan Hwang, and Councilor Ashton Simpson

2. Public Communication

3. Resolutions

- 3.1 Resolution No. 24-5375 For the Purpose of Submitting to the Metro Area Voters a \$380 Million General Obligation Oregon Zoo Bond Measure to Protect Animal Health, Provide Conservation Education and Increase Sustainability, and Setting Forth the Official Intent of the Metro Council to Reimburse Certain Expenditures out of the Proceeds of General Obligation Bonds Upon Issuance

Attachments: [Resolution 24-5375](#)
[Staff Report](#)
[Exhibit A](#)
[Exhibit B](#)

Council President Lynn Peterson called on Heidi Rahn, Oregon Zoo Director, to present on the Oregon Zoo Phase 2 Framework & Bond Referral.

Staff pulled up the presentation to present to council.

Summary of presentation:

During the meeting, Rahn elaborated on the Oregon Zoo's

significant annual attendance, which boasts 1.3 million visitors, encompassing over 400,000 children. Transitioning to the next segment of the presentation, Rahn delved into the details of the 2008 phase 1 bond measure, emphasizing its impact on upgrading 40% of the zoo and its implications for the zoo's future. Moving forward, Rahn outlined the phase 2 campus plan and its corresponding timeline, underscoring its key objectives, including safeguarding animal health and welfare, fostering unmatched conservation and educational opportunities, prioritizing water and energy conservation, ensuring inclusivity, and bolstering species recovery efforts.

Highlighting specific initiatives within phase 2, Rahn announced plans to enhance various natural habitats, such as those for sea otters, penguins, and giraffes, with a focus on providing better protection against heat and extreme weather conditions. Addressing feedback from zoo visitors, Rahn acknowledged both comments and criticisms, emphasizing the investment's aim to create an accessible and enjoyable experience for individuals of all abilities and ages. Updates to plazas, pathways, rest areas, and shelter from adverse weather conditions are among the enhancements planned.

Rahn then provided an overview of the proposed phase 2 bond measure, stressing its role in safeguarding animal welfare, promoting conservation efforts, and advancing sustainability initiatives. Notably, the bond measure entails \$380 million in general obligation bonds, with no anticipated increase in current bond tax rates. The estimated rate is projected to be 8.5 cents per \$1,000 in assessed value, ensuring fiscal responsibility while supporting the zoo's vital mission

Council discussion:

Councilor Simpson extended gratitude to the staff and emphasized his strong support for the bond measure, highlighting its significance for both the well-being of the animals at the Zoo and the experience of its visitors.

Councilor Nolan expressed enthusiasm about engaging with voters to discuss the potential benefits of the zoo's opportunities.

Councilor Lewis affirmed her backing for the proposed investments, stressing the importance of such endeavors. She inquired about the tax rate, suggesting 9 cents per \$1,000.

In response, CFO Brian Kennedy clarified that while levy rates fluctuate over time, Metro's commitment remains at 51 cents per \$1,000, with the current rate hovering around 40 cents. He explained that the projected 8-9 cents is an average over the bond's lifespan, ensuring it stays below 40 cents.

Councilor Rosenthal voiced his support for advancing the new bond measure.

Councilor Hwang echoed his support for moving forward with the bond measure.

Councilor Gonzalez commended the staff for their accomplishments and voiced his support for the initiative.

Council President Peterson expressed gratitude towards the staff for their efforts in enhancing the zoo's appeal for all visitors and signaled her support for the measure's progression.

Reflecting on her upbringing in Wisconsin, Council President Peterson shared insights into her early exposure to animal

conservation, both there and at the Oregon Zoo. She underscored the zoo's history of conservation efforts and its global impact.

Councilor Nolan praised the zoo's commendable work and stressed the importance of animal care. She urged staff to prioritize animal welfare and to foster connections between zoo experiences and visitors' sense of responsibility towards animals worldwide. She emphasized that the voting opportunity empowers voters to act from their hearts.

End of presentation.

A motion was made by Councilor Lewis, seconded by Councilor Rosenthal, that this item be approved. The motion passed by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Council President Peterson, Councilor Lewis, Councilor Gonzalez, Councilor Nolan, Councilor Rosenthal, Councilor Hwang, and Councilor Simpson

3.1.1 Public Comment Opportunity on Resolution No. 24-5375

Council President Lynn Peterson opened the meeting to members of the public wanting to testify on Resolution No. 24-5375.

There were twelve members of the public that testified:

Susan Hartnett, representing the bond oversight committee, highlighted the success of the previous bond and urged the council to proceed with the new measure.

Sharla Settlemier, director of the Oregon Zoo Foundation, shared personal experiences of the zoo's positive impact on her family and visitors, emphasizing its role in education, entertainment, and wildlife conservation.

Melanie Billings-Yun, Vice Chair of the Oregon Zoo

Foundation, voiced her support for the new bond measure, stressing its importance for the community and the well-being of zoo animals.

Yang Yang, a board member of the Oregon Zoo Foundation, discussed the benefits of the new campus plan in improving animal habitats, fostering long-term prosperity, and boosting tourism, which in turn benefits local businesses.

Allegra Hodges, also a board member of the Oregon Zoo Foundation, emphasized the necessity of the new bond measure for building a more eco-friendly and sustainable future for the zoo.

Bala Seshasayee expressed disagreement with the new bond measure, citing concerns about alternative allocation of funds and raising issues regarding animal welfare based on recent incidents.

Dani, addressing concerns about zoo management and financial transparency, voiced frustrations about lack of responsiveness from certain councilors and highlighted ongoing worries about elephant welfare and the allocation of previous bond funds.

Gina Zejdlik expressed support for the new bond measure, recognizing its significance for the community.

Doug, a Portland resident, voiced opposition to the new bond measure, criticizing what he perceives as inadequate transparency regarding animal welfare and an excessive focus on entertainment over education.

Dan Ashe, President & CEO of Zoo's & Aquariums, commended staff for their efforts and voiced support for the new bond measure.

Jane Bacchieri, Executive Director of the Elakha Alliance, affirmed her organization's support for the new Oregon Zoo bond measure.

Asaba Mukobi, an Oregon Zoo keeper, expressed support for the new bond measure, citing improvements in animal welfare since the previous bond and his dedication to enhancing their lives.

4. Chief Operating Officer Communication

Marissa Madrigal provided an update on the following events or items:

- Marissa Madrigal announced the invitation for the affordable housing funding stakeholder roundtable went out.
- Marissa Madrigal thanked staff for the work they have accomplished.

5. Councilor Communication

Councilors provided updates on the following meetings and events:

- Councilor Simpson gave an update about the ATNI conference making sure tribes have rights to access water.
- Councilor Simpson announced it is Black History Month.
- Councilor Hwang spoke about the lunar new year, and announced the Metro lobby will be decorated with a lunar new year theme. Councilor Hwang also mentioned that a lunar new year celebration will be held at the Chinese Garden, and Oregon Convention Center.
- Councilor Lewis gave an update about the Sunrise Corridor visioning steering committee met last night and they are doing community engagement speaking about plans related to transportation needs.

- Councilor Nolan gave an announced about the Waste WPES taskforce met for its fourth meeting.

6. Adjourn

There being no further business, Council President Lynn Peterson adjourned the Metro Council Meeting at 12:02pm

Respectfully submitted,

Sermad Mohamad

Sermad Mohamad, Legislative Assistant