



**Filed Testimony of
Donald P. Hutchinson, President & CEO
The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore
March 13, 2017**

**House Appropriations Capital Budget Subcommittee
Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Hearing**

Madame Chair and Members of the Subcommittee:

The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is grateful for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Fiscal Year 2018 capital budget request of \$3.5 million for a variety of projects that are necessary for the Zoo's basic infrastructure improvements, an upgrade and expansion of our giraffe and lion exhibits to allow for the safety of our growing giraffe herd and to appropriately accommodate the lion pride, the continuation of mandated changes to the elephant exhibit, a renovation to the exterior of the Chimpanzee Forest, and safety and environmental changes to the guest parking lots.

Enactment of the Baltimore City International Green Building Construction Code in April 2015 will have an impact on costs and choices of building materials as well as increasing the fees from the architect for coordination and paperwork necessary for code review. We have had discussions with the City of Baltimore about the need to comply with this law. The City has not communicated with us about completed rules on implementation. However, the one thing that was made clear was that without compliance, issuance of permits would not occur. Construction cannot proceed without the necessary permits. If the costs for compliance for the first projects done at the Zoo since the code took effect are indicative of potential additional costs, increased amounts of between 10% and 20% can be anticipated.

Renewal of the Zoo's facilities is an ongoing and necessary process in order to continue to meet the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements (our regulatory agency) and Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) standards. Failure to meet USDA requirements could result in fines and/or immediate closure of the facility. The Zoo must continue to make improvements to its physical plant, correct outstanding problems, perform proper upkeep, and address new problems as they arise to maintain our AZA accreditation. The process for accreditation, which is required by the Zoo's lease with the State of Maryland, has begun and inspection will take place in the next few months. The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is most appreciative of the capital budget support that the State of Maryland has made over the course of the last 25 years. However, this \$3.5 million in Fiscal Year 2018 is imperative for the progression of capital improvements to this 141-year old facility that will help us meet accreditation standards.

While the Zoo staff works continuously to address all matters that the AZA deems necessary for us to update, we are always cognizant that something of negative significance could occur on this mature campus that would require the availability of funds to correct immediately. State capital dollars are critical to our success in this regard. AZA has essentially three actions it takes with regard to accreditation. A facility may 1) be accredited with a significant list of expectations for improvements or, 2) have accreditation tabled for a year to give the zoo additional time to correct the deficiencies noted in the inspection or, 3) deny accreditation. The Zoo is still working through the long list of expected improvements from its 2012 accreditation. Given the Zoo's history of nine years ago (the then-likelihood of not being accredited) and our intense efforts in 2011 and 2012 to avoid a repeat of that

scenario, having sufficient capital funding would be critical to having the best chance of being accredited again for five years.

Specific capital projects include infrastructure (water, sewer, buildings) drawings, several roof replacements, as well as renovations to the Life Support System at the African Watering Hole.

The Zoo is asking for funding for the third year of a multi-year funding period for an upgrade and expansion of our neighboring giraffe and lion exhibits. This project has moved up in priority for the Zoo due to additions to the animal collection and recommendations by the AZA's Species Survival Plan (SSP) Program to breed both giraffe. The Zoo's giraffe herd actively uses two contiguous yards, with the larger space beginning at the edge of the Giraffe House and ending at the Giraffe Feeding Station. It has panoramic viewing of the giraffe and is a wonderful experience for guests when there are two or more animals there. But, because of the steep topography, this larger area cannot be used whenever it has rained because wet grass and mud make it unsafe for the giraffe. Leveling and expanding the giraffe exhibit so that the giraffe may move about safely becomes paramount. The birth of two lion cubs in October 2013, and the arrival of an orphaned cub in December 2013, necessitates enlarging the lion holding area. This can be accomplished by expanding the off-exhibit holding area and building a pathway between these two exhibits. While this renovation would be done primarily to improve animal welfare, its secondary purpose will be to create an opportunity to give guests an improved experience to view lions and giraffe simultaneously, one species on each side of the guest path.

The safety of guests, staff, and animals is always in our uppermost consideration. The tragic accident of a child falling into the gorilla exhibit at the Cincinnati Zoo on May 28, 2016 prompted an extensive internal review of guest barriers throughout the Zoo. The Chimpanzee Forest outdoor chimpanzee exhibit is of particular concern and will likely be cited in our upcoming AZA inspection. The mesh on this exhibit is approaching the end of its useful life and will need to be replaced. Replacing the mesh will not only make this exhibit more secure, but also will improve guest viewing of the chimpanzees.

Parking Lots A and B are used by our guests every day. Both have surfaces that were considered progressive and environmentally advanced at the time they were installed in the 1970s. The pavers were intended to be a pervious surface that made "wise use" of Druid Hill Park's beautiful parkland to act as drainage. Over the years, it has become an impervious surface with rainwater just running off the parking lots. A heavy rain and tree roots can cause the storm water drainage pipes to move and collapse. Due to pot holes and ruts, guests' automobiles have occasionally been damaged from being driven on the lots and the surface has become dangerous upon which to walk or push a stroller or wheelchair. This funding will be used for surveying, engineering, and design of necessary stormwater management through proper grading, curbing, and rain gardens on the parking lots.

The Maryland Zoological Society and the staff of The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore are extremely grateful to the State for its capital project funding and to this Subcommittee for its long standing support. **We respectfully request approval of full funding for The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore.**



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