



Michael Espinosa <michael.espinosa@lacity.org>

Council File #17-0453

1 message

Naomi Martin <webmaster@lazoo.org>
Reply-To: garynoni1234@gmail.com
To: clerk.cps@lacity.org, michael.espinosa@lacity.org

Wed, Feb 14, 2018 at 9:25 AM

Sent by the Los Angeles Zoo on behalf of:

Naomi Martin
3046 Community Ave
La Crescenta, California 91214
8182494816
garynoni1234@gmail.com

Dear Los Angeles City Council Arts, Entertainment, Parks and River Committee Member,

As an area resident and a supporter of the Los Angeles Zoo, I urge you to dismiss L.A. City Council motion #17-0453 that would send Billy the Asian elephant to a sanctuary.

The Elephants of Asia habitat at the Los Angeles Zoo is Billy's home. In fact, it's the only home that he has ever known. Billy lives in one of the best and largest elephant habitats in North America and benefits from tremendous resources, a dedicated staff, and top-quality health care. Elephants of Asia is the largest habitat at the L.A. Zoo and the space vastly exceeds the standards of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), as well as those of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Billy's quality of care at the L.A. Zoo far surpasses that which he would receive at any sanctuary. Elephants are highly intelligent and sociable animals, and they form deep emotional bonds with their caregivers and other elephants. Billy's caregivers have known him for decades and he receives the best care possible at the L.A. Zoo. If Billy were sent to a sanctuary, the ties he has with his caregivers and fellow elephant companions would be broken. Further, any sanctuary would keep Billy separated from other elephants, since he is a bull and would not be allowed to mate.

The fact is that sanctuaries are limited in their land and financial resources, no matter their size. They do not have an accrediting organization as stringent as the AZA and they are not focused on or committed to saving animals from extinction.

At the L.A. Zoo, Billy is an ambassador for his endangered species. He is an important member of the AZA Asian elephant Species Survival Plan (SSP) and his presence at the L.A. Zoo raises awareness about his wild counterparts to the nearly 1.8 million people who visit the Zoo annually. The L.A. Zoo does a tremendous amount of conservation work and is committed to saving the thousands of species, including wild Asian elephants, that are on the verge of extinction.

I am submitting this letter because I care deeply about Billy's future as well as that of endangered wild Asian elephants. It is with this concern that I ask you NOT to approve the motion to send Billy to a sanctuary. Billy deserves the best care possible – and wild Asian elephants deserve a future.

Sincerely,

Naomi Martin

garynoni1234@gmail.com

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens (<http://www.lazoo.org>)



Michael Espinosa <michael.espinosa@lacity.org>

Fwd: Council File #17-0453 - Billy The Elephant

1 message

Mitch O'Farrell <councilmember.ofarrell@lacity.org>

Wed, Feb 14, 2018 at 9:48 AM

To: Michael Espinosa <michael.espinosa@lacity.org>

Cc: Angelo Yenke <angelo.yenke@lacity.org>, Star Parsamyan <star.parsamyan@lacity.org>, David Giron <david.giron@lacity.org>, Christine Peters <christine.peters@lacity.org>

FYI: For the record.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <stballet@aol.com>

Date: Mon, Feb 12, 2018 at 8:56 PM

Subject: Council File #17-0453 - Billy The Elephant

To: councilmember.ofarrell@lacity.org

Councilman Mr. O'Farrell,

Thank you for taking time to read my email:

"In response to Council File #17-0453, I do not support any effort to move Billy the Asian elephant to a sanctuary. The Los Angeles Zoo has been home to Billy for over '28' Years. He has established a special bond with his care takers (his herd), vets, and the guests who come to see an experience up close a special elephant named Billy. Billy is the heart of this zoo. My fear and what I think is the real goal of these activists and councilman Koretz is to remove the accreditation of the Los Angeles Zoo. As this could be the result if Billy is removed from the zoo. This would be disastrous for the zoo and could impact other zoos as well. This is not just about an elephant. Poor Billy is just being used as an asset or pawn for the activists to get what they really want. To bring down this zoo and zoos in general.

Lets' talk about the success stories of the Los Angeles Zoo. This is a world class zoo with a deserved accreditation. They do some great work with their breeding program for animals that are endangered:

- California Condors
- Snow Leopards
- Peninsular Pronghorns
- Okapi
- Giraffe
- Mandrill
- Giraffes
- Giant Otters

Other animals that are within the breeding program that they hope will save other endangered species are:

- Tigers
- Orangutans
- Gorillas
- Red Uakari

The Los Angeles Zoo also has success stories with taking care of their animals. Some of the residents are older than what the normal age for these animals usually are in zoos:

- Randa the Rhinoceros - She just recently passed away at age "48". The oldest Indian rhino in a zoo worldwide. She is also a cancer survivor. An experimental treatment was performed on Randa for her skin cancer on her horn. The treatment was performed by the Vets at the zoo along with the UCLA doctors. It was a success and she went into remission. She was cancer free for over 7 years before she passed away from age related illnesses.
- Eloise the Orangutan - A favorite orangutan of mine who is 49 years old and has cerebral palsy. She lives in a habitat that was built to assist her with her disability and mobility around the exhibit. She receives special care on her hands and feet to ensure that she is comfortable and able to live a normal life at the zoo. I know she responds to people who come to visit her. Eloise came rolling over to me in her exhibit and put her hand on the glass where my hand was. How wonderful and touching is that. These animals respond to us.

- Elephants are very well taken care of at the zoo. Their good health is a testament to the great care the elephants receive at this zoo. They are spoiled. This state of the art habitat was built to ensure that the elephants have a life similar to what they would have in the wild. It has plenty of space. There are separate corrals built purposely so that the elephants use all the space during the day with specialized enrichment exercises. They move from corral to another throughout the day. Mr. Koretz suggested that the corrals should be opened for all the elephants to use the same space. If he really understood elephant behavior he would know better that it is the enrichment exercises that will ensure the elephants use all their space. You also cannot always put elephants in to the same corral as they might not get along. Tina and Jewel were sent to Los Angeles zoo because they did not get along with the other elephants at the San Diego zoo. Shaunzi the new elephant is getting used to her new home at the Los Angeles Zoo, so she needs to slowly assimilate with the other elephants. The separate corrals work best for these situations. Hopefully she can be within the same corrals as the other elephants soon. You do not want the elephants to hurt one another. The Fresno zoo chose the Los Angeles zoo for Shaunzi. They could have sent her to a sanctuary or another zoo but chose the Los Angeles zoo because of the great care the elephants receive and to be in a state of the art exhibit which has lots of space. I have taken a tour of the barn which is huge and has heated floors. It is amazing. These elephants are free to roam around their exhibit all day and night. They are not locked up in their barns at night like the sanctuaries and other zoos are. In fact, Tina and Jewel joined the New Year's Eve party. They were out and quite curious about the party. They came right over to me when I called them to wish them a happy New Year. I have seen the way the care takers exercise Billy. I have seen how they clean and take such good care of their feet. I understand that there are "7" care takers for these "4" elephants. I have seen Billy playing in the pools bobbing his feet up and down in the water. Scott, his longtime care taker says that Billy does these activities on his own. They do not ask him to play in the water. If you look at the smile on Scott's face when he talks about Billy. He is beaming. He loves these elephants as if they were his own children.

The Los Angeles Zoo also has done a remarkable job educating the visitors on the animals that are endangered and how we all can help preserving some of these species. They also work with other outside organizations for research and to learn how to preserve species that could be going extinct.

This is what a zoo is for. The Los Angeles zoo has changed so much in the last 20-30 years. Some of their newer exhibits get praise from the animal community and animal specialists such as Jane Goodall. She has praised the chimpanzee exhibit at the Los Angeles zoo. They have a master plan to improve some of the older habitats. I love watching the river otters play in their new exhibit, the wonderful Rainforest of the Americas. If the zoo loses their accreditation, then the zoo may not be able to proceed forward with their master plan. They would have to stop their breeding programs and working with other zoos for breeding and saving species. They would probably need to fire some key people who work at the zoo.

Let's talk about sending Billy to a sanctuary. First, what Sanctuary will take a bull elephant. The sanctuary in Tennessee will only take females. The PAWS sanctuary does not currently have room for a bull elephant. It would require a lot of money to build another barn for Billy and it will be costly for his upkeep at a sanctuary. They do not have the same resources that the zoo has to care for all their elephants. The PAWS sanctuary also has a strain of tuberculosis (TB). Do we want to have Billy contaminated by this Tuberculosis strain? Billy as a bull elephant would be separated from the female elephants and other bulls. Bull elephants are usually solitary in the wild and only with a herd to mate. He would be really alone in a sanctuary. He is a great candidate for breeding as these Asian elephants are even more endangered than the African elephant. If he were sent to sanctuary, he might need to be castrated which is a shame. I wish there was a younger female elephant for Billy, but my understanding is that the zoo could not find an eligible elephant.

As for his bobbing of his head. Billy came to the zoo with this stereotypical behavior. The zoo has done research on this behavior and have watched and observed him to identify when and why he does this bobbing behavior. They have determined that is an anticipatory behavior waiting for food or a specific activity to occur. The care takers try their best to mitigate it. He DOES NOT bob his head all the time as the activists want you to believe. The behavior does not impact his wellbeing or health. If he were to go to a sanctuary, he would still be bobbing his head. It does not mean he is unhappy. His good health proves that he is happy. If he were unhappy, he would not eat, not move around his habitat, swim in his pools, etc. He would get sick and die if he were that unhappy. Billy is a happy elephant at the Los Angeles zoo.

To Summarize:

We are all passionate animal lovers and I appreciate that these activists do care for Billy's wellbeing, but I do not agree that a sanctuary would be best for Billy. Billy is an ambassador for his species. Billy is saving elephants by educating children about the plight of Asian elephants in the wild today. Moving an elephant is very stressful and he will be very scared. He will never have the same care he is getting at the Los Angeles Zoo. He will be more alone in a sanctuary than he would be at a zoo. It does not matter if Billy has 3 acres or 50 acres, if he does not utilize all the space that he has. He needs the enrichment exercise to utilize all of his space. A sanctuary does not have the resources to provide the care and exercises he needs. I would not want to move Billy to a sanctuary that could have a strain of Tuberculosis. Billy needs to be with his herd at

the Los Angeles Zoo. His herd are the care takers who work with him 24/7 and the vets who know best to care for his health. His herd and family also include the children and older guests who come to see elephants up close.

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU WERE TAKEN AWAY FROM THE ONLY HOME YOU HAVE EVER KNOWN AND A FAMILY YOU HAVE KNOWN FOR OVER 28 YEARS? I WOULD BE MISERABLE. BILLY NEEDS TO REMAIN AT HIS HOME, THE LOS ANGELES ZOO.

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Topper

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With kind regards,



Mitch O'Farrell

Councilmember, 13th District

Los Angeles City Council

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