



ERIC GARCETTI
MAYOR

June 18, 2019

Honorable Members of the City Council
c/o City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall

Re: Appointment of Permanent Director, Los Angeles Zoo: Ms. Denise Verret

Dear Honorable Members:

Pursuant to City Charter Section 508 (b), I appoint Ms. Denise Verret as the permanent Director of the Los Angeles Zoo, effective as of the date of your confirmation of her appointment.

Attached please find a copy of her resume which provides greater detail about her experience. I am confident that Ms. Verret will make an outstanding Director of the Los Angeles Zoo. I look forward to your favorable consideration of her appointment.

Sincerely,

ERIC GARCETTI
Mayor

EG: hvr

Attachment

cc: Councilmember David Ryu, Chair, Health, Education, Neighborhoods, Parks, Arts, and River Committee
Wendy Macy, Personnel Department Sharon Tso, CLA
Rich Llewellyn, CAO Errol Griffin, Office of the CAO
Holly Wolcott, City Clerk Heather Holt, Ethics Commission
General Managers' Association

Denise M. Verret

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

A high-energy, solution-driven leader with exceptional executive skills and a proven ability to deliver mission-critical results. Outstanding reputation for cultivating external relationships and strategic alliances, facilitating internal collaboration and team-building, and addressing complex workplace issues essential to the organization's success. A passion for wildlife conservation, community engagement and municipal service as demonstrated by 18 years as Zoo Assistant General Manager/Deputy Director and 30 years of work with the City of Los Angeles. Operates with the highest levels of both resourcefulness and integrity. Brings a deep understanding of the Zoo, City government, the community, the zoo profession and global conservation efforts, and stands ready to work closely with leadership, partners, and staff to carry out a bold new vision for the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- ❖ Executive Leadership
- ❖ Strategic Planning and Vision Building
- ❖ Building and Sustaining Relationships
- ❖ Personnel Development and Team Building
- ❖ Financial Management and Revenue Generation
- ❖ Problem Solving and Risk Management
- ❖ Organizational Management
- ❖ Active Listener and Continual Learner

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Facilitated Attendance Increase (20%) and Revenue Growth (125%): Oversaw public relations and marketing program, which leveraged new exhibit openings, innovative special events, and free and paid media to increase attendance from 1.3 million to 1.6 million between 2000 and 2012, which achieved the highest daytime attendance (1.66 million in Fiscal Year 2011-12) in over 20 years. This resulted in significant revenue growth from increased attendance, as well as the implementation of new initiatives in the areas of visitor amenities and experiences, education programs, parking operations, and technology utilization.

Directed the Development of the Zoo's First Strategic Plan: Led the Zoo and GLAZA executive team's development of a Strategic Plan to guide future efforts and form a road map to ensure the Zoo's continued growth, success, and relevance in the Los Angeles community and beyond.

Reduced Worker's Compensation Claims by over 25%: Oversaw Human Resources' Workplace Safety Program, which applied specialized safety training, audit and risk assessment, accident investigation, safety communications and employee morale program to significantly reduce workers' compensation claims over the last eight years ending in Fiscal Year 2017-18.

Championed the Development of an Employee Engagement Program: Launched a comprehensive third-party employee engagement assessment whereby Zoo results were benchmarked against AZA norm comparative data; the results informed the development of senior manager action plans in improvement areas such as customer service and employee training and development.

Launched the Zoo's Diversity and Inclusion Program: Initiated a comprehensive diversity and inclusion program aimed at increasing employee engagement and higher performance, along with equipping leaders and managers with cultural competency and inclusive leadership skills to leverage diversity of thought.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens Interim Zoo Director

January 2019–Present

Responsible for the executive leadership and management of all aspects of the Zoo's operations which receives over 1.8 million visitors annually. Specific priority areas of focus include the following:

- ❖ Oversee the implementation of the Zoo's Strategic Plan including annual action plan with goals, tactics, timelines, and performance metrics.
- ❖ Facilitate the realization of the Vision Plan through support of the environmental review process and the strategic development of a financial plan.
- ❖ Ensure the highest level of animal welfare through animal management access to the most up-to-date information and techniques in animal welfare standards, zoo husbandry, veterinary management, and exhibit design.
- ❖ Enable the Zoo's continued position as a leader in wildlife conservation efforts.
- ❖ Innovate programming through the lens of diversity, accessibility, equity, and inclusion to strengthen the Zoo's position in the community and diversify the Zoo's audiences.
- ❖ Build and manage strategic partnerships, including those with the Offices of the Mayor, City Council, City Attorney, City Controller, Chief Legislative Analyst, City Administrative Officer, and the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association.
- ❖ Provide sound fiscal stewardship and accountability regarding the Zoo's finances.
- ❖ Exhibit a leadership style that demonstrates integrity, empathy, transparency, and resilience and that yields high employee engagement and morale, shared values, collaboration, and measurable success.

Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens Assistant General Manager/Deputy Director

May 2000–December 2018

Provided executive leadership, management, and oversight of the following divisions and functions: Budget and Finance, Administration, Information Technology, Human Resources, Admissions and Guest Relations, Capital Projects Planning and Development, Public Relations and Marketing, and Education and Interpretive Programs. Managed the annual operating budget of \$22.8 million and staff of 180. Managed the formulation and development of annual organizational goals and performance metrics. Directed the development of the Strategic Plan, Vision Plan, and Business and Marketing Plan. Managed important relationships with GLAZA, the GLAZA Board of Trustees, and the Board of Zoo Commissioners. Coordinated policy, legislative, legal, budget, and employee relations issues of importance with the Offices of the Mayor, City Council, City Attorney, and other governmental officials and agencies. Represented the organization at community meetings and with the media.

Office of the City Administrative Officer (CAO) Senior Administrative Analyst, Administrative Analyst, Management Analyst I, Management Assistant and Administrative Intern

July 1988–May 2000

Over a 12-year period held increasingly senior positions and increasingly complex analyst assignments in operating and capital budget planning and preparation, organizational analysis, contract analysis, and management and policy studies.

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

Bachelor of Science, Administrative Studies

June 1988

University of California, Riverside

Leadership for the 21st Century

December 1999

UCLA Extension Course

Disney's Approach to Quality Service

January 2001

Disney Institute in Orlando, Florida

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Professional Fellow

Since 2001

AZA Accreditation Inspector

Since 2004

City of Los Angeles Joint Labor-Management Committee for

Civilian Benefits, Management Representative

2004–2012

AZA Business Operations Committee, Advisor

2005–2007

AZA Annual Conference Program Committee, Member

2009–2015

AZA Executive Leadership Development Program,

Action Learning Team Advisor

2015–2016

AZA Government Affairs Committee, Member

Since 2016

AZA Diversity Committee, Member

Since 2016

AZA Nominating Committee

2018

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

Honorary Service Award

January 2010

Received the Honorary Service Award for recognition of outstanding service to children and youth from the Hugo Reid Elementary PTSA, Inc., Arcadia, California.

African-American Distinguished Leader Award

February 2011

Recognized by the Los Angeles City Council as a distinguished African-American in a leadership role, making significant contributions to the citizens and communities of the City of Los Angeles.