



April 22, 2025

Honorable Members of the Budget, Finance and Innovation Committee
Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

“Creating a just and sustainable world where people and wildlife, thrive, together.”

SUBJECT: ZOO DEPARTMENT RESPONSE TO THE MAYOR’S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-26 (C.F. 25-0600)

Honorable Councilmembers:

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The Zoo Department appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the Mayor's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-26 (C.F. 25-0600). The Proposed Budget for the Zoo Department represents a 19% reduction across all programs in the Zoo’s workforce and most critically impact Animal Care and Construction and Maintenance operations. In addition to these proposed full-time position authority eliminations, a one-time reduction of \$500,000 in the As Needed Salaries Account was proposed representing a 21% reduction in part-time staffing.

Karen Bass
Mayor

Nithya Raman
Council Member
4th District

As such, the Zoo Department provides the following for consideration in its review of the Mayor’s Proposed Budget and in response to the letter from the Chair of the Budget, Finance, and Innovation Committee.

Zoo Commissioners

Karen B. Winnick
President

Bernardo Silva
Vice President

Justin Mikita

Daryl Smith

Elnie Vannatim

Richard Lichtenstein
Ex Officio Member

Staffing Reduction Impacts

The proposed staffing reductions for the Zoo Department for Fiscal Year 2025-26 include a total of 53 positions (\$3.7M) comprised of:

- 21 Vacant Regular Authority Position
- 1 Vacant Resolution Authority Position
- 30 Filled Regular Authority Positions
- 1 Filled Resolution Authority Position

Denise M. Verret
Chief Executive Officer
& Zoo Director

The attached organizational chart provides a breakdown of the reduction impacts by program.

The Zoo is governed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for its exhibitor’s license and is also required to meet standards in order to maintain accreditation under the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The combined full and part-time reductions impact the Zoo’s ability to support operations in compliance with these regulatory agencies and in a seven-day-a-week capacity that would allow the Zoo to sufficiently meet the daily demands of animal care and husbandry, as well as to maintain the facility in a safe manner to meet the needs of the animals, staff, and guests. The Zoo’s ability to maintain its 1966 infrastructure continues to be a challenge with the already limited workforce resources resulting in increased deferred maintenance and the potential for structural failure of facilities ultimately putting the



Zoo at risk and liability. This ultimately impacts the guest experience which limits the Zoo's ability to maximize attendance and revenue.

A decreased workforce also leads to additional overtime to meet workload demands and limited resources to compensate for employee absences and time off which can result in overworked staff and increased margin for error and potential for injury in these physically intensive classifications.

In order to reduce potential layoffs and address critical needs, the Zoo proposes the restoration of one vacant and ten filled positions being proposed for elimination to be offset by the elimination of ten existing vacant positions (See Attached Chart).

Of the requested restoration of positions, one Zoo Curator of Education II (4300-2) resolution authority position in the Conservation Division is funded via a reimbursement from the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA).

Technical Corrections

The Zoo also requests the following technical corrections:

- Correct Blue Book Item #20 from the Communications Program (8706) to GASP (8750)
- Correct Blue Book Item #25 from GASP (8750) to the Communications Program (8706)

Closing

The Department recognizes the severity of the City's fiscal situation and the shared responsibility; however, it must note that the 19% cut to staffing will have detrimental effects on the Zoo's ability to effectively meet the needs of the Zoo's operations and maintain the facility in the long term. As a result, the Zoo Department respectfully requests consideration of the alternative proposal submitted.

My staff and I look forward to working with your Committee and the City Council throughout the budget deliberation process.

Respectfully Submitted,



Denise M. Verret
Chief Executive Officer & Zoo Director

DMV:MK:cf

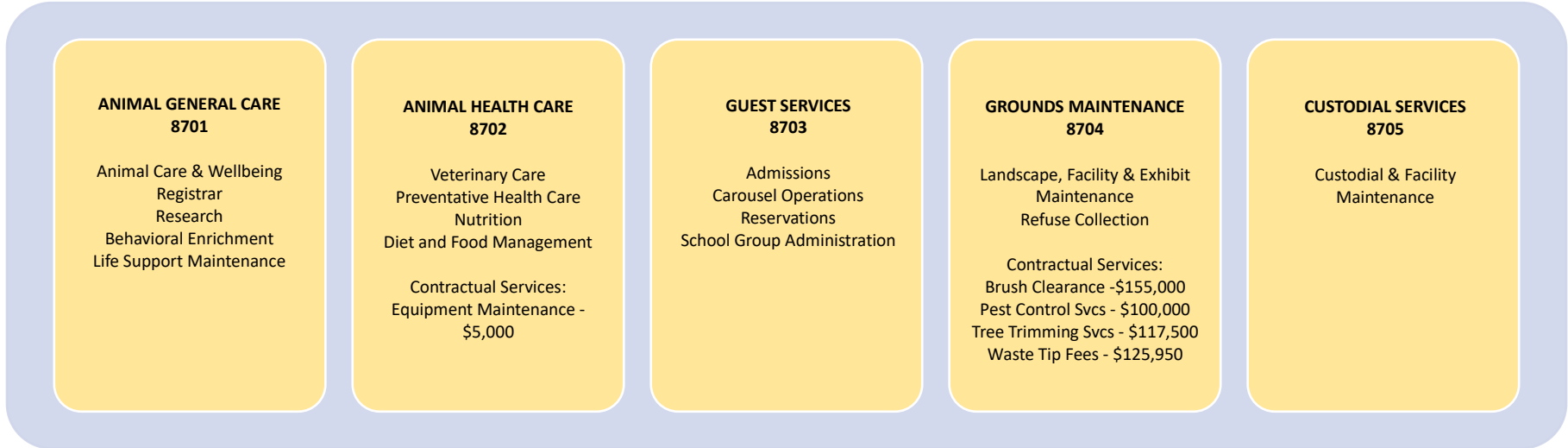
Attachments

**ZOO DEPARTMENT FISCAL YEAR 2025-26 PROPOSED BUDGET
ALTERNATIVE POSITION ELIMINATION AND OFFSET**

	CLASS CODE	CLASS TITLE	AUTHORITY	POSITION NUMBER	SALARY
		Restoration of Filled Positions			
1	4304	Animal Keeper		P040733	\$ 71,067
1	1670-2	Graphics Designer II	Regular	P040770	\$ 102,686
1	2369	Veterinary Technician	Regular	P040909	\$ 103,852
1	2412-1	Park Services Attendant I	Regular	P040716	\$ 47,856
1	3112	Maintenance Laborer	Regular	P040780	\$ 49,994
1	3141	Gardener Caretaker	Regular	P040794	\$ 54,625
1	3156	Custodian	Regular	P040756	\$ 53,848
1	4300-2	Zoo Curator of Education II	Resolution	P139941	\$ 87,978
1	4304	Animal Keeper	Regular	P040734	\$ 71,067
1	4312	Principal Animal Keeper	Regular	P068702	\$ 93,859
		Restoration of Vacant Positions			
1	3583	Truck Operator	Regular	P073482	\$ 77,686
11		TOTAL RESTORATION			\$ 814,518
		Offset - Elimination of Vacant Positions			
1	4304	Animal Keeper	Regular	P073493	\$ (71,067)
1	4304	Animal Keeper	Regular	P040833	\$ (71,067)
1	4304	Animal Keeper	Regular	P040835	\$ (71,067)
1	4304	Animal Keeper	Regular	P156497	\$ (71,067)
1	6147	Audio Visual Technician	Regular	P040771	\$ (105,328)
1	2412-2	Park Services Attendant II	Resolution	P156432	\$ (66,023)
1	2412-2	Park Services Attendant II	Resolution	P156433	\$ (66,023)
1	2412-2	Park Services Attendant II	Resolution	P156434	\$ (66,023)
1	1431-3	Programmer Analyst III	Resolution	P156768	\$ (107,079)
1	1800-1	Public Information Director I	Resolution	P147101	\$ (122,164)
10		TOTAL OFFSET			\$ (812,127)



**FISCAL YEAR 2025-26 PROPOSED BUDGET
ATTACHMENT - DEPARTMENT OF THE ZOO ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

8-Filled Positions
5-Vacant Positions

IMPACT
From 115 to 102 Positions – 11% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to adequately comply with USDA regulations which may impact the Zoo's exhibitor's license as well as meet AZA standards which may impact the Zoo's accreditation standing; minimizes the ability to have backup staffing to cover staffing; increases potential for workplace injury

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

1-Filled Position
1-Vacant Position
1-Vacant Position (Reso)
8% Reduction - Feed & Grain
21% Reduction – Vet Supplies

IMPACT
From 17 to 15 Positions – 12% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to adequately comply with USDA regulations which may impact the Zoo's exhibitor's license as well as meet AZA standards which may impact the Zoo's accreditation standing

Reduced expense account funding and increasing supply costs will result in the inability to meet resource needs

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

3-Filled Positions
1-Vacant Position

IMPACT
From 13 to 9 Positions – 31% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to process transactions, handle peak season demands, and increases overall wait time

Reduced Customer Service will result in poor guest experience which impacts the ability to maximize attendance and revenue

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

4-Filled Positions
2 Vacant Positions
19% Reduction – Brush Clearance & Tree Trimming
Contractual Services

IMPACT
From 27 to 21 Positions – 22% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts ability to address landscape and facility cleanliness & maintenance resulting in potential health, safety, and liability risk along with a poor guest experience which impacts the ability to maximize attendance and revenue

Reduced contractual services funding impacts compliance with brush clearance fire code Safety and liability risk from reduced tree trimming

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

5-Filled Positions

IMPACT
From 17 to 12 Positions – 29% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts ability to maintain a clean and safe facility resulting in potential health, safety, and liability risk along with a poor guest experience which impacts the ability to maximize attendance and revenue



**FISCAL YEAR 2025-26 PROPOSED BUDGET
ATTACHMENT - DEPARTMENT OF THE ZOO ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

1-Vacant Position

IMPACT

From 3 to 2 Positions – 33% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to effectively address and respond to media timely

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

2-Filled Positions

IMPACT

From 15 to 13 Positions – 13% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to on grounds programming which impacts the guest experience and the ability to maximize attendance and revenue

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

4-Filled Positions
6-Vacant Position
Elimination of one-time Funding for Hiring Hall Staff

IMPACT

From 30 to 20 Positions – 33% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts ability to address facility maintenance and repair resulting in increased deferred maintenance and potential health, safety, and liability risk; potential non-compliance with USDA & AZA regulatory standards; minimizes resources in all trades such that no back up staffing is available to cover absences; and increases the potential for workplace injury

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

Total Positions – 3
No Reductions

IMPACT

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

1-Filled Position
1-Filled Position (Reso)

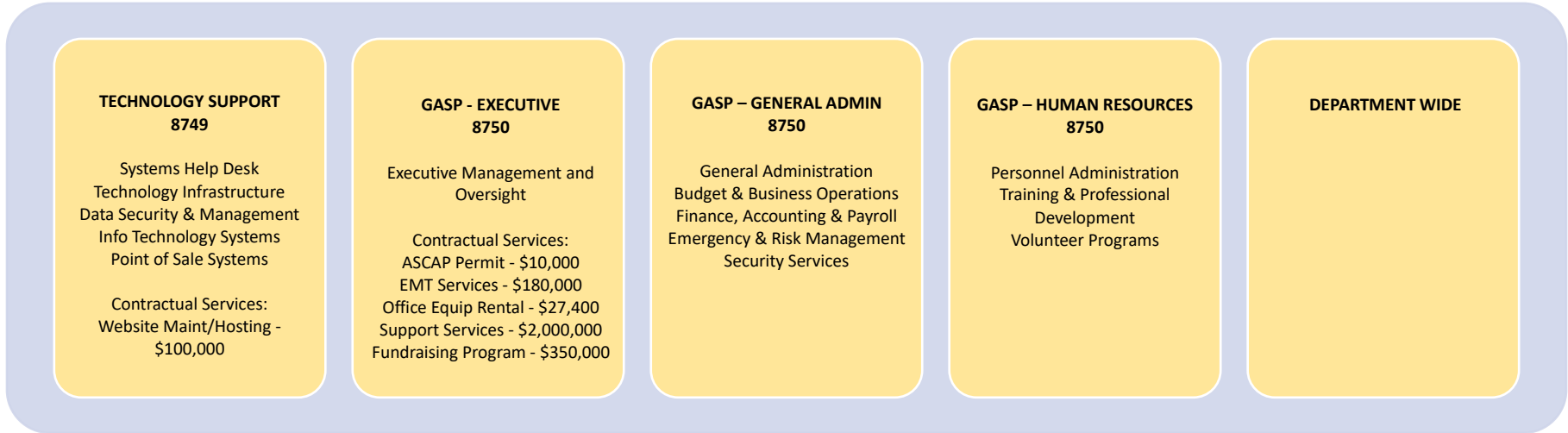
IMPACT

From 3 to 1 Position – 66% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to maintain partnership programs and oversight of the Grant funded Oak Woodland Restoration Program



**FISCAL YEAR 2025-26 PROPOSED BUDGET
ATTACHMENT - DEPARTMENT OF THE ZOO ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

1-Vacant Position

IMPACT

From 4 to 3 Positions – 25% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to maintain and support technology systems and equipment in a safe and timely manner putting daily operational systems at risk

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

Total Positions – 5
No Reductions

IMPACT

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

1-Filled Position
3-Vacant Position

IMPACT

From 15 to 11 Positions – 27% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to effectively meet deadlines and ensure adequate internal control systems resulting in potential loss revenue and inability to conform to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

1-Vacant Position
1-Filled Position

IMPACT

From 6 to 4 Positions – 33% Reduction

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to process personnel and disciplinary transactions timely which may result in increased liability

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

19% - Total Position Reduction
21% Reduction - As Needed Sals
7% Reduction - Contractual Svcs

IMPACT

Reduced staffing impacts the ability to meet the staffing and workload demands of the Zoo’s seven-day-a-week operation; limits flexibility to cover absences and reduces the ability to address emergent needs of the operations and facility in a timely and safe manner resulting in an increased potential for risk and liability, potential non-compliance with USDA and AZA regulations and standards, decreased guest experience, and the inability to maximize attendance and revenue