



**Filed Testimony of  
Donald P. Hutchinson, President & CEO  
The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore  
March 14, 2016**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Capital Budget Subcommittee  
Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Hearing**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is grateful for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Fiscal Year 2017 capital budget request of \$2.5 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 the giraffe herd and to appropriately accommodate the lion pride, and the decommissioning of a 56-year old failing electrical line.

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 standards 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. Accreditation, which is required by the Zoo's lease with the State of Maryland, will begin in spring 2017. 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 24 years. However, without an additional \$2.5 million in Fiscal Year 2017, past capital improvements to this now 140-year old facility may be overshadowed by an inability to 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 or more 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 eight 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 re-accredited.

Specific infrastructure projects include infrastructure (water, sewer, buildings) drawings, an additional chiller and shade structure for Penguin Coast to keep the pool cool enough, public sidewalk and service road replacements, and Animal Hospital caging replacement. Also needed are modular locker rooms for animal keeper staff and vehicle disinfection equipment in preparation for a High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (bird flu) outbreak.

The Zoo is asking for funding for the second 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 Species Survival Plan (SSP) Program to breed both giraffe and lions. 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 antiquated four-kilovolt (4kv) electrical service runs across the campus and feeds important sections of the Zoo. Where the service enters Zoo grounds, it splits into three separate services – one line feeds the Prairie dog exhibit, Rock Island, Elephant Barn, Oasis restrooms and snack building, and Baltimore City Police Department's K9 unit building (located outside of the Zoo), one line feeds the Buffalo Yards exhibits and Wading Bird building and the last line feeds the Mammal House and Greenhouse. In a 2014 incident with the loss of power, we were unable to open a large area of the Zoo to the public. We repaired five failures beyond the original fault in the service in one week including replacing a 30 foot section of cable that ran underneath Mansion House Drive. Each failure required the Zoo to disconnect the appropriate buildings from the electrical service, wire emergency generators to the facilities that we needed to power (Elephant Barn, Rock Island, Wading Bird, and Oasis restrooms and snack building), locate the break, repair the break, disconnect all the emergency generators, reconnect the buildings to the 4kv service, and energize the line. In June 2015, the 4kv service failed again. The portion of the service that feeds the Wading Bird building required two repairs by our high voltage electrician. The other portion of the service that feeds the Mammal House has not yet been repaired. It is vital that the service is replaced properly to avoid dangerous and disruptive future incidents.

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 Committee for its long standing support. **We respectfully request that the Committee restore the full funding for The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore.**



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Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Hearing**

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