



7

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
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SACRAMENTO ZOO
PARKS AND RECREATION

- NORTH
- SOUTH
- CITY-WIDE

September 18, 1990

Budget and Finance Committee/
Transportation and Community Development Committee
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session:

SUBJECT: Relocation of the Sacramento Zoo's Remaining Elephant

SUMMARY

This report provides information regarding the need to relocate the Sacramento Zoo's remaining elephant "Winky" to another accredited zoological institution and the necessary preparation involved. This report also recommends that City Council approve the hiring of a limited term Zoo Attendant I to assist the animal care staff during the preparation to relocate "Winky".

BACKGROUND

In April of 1989, the Sacramento Zoo was forced to euthanize "Sue", one of its two Asian elephants. It was during this same time period that animal rights organizations within California proposed a bill in the State Legislature on the humane treatment of elephants. The bill, which addressed the physical management of elephants, was placed into law in October 1989. Additionally, this bill generated considerable discussion on the ethical treatment of elephants as highly social animals and their mental requirements in captivity. Both zoo professionals and animal rights organizations agreed that elephants should never be exhibited in groups of less than two animals, and that exhibits should include pools for bathing and have available both sand and dirt to allow for dirt baths.

Based on the above and the concerns outlined below, it has been recommended by the Zoo Manager that "Winky", the remaining elephant, be moved to another animal facility. Some of the concerns driving this recommendation are:

1. Since the death of "Sue", "Winky" has displayed a change in personality, exhibiting displaced aggression and frustration. This is a direct response to suddenly being alone without the opportunity for socialization with other elephants. Historically, elephants have caused death or injury of more keepers than any other exotic animal. At 9,400 pounds, Winky has a greater potential of now harming a member of the keeper staff due to her shift in temperament.
2. Within the last two years, the elephant handlers or keepers who cared for both elephants for many years at the Sacramento Zoo have taken positions managing elephants at other zoological institutions. Currently, the three keepers caring for "Winky" are not experienced handlers and her care has placed additional responsibility on these employees. Strict policies have been established to ensure keeper safety. These policies dictate that two keepers will always be present when the elephant is being cared for and trained.
3. The current elephant exhibit at the Sacramento Zoo was constructed over 40 years ago and is totally inadequate for safe, professional elephant management.

The Sacramento Zoo has received written confirmation that the San Diego Wild Animal Park is willing to accept Winky in the latter part of December 1990 or January 1991. This will necessitate considerable training to properly prepare her for shipment. In order to properly prepare Winky for a successful transfer, 3-4 hours per day must be dedicated to training her. This elephant has never been placed in a transporting crate and a great deal of time is needed to properly train her to enter such a crate. To accomplish this, two keepers must be dedicated to this project. Additionally, examinations by the veterinarians are necessary prior to the move and time spent by a designated keeper to stay with her during her first two to three weeks in San Diego.

The extensive amount of time necessary to safely prepare Winky for this move will greatly impact the entire zoo operation. At the current time, this would leave only one keeper to attend to the entire ungulate section for four hours per day and thus impacts other animal areas, as the third keeper in the ungulate area should be helping in other sections each day. Also, due to the Zoo being a seven-day per week operation, there must be no less than three keeper staff able to work with Winky, with four keepers being a preferable situation due to vacations, sick time, and other activities which would impact a safe working situation.

To ensure that the other animal areas are safely cared for and fully covered, an additional limited term Zoo Attendant I (Keeper) was hired out of existing operating vacancies at the zoo, to reduce the impact on other areas, as four keepers are required to safely train Winky and provide adequate backup, given the zoo's seven-day per week operation.

The additional limited term Zoo Attendant was hired on August 18th and the training of Winky began immediately. The training is expected to take several months to properly prepare her for this move. Without such training, her move

could create a seriously negative situation with the potential of either a staff member or Winky being injured. It is important to realize that not only is employee safety a major consideration in this situation, but animal rights is also a major issue. Zoo staff believes that the additional position will allow for professional, safe, and sensitive handling of the relocation of Winky.

FINANCIAL DATA

An additional limited term Zoo Attendant I has been hired to assist in the preparation and relocation of the Zoo's remaining elephant. The term of this additional attendant will be through January 1991. Funding for this limited term position (\$16,860) is provided from existing vacancies at the zoo. No additional funds are requested.

MBE/WBE

None.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed relocation of Winky is supported by the Sacramento Zoological Society and is consistent with standards set by the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA).

RECOMMENDATION

This report recommends that the joint Budget and Finance/Transportation and Community Development Committee approve this report and refer it to the full City Council for action. Further, it is recommended that the City Council, by resolution, approve the hiring on a limited term to assist in the preparation to relocate the Zoo's remaining elephant.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Baker/ja

Maria Baker, Manager
Sacramento Zoo

Recommendation Approved:

Approved:

Robert P. Thomas

Robert P. Thomas, Director
Parks and Community Services

for Regina Young
Solon Wisham, Jr.
Assistant City Manager

September 25, 1990
District 4

RPT:ja

Staff Contact Person: Maria Baker, Manager, Sacramento Zoo - 449-5166

RESOLUTION NO.

ADOPTED BY THE SACRAMENTO CITY COUNCIL

ON DATE OF _____

RESOLUTION APPROVING THE HIRING OF A LIMITED TERM
ZOO ATTENDENT I TO ASSIST IN THE RELOCATION OF
THE SACRAMENTO ZOO'S REMAINING ELEPHANT

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SACRAMENTO:

That the hiring of an additional limited term Zoo Attendent I is hereby approved.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK

FOR CITY CLERK USE ONLY

RESOLUTION NO.: _____

DATE ADOPTED: _____

4