

2ND REPORT OF THE
ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on February 2, 2012 commencing at 4:10 p.m.

PRESENT: E. Gerrow (Chair), M. Blosch, D. Fortney, D. Harris, L. Jackson, J. Lalonde, S. C. Rans, V. Van Linden, B. Warder and J. Martin, Committee Secretary.

ALSO PRESENT: R. Oke and L. Pompilii.

REGRETS: W.L. MacKay, A. Papmehl, F. Sekercioglu, M. Shepherd, and M. Warder.

I YOUR COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- 1st Report of the AWAC 1. (1) That the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee reviewed and received the 1st Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee from its meeting held on January 10, 2012.
- Wildlife Sub-committee 2. (C) That the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) received the attached report and heard a verbal update from D. Harris, on behalf of the Wildlife Sub-committee.
- No More Homeless Pets Conference 3. (2) That the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) heard a verbal presentation from D. Fortney, with respect to the No More Homeless Pets Conference.
- Storybook Gardens Update 4. (3) That the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) received the attached communication dated January 23, 2012 and heard a verbal update from V. VanLinden, with respect to the transfer of animals at Storybook Gardens. The AWAC would like to extend their thanks to the following for their dedication to this matter:
- (a) Mayor and Members of Council;
 - (b) Civic Administration – J. Riddell and the Community Services Staff;
 - (c) Zoocheck Canada;
 - (d) Citizen's Task Force; and,
 - (c) City Clerk and AWAC Committee Secretary.
- Other Business 5. (Added) That the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) heard a verbal update from L. Pompilii and held a general discussion, with respect to the Animal Welfare Initiatives Report.
- Next Meeting 6. That the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee will hold its next meeting on March 1, 2012.

The meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Martin, Jackie

From: VICKI VAN LINDEN
Sent: Monday, January 23, 2012 12:27 AM
To: Martin, Jackie
Subject: Submission for AWAC agenda, Feb. 2012

Submission for Feb. 2012, AWAC Agenda

Elizabeth Gerrow
Vicki Van Linden,
on behalf of: *FOCA-Friends of Captive Animals*

Storybook Gardens and the *City of London*, have announced that they will be re-homing all of the wild animals from *Storybook Gardens*.

These transfers should be completed by late spring of 2012.

Advocacy group, *Zoocheck Canada*, approached the city with a very generous offer: to find good homes for all of the wild animals, and to pay all costs connected with the transport of the animals to their new homes.

This generous offer allows *Storybook* and *Parks* management to move ahead on decisions that were made in 2008: to reduce and modify the zoo portion of this family attraction, and to develop new features and activities for modern families. The domestic animals will be remaining, hopefully with improvements to their surroundings.

Our group is very pleased with this outcome, and sincerely thanks all participants from the *City of London*, including *Storybook* and *Parks* management, and *Zoocheck Canada*, for their co-operative and progressive work together.

In the winter of 2010, *FOCA* approached *Storybook* management with a proposal. We wanted to conduct an observational study of the Seals' behaviour in a random, observational study. Our goal was to record behaviour and determine if the seals are pattern swimming, or displaying any behaviours that indicate captivity stress.

Once we had honestly recorded our results, the intention was to then introduce various enrichment items and see if there were any changes and improvements in their behaviour.

If our study showed that the seals were more active and involved when using enrichment objects, then we intended to use that information to hopefully raise funds to purchase enrichment items and perhaps donate some affordable pool enhancements.

Our intentions were openly discussed with the park's manager, Mr John Riddell, and he generously agreed that he and his staff would co-operate in this venture. We are very grateful for this open and co-operative spirit.

Fortunately, one of our *FOCA* leaders, Elizabeth Gerrow, has a degree in Zoology and was able to design and lead this study. We conducted this study throughout the summer of 2011.

Other community volunteers, including a Veterinary Technician, named Melissa Brighton (who was referred to us by Mr. Riddell) and a UWO Engineering student, named Manuella Brito, also participated in the study itself, as well as provided extensive research in their own fields.

Another *FOCA* leader, Deborah Harris, and other community volunteers also participated.

What this study and the connected research revealed to us was that there is essentially no low-cost way to meaningfully enrich the lives of the seals to an appropriate level.

Enrichment programs are far more than just purchasing items and tossing them into the pool. We had the opportunity to speak with a fully-qualified zoo keeper with recent training at a large Canadian facility working with Marine mammals, and learned that items need to be introduced in careful ways, and as part of a daily relationship with the keepers attending them. Actions like just tossing items into the pool can actually traumatize the animals and add to their stress rather than relieve it. Items also need to be changed constantly, even several times a day, and introduced in ways that are appropriate to the individual needs of each animal.

The time given by the keepers is just as important as the items. We were clearly aware of the close and caring relationship of the current keepers, yet also saw that their duties do not allow for the kind of extensive time required for the enrichment programs needed for these seals, as well as all of the other animals.

For a variety of reasons, it became evident that meaningful enrichment would require large increases of time from the professional staff, which would likely be unwelcome in today's economic climate. Additional staff would most likely need to be hired, and at least one of them with specialized training.

As well, the needed structural changes that the pool and haul-out areas definitely require would be far more costly than first assumed.

We learned that the seals' pool needs to be a completely salt-water environment, rather than the present brackish water. This cannot be achieved by simply adding more salt, otherwise we are sure this would have been done already. The entire intake, and output systems of the pool would need to be completely replaced, and a filtration system added, all at great expense.

The decision made to accept *Zoocheck Canada's* generous offer, indicates real civic leadership, and a willingness to place high value on the needs of all these animals. It is a decision that showed fiscal responsibility, as well as compassion and concern for the wild animals.

- We propose that members of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee send our thanks and recognition to our Mayor, members of City Council, *Storybook Gardens* manager Mr. John Riddell, and senior members of Community Services management to commend them on this progressive and highly appropriate decision.
- We also propose that AWAC members send our thanks and recognition to *Zoocheck Canada*. Let's commend them for generously contributing the costs of the transporting as well as their expertise and time, which have all been essential components of this favourable outcome.

Wildlife Subcommittee Report

The Wildlife Subcommittee for Wildlife Strategy had their first meeting on January 25, 2012. All members were present: Sara Rans, Vicki Van Linden, Elizabeth Gerrow and myself. Bonnie Bergsma provided a comprehensive overview of the issues and reviewed the scope of the project with an initial focus on beavers. The content and format of the report was established, and research and responsibilities were delegated to each committee member. Bonnie will remain the city contact person and mutual updates and information sharing will be provided on an ad hoc basis.

The next meeting of the Wildlife Subcommittee of AWAC has not yet been established.

Respectfully Submitted

Deborah Harris