

**7TH REPORT OF THE**  
**ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Meeting held on August 3, 2017, commencing at 5:01 PM, in Committee Room #3, Second Floor, London City Hall.

**PRESENT:** W. Brown (Chair), K. Ashe, H. de Hoog, M. Gelinias, P. Lystar, E. Nicholas, D. Simpson and M. Toplack and J. Martin (Secretary).

**ABSENT:** V. Lightfoot and M. Puzanov.

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

1. Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest

That it BE NOTED that no pecuniary interests were disclosed.

**II. SCHEDULED ITEMS**

None.

**III. CONSENT ITEMS**

2. 6th Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the 6th Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, from its meeting held on June 1, 2017, was received.

**IV. SUB-COMMITTEES & WORKING GROUPS**

3. Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Working Group

That the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to provide a presentation to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee with respect to the overall nature of the modifications of the Hyde Park Storm Sewer and how the modifications will affect wildlife; it being noted that a verbal update from W. Brown, on behalf of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Working Group, was received.

**V. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

4. REQUEST FOR DELEGATION - V. VanLinden - Reptilia

That it BE NOTED that the attached communication dated August 3, 2017, from V. VanLinden, with respect to reptiles and amphibians in captive environments and mobile zoos, was received; it being noted that the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) held a general discussion and referred additional discussion related to this matter to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Working Group, for review and report back to the AWAC.

5. REQUEST FOR DELEGATION - Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee - Cats and Birds Pamphlet

That it BE NOTED that a verbal presentation from S. Pierce and S. Hall, Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee (EEPAC) with respect to the draft "Cat's and Birds" pamphlet was received; it being noted that the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) supports the distribution of this pamphlet to educate and inform the community with respect to this matter.

6. DISCUSSION - Urban Agriculture Strategy

That it BE NOTED that the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee expressed an interest in participating in a joint advisory committee meeting to be hosted by the Advisory Committee on the Environment, to discuss and provide feedback with respect to the Urban Agriculture Strategy; it being noted that the AWAC

approved W. Brown, P. Lystar and E. Nicholas to be the AWAC representatives at the joint advisory committee meeting.

7. DISCUSSION - Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

That the Municipal Council BE REQUESTED to consider the following amendments to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) Terms of Reference:

- a) the Urban League of London position be eliminated and an Animal Rescue Group be added in its place;
- b) the London Veterinarian Association position be eliminated as this organization is no longer in existence and a Member-at-Large be added in its place;
- c) the London Humane Society position be eliminated and a Wildlife Rehabilitator/Naturalist be added in its place; and,
- d) the Citizens for Companion Animals position be eliminated and a Member-at-Large be added in its place;

it being noted that several attempts to recruit members under the current above-noted definitions, have been unsuccessful and these positions have consistently been vacant; it being further noted that these amendments will provide much needed support for the AWAC.

**VI. DEFERRED MATTERS/ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

8. (ADDED) Municipal Council Resolution - 2nd Report of Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the Municipal Council resolution adopted at its meeting held July 25, 2017 with respect to the 2nd Report of Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee, was received.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 PM.

**NEXT MEETING DATE: September 7, 2017**

Delegation to AWAC/ August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017

RE: Reptiles and Amphibians in captive environments and mobile zoos:

Facilities like Reptilia and other mobile zoo businesses like Hands On Exotics and Little Ray's Reptiles promote a false idea of what is an acceptable way to treat living beings. They are in my opinion the exact opposite of education and promote insensitivity and a lack of compassion in children.

It's unfortunate that these businesses are promoted as family entertainment or even more oddly as education because they transmit the destructive message that the natural world is a source of amusement; rather than a precious, sensitive ecosystem whose every inhabitant is absolutely essential and worthy of our respect and protection.

I have listened to presentations made by Hands On Exotics (a mobile zoo business located in the GTA) to a Toronto committee, have attended two mobile zoo presentations by Little Ray's Reptiles and visited Reptilia's facility in Vaughan last month. The consistent impression that I have seen is that they are businesses who simply exploit wild animals for profit, but try to present themselves as socially responsible, animal-friendly organizations that benefit the community and the animals themselves. To that, I completely disagree.

What I saw at Reptilia was truly depressing. I saw animals as large as American Alligators living in tanks that did allow them to fully stretch out, but provided little opportunity for significant movement or meaningful exercise. Not one of the living, wild beings in that facility has any access to natural light or sun, and only had heat lamps available to them. The building is dark and devoid of natural stimulation for any of the animals imprisoned there. The glass boxes that make up most of the housing fail to allow the animals to experience a range of sensory perceptions, forms of stimulus that are important to all wild beings. There was no ability to forage for food, the essential activity of all wild animals, meaning that each of them was sentenced to a life of boredom. Boredom in captive beings is now widely seen as a hardship and a form of deprivation and suffering.

Most had little provision of natural plants or other natural provisions that would replicate their native habitats. Many of the glass tanks had plastic plants, apparently to give a false impression of naturalness to the human viewer but would provide no benefit to the animal confined in the tank.

On exiting the Reptilia facility we are lead into a large area where pet supplies like tanks for reptiles and amphibians and other equipment are available for sale. This apparent promotion of and willingness to financially benefit from the pet trade of these animals

was very disturbing. As lacking in space and complexity that the glass boxes at Reptilia are, the tanks that are sold for home use are even less adequate.

After seeing the animals being displayed, and possibly hearing a presentation from the staff, it's easy to see that some children would then ask their parent to purchase such an animal for them as a pet, and the tanks and other equipment is right there for purchase. This is highly likely to contribute to the impulse purchase of an animal to then fill the tank. And, there were a small number of animals available for 'adoption.'

In my opinion, anything that promotes the pet trade of these animals who will live most of their lives confined to tanks is something that we need to oppose. If we saw people keeping a cat or dog inside a small glass box for his or her entire life, we would be outraged. Yet, the needs of reptiles and amphibians are no less real than those of dogs and cats. It's only our cultural insensitivity to these animals that allows us to believe that this form of captivity is acceptable.

Living, wild beings who are unable to be taken for a walk, cannot experience the sun, wind, natural activities, or a run in an off-leash park as companion animals like dogs are able to are not simply suitable as 'pets'. They are not 'pets' in the true sense of a companion, but are kept as living collectibles that hobbyists may take pleasure in having in their possession, but the quality of life that they experience is indefensible.

I hope that this committee, and our city will find ways to restrict the influx of these businesses that promote outdated and unscientific views of the nature of animals.

Teaching children that living animals are objects for their pleasure and amusement is destructive to the development of empathy and good citizenship. We have a far greater need for children to be raised to revere the natural world and respect all living beings than we do to promote a few jobs from such businesses. Seeing captive beings handed about, or made to endure miserable lives does not promote empathy, even though this is an argument often made by the businesses that exploit these animals.

In summary, my visit to Reptilia was a depressing experience. After leaving the dark environment with no natural light or air I was able to step outside into the sun, feel the breeze on my face and choose where I would travel to. None of those things that we take so for granted will ever be available to the prisoners inside those glass boxes in that dark, cave-like building.

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