



Legislation Text

File #: 2634-2020, **Version:** 1

This legislation authorizes the Director of the Department of Development to enter into a grant agreement with the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium (Zoo) in an amount up to \$125,000.00 for the purpose of providing funding for health and safety equipment and operating support for educational programming.

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is home to more than 10,000 animals representing nearly 600 species from around the world. The Zoo's 580 acres consist of seven regions, including the newest region, Adventure Cove, which is home to a variety of diverse species, including 10 California sea lions and four harbor seals, as well as a one-of-a-kind indoor-outdoor animal habitat at the new Jack Hanna's Animal Encounters Village. The Zoo first gained international recognition with the 1956 birth of Colo, the first gorilla born in human care, and was elevated to become one of the best zoos in the country under visionary leadership that began in 1978 with the now legendary Jack Hanna.

The mission of the Zoo is simple-to lead and inspire by connecting people and wildlife. To that end, conservation and education are pivotal to the work that they do as an organization. The Zoo's unmatched reputation transcends that of just a local zoo because the community has invested in the Zoo and their priorities. Decades of experience in the field has taught Zoo leadership one critical thing: effective conservation starts with *inspiring, empowering, and partnering with people*.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 and compliance with the state's order to shelter in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus, the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium closed on March 16, 2020, and did not reopen until June 15, 2020. This three month closure fell during a time when they would normally have some of largest attendance numbers. Because of the significant loss of attendance revenue, in addition to lost revenue from the cancellations of events and other programs, the Zoo made significant budget cuts in the form of furloughs, layoffs, limited seasonal staff, and the elimination of non-essential travel and other non-essential expenses.

The Columbus Zoo was relieved to resume operations in June, but knew the safety, health, and security of Zoo guests, employees, and wildlife remained paramount. They quickly and efficiently implemented social distancing guidelines and limited capacity mandates that were communicated through updated signage, new wayfinding standards, and on their website and through social media. These changes were necessary, but limited the number of visitors each day compared to budgeted projections. They also purchased Personal Protective Equipment to ensure employees and guests were safe, as well as increased hand sanitizing stations and implemented around the clock disinfectant and cleaning of all high touch surfaces in the zoo.

While the Zoo was closed, the small education team was able to deploy some of their programs virtually to community children eager to see their favorite species on their screens. Through virtual tours of the reptile house, to on-screen question and answer sessions and other virtual programming, guests were able to experience a little piece of the Zoo when they could not be there in person. These programs, along with new educational programs being created, keep children and adults connected to the zoo and fill a small void in the K-12 education world disrupted by the pandemic.

The investment in health and safety equipment (e.g. PPEs, sanitation supplies, sneeze guards, cleaning supplies, etc.) and operating support for essential staff to maintain educational programming on-line and socially distanced in person is necessary to combat budgetary shortfalls during and negative impacts on K-12 education in these unprecedented times.

These services provided by the Zoo cannot be provided by existing city employees because these services are beyond the City's current staffing capacity to provide.

Emergency legislation is requested in order to encumber funds in a timely manner so the Zoo can expend the funds before the end of the year.

Contract Compliance: the vendor number is 006098 and contract compliance is pending.

Fiscal Impact: Funding was provided to the City of Columbus from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress and signed into law March 27, 2020, and is available in the Department of Development's CARES Act budget (fund 2207, subfund 220702).

To authorize the Director of Development to execute a grant agreement with the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in an amount up to \$125,000.00 for the purpose of providing funding for health and safety equipment and operating support for educational programming; to authorize an expenditure up to \$125,000.00 from the CARES Act Fund; to authorize the payment of expenses starting March 1, 2020; and to declare an emergency. (\$125,000.00)

WHEREAS, the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is home to more than 10,000 animals representing nearly 600 species from around the world and has gained international recognition nearly 70 years ago; and

WHEREAS, due to the impact of COVID-19 and compliance with our state's order to shelter in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus, the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium closed on March 16, 2020, and did not reopen until June 15, 2020, resulting in a significant impact on their budget and a change in how they do education programming; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant reduction in cultural and educational events, reduction in operating revenue for the Zoo, and reduction of tax revenue to the city; and

WHEREAS, expenditures of CARES Act funding for the investment in health and safety equipment (e.g. PPEs, sanitation supplies, sneeze guards, cleaning supplies, etc.) and operating support for essential staff to maintain educational programming on-line and socially distanced in person is necessary to combat budgetary shortfalls and negative impacts on K-12 education caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, such expenditures of funds has not been previously accounted for the 2020 budget; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the Department of Development in that it is immediately necessary to enter into grant agreement in order to encumber funds in a timely manner so Columbus Zoo and Aquarium can expend the funds before the end of the year, such immediate action being necessary for the preservation of the public health, peace, property and safety; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That the Director of the Department of Development is authorized to enter into a grant agreement with the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in an amount up to \$125,000.00 for the purpose of providing funding for health and safety equipment and operating support for educational programming, beginning March 1, 2020.

SECTION 2. That for the purpose as stated in Section 1, the expenditure of \$125,000.00 or so much thereof as may be necessary is hereby authorized in fund 2207, subfund 220702 (CARES Act Fund), Dept. 44-01 (Administration), in Object Class 03 (Services) per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

SECTION 3. That the funds necessary to out the purpose of this ordinance are hereby deemed appropriated, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

SECTION 4. That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this ordinance.

SECTION 5. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this Ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its approval by the Mayor, or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.