



August 27, 2019

Honorable Linda L. Lofthus, Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California, County of San Joaquin  
180 East Weber Avenue, Suite 1306J  
Stockton, CA 95202

Dear Judge Lofthus:

### **Responses to the 2018-2019 Grand Jury Report**

Pursuant to Sections 933 and 933.05 of the California Penal Code, the following are responses to the 2018-2019 San Joaquin County Grand Jury for the report entitled “Micke Grove Zoo: Honoring the Past, Securing the Future 2018-2019” (Case No. 0218)

#### **1.0 Micke Grove Zoo Today**

##### **Policies and Procedures**

###### **Finding**

*F1.1 The lack of a Policy and Procedures Manual for Micke Grove Zoo creates inefficiencies and potential liabilities for the Parks and Recreation Division and San Joaquin County.*

###### **Agency Response**

###### **F1.1 Partially Disagree**

The Micke Grove Zoo has some Policies and Procedures in place and which are housed in various shared folders on the County server. However, due to the organizational manner in which such files are kept, such files would not be considered a manual at this time.

###### **Recommendation**

*R1.1 The San Joaquin County Parks and Recreation Division develop a written Policy and Procedures Manual for all Micke Grove Zoo operations by June 30, 2020.*

###### **Agency Response**

###### **R1.1 To be implemented**

During Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the Parks Administrator and the Zoo & Interpretive Services Manager (Zoo Manager) began gathering written Policy and Procedure documents to begin a Zoo Policy and Procedure Manual. The Zoo Curator who has been the “keeper” of the documents began adding them to a centralized electronic shared folder entitled Zoo Policies. As documents are gathered the Zoo Manager and staff are reading through them to ensure the validity, appropriateness, and applicability of

each and determining if they need to be rewritten, deleted, or in some instances, created. The Policy and Procedures Manual for the Micke Grove Zoo has a completion date of June 30, 2020.

## **Budget**

### **Finding**

*F1.2 The lack of a detailed and comprehensive budget for Micke Grove Zoo makes proper financial management difficult.*

### **Agency Response**

#### **F1.2 Disagree**

The Micke Grove Zoo has specific line items on the Parks and Recreation Division budget, and actual charges are tracked through an access database. The use of project costing on timesheets and material purchased allows for reports to be maintained for Zoo specific items.

### **Recommendation**

*R1.2 The San Joaquin County Parks and Recreation Division develop a detailed and comprehensive budget for the Zoo that includes assumptions for every income and expense line item by December 31, 2019.*

### **Agency Response**

#### **R1.2 Has been implemented**

Starting in Fiscal Year 2017-2018 and during the Fiscal Year 2018-2019, a Zoo specific budget worksheet was created including Zoo specific revenue and expenses. The information is derived from the Parks and Recreation Division budget. The Zoo budget worksheet will be updated annually after final budgets are approved.

## **Staffing**

### **Finding**

*F1.3 Micke Grove Zoo staff and operations have been negatively impacted by departmental reorganizations, turnover in administrators and staff, layoffs of part-time employees, understaffing, and lack of cross-training.*

### **Agency Response**

#### **F1.3 Disagree**

As part of ongoing efficiencies at the Micke Grove Zoo, animals which were on display at the Oak Grove Nature Center have been relocated to the Micke Grove Zoo saving husbandry and travel time. Animals that are part of the MGZS Educational program are now being cared for by the MGZS staff. These two items have saved approximately 24 hours per week of staff time, which are better served within the Zoo. All veterinary care is contracted with UC Davis Medical Teaching Hospital, which provides one day of on-site field services, emergency and after-hours' services, pharmaceuticals and telephone support as needed.

The Parks Administrator and the Zoo & Interpretive Services Manager (Zoo Manager) began the process of cross-training employees and have consistently employed two-part time zookeeper aides to compensate for a full-time employee’s extended absence. The number of allocated full-time positions at the Zoo remains at eight.

**Recommendation**

***R1.3 The San Joaquin County Parks and Recreation Division complete necessary cross-training for all current Zoo staff members and hire at least one additional full-time Zookeeper by June 30, 2020.***

**Agency Response**

**R1.3 To be implemented**

Cross-training of all employees began in January 2019 using a top-down method. All staff will be required to train in all aspects of animal husbandry by June 30, 2020. The Zoo Manager, Zoo Curator, and Senior Animal Care Specialist began cross-training on animal medical care, veterinary services, and animal diets in March 2019, with a completion date of December 2019.

The Grand Jury mistakenly reported that the Zoo employs only four full-time Animal Care Specialists (referred to as Zoo Keepers in the report) Currently the Zoo is allocated eight (8) full-time positions, one (1) Zoo Manager, one (1) Zoo Curator, and five (5) Animal Care Specialists and (1) Senior Animal Care Specialist. At this time, one Animal Care Specialist is on extended medical leave and whose job duties have been allocated to two-part time temporary Animal Care Aides. Previously the Zoo Curator and Zoo Manager did not materially participate in animal husbandry, and recent cross-training has improved Zoo efficiencies. Parks and Recreation will not be requesting a fifth Animal Care Specialist allocation as the Zoo already has five (5) but will hire a replacement full-time Animal Care Specialist if the current employee is unable to return to work.

The Parks and Recreation Benchmarking and Assessments Report, commonly referred to as the Taussig report, recommends expanding the use of volunteers at Micke Grove Zoo. The Zoo Manager, along with the MGZS education staff, have begun revamping the volunteer program, and also aim to look into the possibility of creating an intern program.

**Infrastructure/Maintenance**

**Finding**

***F1.4 The lack of a preventive maintenance schedule and record of repairs has resulted in increased costs and staff time in maintaining Micke Grove Zoo.***

**Agency Response**

**F1.4 Partially Disagree**

Facilities Management, Park Workers, Zoo Manager, and Parks Administrator walk the Zoo on a monthly basis, and have created a list of Zoo specific repairs. The items on the list are prioritized and tracked through to completion. In Fiscal Year 2018-2019, a new full-time Park Worker was allocated to spend three whole days within the Zoo and dedicates time/resources toward performing the necessary maintenance as identified within the Zoo repair list.

**Recommendation**

***R1.4** The San Joaquin County Parks and Recreation Division develop a preventive maintenance schedule and accurate repair record for Micke Grove Zoo by June 30, 2020.*

**Agency Response**

**R1.4 Has been implemented**

Beginning in January 2019, the Parks Administrator, Zoo Manager, General Services Assistant Director and Facility Maintenance and Construction Superintendent began a monthly walkthrough at the Zoo to discuss, address, and plan scheduled maintenance and repair issues. To date, the process consists of utilizing an excel worksheet with items coded as high, medium, and low priorities. Items are then tracked to completion. Although this process pertains to known issues, all new or emergent items are prioritized and submitted through the facility maintenance program already in place.

**Micke Grove Zoological Society (MGZS)**

**Findings**

***F1.5** The inability of MGZS to operate the concession stand and gift shop, as well as provide necessary fundraising support, demonstrates noncompliance with the 1999 operating agreement with San Joaquin County.*

***F1.6** The inability of San Joaquin County to ensure compliance with its 1999 operating agreement with MGZS has been financially detrimental to Micke Grove Zoo and its visitors.*

**Agency Responses**

**F1.5** Agree

**F1.6** Agree

**Recommendation**

***R1.5** The San Joaquin County General Services Department renegotiate their operating agreement with MGZS to update and clarify assigned roles and responsibilities by June 30, 2020.*

**Agency Response**

**R1.5 To be implemented**

The Parks Administrator will create an operating agreement with the MGZS that will include assigned roles and responsibilities by June 30, 2020.

**2.0 A Vision for Tomorrow**

**County Commitment**

**Finding**

***F2.1** Despite budget challenges, San Joaquin County leadership, is committed to the continued operation and improvement of Micke Grove Zoo.*

**Agency Response**

**F2.1** Agree

**Public Feedback**

**Finding**

*F2.2 The residents of San Joaquin County value Micke Grove Zoo and desire to see it improved.*

**Agency Response**

**F2.2** Agree

**Master Plan**

**Findings**

*F2.3 Developing a vision and plan for the future of Micke Grove Zoo is essential to generating the financial support necessary to make that vision a reality.*

*F2.4 San Joaquin County leadership must obtain the guidance and expertise of the industry professionals in both determining and designing the master plan for Micke Grove Zoo in order to ensure its successful future.*

**Agency Responses**

**F2.3** Agree

**F2.4** Agree

**Recommendation**

*R2.1 The San Joaquin County General Services Department complete and present to the Board of Supervisors an analysis of viable options for the future direction of Micke Grove Zoo, including what they envision the Zoo to be in five, ten, and twenty years by June 30, 2020.*

**Agency Response**

**R2.1** To be partially implemented

The San Joaquin County General Services Department, Director and the Parks and Recreation, Parks Administrator will complete and present to the Board of Supervisors an analysis of viable options for the future direction of Micke Grove Zoo, including what they envision the Zoo to be in five years by June 30, 2020.

**Recommendation**

*R2.2 The San Joaquin County General Services Department develop and present to the Board of Supervisors a professionally designed Master Plan for Micke Grove Zoo, which includes development goals for the next five, ten, and twenty years by December 31, 2020.*

**Agency Response**

**R2.2 To be partially implemented**

The Parks and Recreation Division will develop and present to the Board of Supervisors a Master Plan for the Micke Grove Zoo for the next five years by December 31, 2020. Beginning with a five-year strategic plan will allow the Department to implement strategies and goals set through the strategic plan.

**Accreditation**

**Findings**

*F2.5 Owning and operating a zoological facility today where animal care standards are subject to intense scrutiny and criticism may necessitate certification from a recognized professional association. Such certification is further justified through numerous additional benefits.*

*F2.6 Regaining accreditation through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) may not be practical or affordable for Micke Grove Zoo due to the stringent requirements and constantly evolving standards.*

*F2.7 Accreditation through the Zoological Association of America (ZAA) offers many of the same benefits as AZA, but may allow more flexibility and affordability as the County works to improve Micke Grove Zoo.*

**Agency Responses**

**F2.5 Agree**

**F2.6 Agree**

**F2.7 Agree**

**Recommendation**

*R2.3 The San Joaquin County Parks and Recreation Division examine the requirements and affordability for obtaining accreditation from available accrediting associations, and pursue appropriate accreditation as part of the County's Master Plan to improve Micke Grove Zoo by December 31, 2020.*

**Agency Response**

**R2.3 To be implemented**

The Park and Recreation Division will examine and analyze the requirements, affordability, and suitability of accreditation for Micke Grove Zoo by December 31, 2020.

Pursuing accreditation is a rigorous process including husbandry, recordkeeping, veterinary care, animal diet, staff knowledge, and facility site inspections.

### **3.0 Funding the Vision**

#### **County Responsibility**

##### **Finding**

*F3.1 San Joaquin County's ability to identify and secure multiple funding sources will be critical to fulfilling the future vision for Micke Grove Zoo.*

##### **Agency Response**

#### **F3.1 Partially Disagree**

This requires the further analysis regarding the future vision of the Micke Grove Zoo.

#### **Micke Grove Zoological Society (MGZS)**

##### **Findings**

*F3.2 A non-profit organization or foundation capable of raising significant funds is essential to fulfilling the future vision for Micke Grove Zoo.*

*F3.3 The recent fundraising results from the MGZS are insufficient to support the necessary improvements for the Micke Grove Zoo.*

##### **Agency Responses**

#### **F3.2 Partially Disagree**

This requires the further analysis regarding the future vision of the Micke Grove Zoo.

#### **F3.3 Agree**

##### **Recommendation**

*R3.1 The San Joaquin County General Services Department determine the role and responsibility of the MGZS for fundraising to support the future vision for the Micke Grove Zoo, and renegotiate their operating agreement accordingly by June 30, 2020.*

##### **Agency Response**

#### **R3.1 To be implemented**

The Parks Administrator and the Director of General Services along with the MGZS will create a new operating agreement with the MGZS that will assign roles and responsibilities and determine the MGZS'S fundraising expectations to support the future vision for the Micke Grove Zoo by June 30, 2020

## Corporate Sponsorships

### Finding

*F3.4 The opportunities for San Joaquin County to obtain funding support for Micke Grove Zoo through corporate sponsorships and grants are hindered by lack of accreditation and a new Master Plan for the Zoo.*

### Agency Response

#### **F3.4 Partially Disagree**

In the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Micke Grove Zoo received grant funding for \$500,000 from the State, and additional funding through Proposition 68 by working collaboratively with the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

### Recommendation

*R3.2 The San Joaquin County General Services Department evaluate all available funding sources for the improvement of Micke Grove Zoo and report their findings to the Board of Supervisors by December 31, 2020.*

### Agency Response

#### **R3.2 To be implemented**

The Department will evaluate available funding sources to improve Micke Grove Zoo and report the finding to the Board of Supervisors by December 31, 2020.

Sincerely,



Miguel A. Villapudua, Chair  
San Joaquin County Board of Supervisor

c: Board of Supervisors  
Clerk of the Board  
County Administrator  
County Counsel