



May 11, 2026

Chair Connie Chan
Supervisor Matt Dorsey
Supervisor Danny Sauter
San Francisco Board of Supervisors
Budget and Finance Committee

Dear Chair Chan and Supervisors,

On behalf of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department (RPD) and the San Francisco Zoological Society (SFZS), thank you for your time, consideration, and thoughtful engagement on the proposed Zoo loan agreement and the De-appropriation and Appropriation legislative packet.

We are aligned in recognizing both the urgency of the Zoo's current challenges and the opportunity ahead to strengthen this vital public institution and we acknowledge that the current lease and management agreement is outdated and not serving either of us well.

The loan agreement provides an opportunity to modernize and strengthen the relationship quickly, without prolonged negotiations. The loan structure and milestones provide critical near-term stability while establishing clear expectations for accountability, performance, and long-term sustainability.

Informed by the findings and recommendations of the recent performance and management BLA audit, RPD and SFZS are jointly committed to advancing a focused set of high-level priorities:

- **Restoring financial stability and transparency** through a comprehensive financial sustainability plan, improved budgeting practices, and ongoing reporting
- **Developing a clear strategic vision** through the creation of a forward-looking strategic plan, campus master plan, and capital investment roadmap
- **Strengthening governance and oversight** by enhancing Board practices, improving internal controls, and increasing regular reporting and accountability

- **Improving operations and guest experience** through targeted investments in maintenance, programming, marketing, and public-facing amenities
- **Rebuilding organizational culture and trust** through strengthened leadership practices, communication, and staff engagement
- **Aligning animal care, facilities, and long-term planning** to meet modern zoo standards and support accreditation goals

Just as importantly, this moment represents an opportunity to strengthen and modernize the City and Zoo partnership. A new lease agreement to operate the zoo will be informed by the planning and financial stabilization efforts undertaken during the loan performance period, which aligns with fiscal year 2026-2027. Upon completion of this work, we will undertake the execution of a new lease agreement.

Together, we are committed not only to stabilizing the Zoo in the near term, but to building a stronger, more resilient, and more accountable institution for the future, one that reflects San Francisco's values and serves generations to come.

Thank you again for your leadership and partnership in this effort.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

55846E553D3B46B...
Sarah Madland
Interim General Manager
San Francisco Recreation and Park Department

Signed by:

81285E7C2763456...
Cassandra Costello
CEO & Executive Director
San Francisco Zoo & Gardens

cc:
Supervisor Myrna Melgar
Alicia John-Baptiste, Mayor's Office
Adam Thongsavat, Mayor's Office
Kat Anderson, President, Recreation and Park Commission