

File No. 260360

Committee Item No. 2

Board Item No. 2

COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA PACKET CONTENTS LIST

Committee: Budget and Finance Committee
Board of Supervisors Meeting

Date May 6, 2026
Date May 19, 2026

Cmte Board

- Motion
- Resolution
- Ordinance
- Legislative Digest
- Budget and Legislative Analyst Report
- Youth Commission Report
- Introduction Form
- Department/Agency Cover Letter and/or Report
- MOU
- Grant Information Form
- Grant Budget
- Subcontract Budget
- Contract/Agreement
- Form 126 – Ethics Commission
- Notice of Award/Award Letter
- Application
- Public Correspondence

OTHER (Use back side if additional space is needed)

- REC Presentation 5/6/2026
- SFZS Presentation 5/6/2026
- _____
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Completed by: Brent Jalipa Date April 30, 2026

Completed by: Brent Jalipa Date May 7, 2026

1 [De-appropriation and Appropriation - Recreation and Park - San Francisco Zoological
2 Society Loan - \$2,500,000 - FY2025-2026]

3

3 **Ordinance de-appropriating \$2,500,000 of Open Space Acquisition funding and**
4 **appropriating \$2,500,000 in the Recreation and Park Department for a loan to the**
5 **San Francisco Zoological Society in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026.**

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Note: Additions are *single-underline italics Times New Roman*;
8 deletions are *strikethrough italics Times New Roman*.
9 Board amendment additions are double underlined.
Board amendment deletions are ~~strikethrough normal~~.

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Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

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Section 1. The uses of funding outlined below are herein de-appropriated to
14 reflect the projected sources of funding for FY2025-2026.

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16 **USES De-Appropriation**

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1	Fund /	Project & Activity /	Account	Description	Amount
2	Department ID	Authority			
3	13360 - SR Open	10013093 - RP Open	567000 -	Open Space	(\$2,500,000)
4	Space-Continuing /	Space Acquisition	Bldgs,Struct&Imprv	Acquisition	
5	262676 - REC Capital	0001 - Os Acquisition-	Proj-Budget	Fund	
6	Projects	Budget / 14614 - RP			
7		OS ACQ Acquisition			
8		Reserve			
9					
10	Total USES De-Appropriation				(\$2,500,000)

12 Section 2. The uses of funding outlined below are herein appropriated to reflect
13 the projected uses of funding in FY2025-2026.

15 **USES APPROPRIATION**

17	Fund /	Project & Activity /	Account	Description	Amount
18	Department ID	Authority			
19	13370 – SR Open	10024377 – RP Zoo	539200 –	Zoo Loan	\$2,500,000
20	Space&Park-Annual /	Operations Project 0002 –	Loans Issued		
21	232221 – REC Zoo	Zoo Loan / NEW – Zoo	By City		
22		Loan			
23	Total USES Appropriation				\$2,500,000

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25

1 Section 3. The Controller is authorized to record transfers between funds and
2 adjust the accounting treatment of sources and uses appropriated in this ordinance as
3 necessary to conform with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and other laws.
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5

6 APPROVED AS TO FORM:
7 DAVID CHIU, City Attorney

FUNDS AVAILABLE:
GREG WAGNER, Controller

8
9 By: /s/ Bradley Russi
10 BRADLEY RUSSI
Deputy City Attorney

By: /s/ Greg Wagner
GREG WAGNER
Controller

<p>Items 2 & 3 Files 26-0360 and 26-0393</p>	<p>Department: Recreation and Park Department (RPD)</p>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Legislative Objectives

- The proposed resolution in File 26-0393 would authorize the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) General Manager to execute a ten-year agreement to loan the San Francisco Zoological Society (SFZS), the nonprofit organization that manages the San Francisco Zoo, \$6.5 million, with an additional \$2 million in reserve, for a total loan of up to \$8.5 million.
- The proposed ordinance in File 26-0360 would de-appropriate \$2.5 million from the Open Space Acquisition Reserve and appropriate this funding to the Park, Recreation and Open Space Fund to be used for the initial loan disbursement to SFZS in FY 2025-26.

Key Points

- SFZS is projecting a two-year net operating cash deficit of \$11.89 million between January 2026 and December 2027. As of June 2025, the Zoo had \$9.2 million in net assets without donor restrictions and that figure is lower as of this writing due to an ongoing draw on that balance. Beginning in calendar year 2028, SFZS is projecting a net operating cash surplus due primarily to the anticipated arrival of two giant pandas and corresponding revenue increases. To cover its projected operating cash deficit between January 2026 and December 2027, SFZS has requested a loan from the City.
- The formal loan agreement has not been drafted. According to the draft loan term sheet, the loan is expected to be executed in FY 2025-26 with an initial disbursement of \$2.5 million. The remaining loan amounts will be disbursed in FY 2026-27 as SFZS meets various milestones, including completion of a financial sustainability plan and strategic plan.

Fiscal Impact

- RPD anticipates the loan will be entirely General Fund supported and that the Mayor’s proposed FY 2026-28 budget will include (1) a \$2.5 million General Fund transfer to restore the funding proposed be de-appropriated from the Open Space Acquisition Reserve; and (2) General Fund support for the remaining \$6 million of loan disbursements.

Policy Consideration

- The proposed resolution in File 26-0393 would authorize a loan agreement that has not yet been drafted, without an opportunity for the Board of Supervisors to review.
- No collateral secures the loan. SFZS’s ability to repay the loan will be compromised if it is not able to execute the plan to bring pandas to the Zoo, if the plan is substantially delayed, or if its actual resulting revenues are not sufficient to generate an operating cash surplus.

Recommendations

- Approval of the proposed resolution and proposed ordinance are policy matters for the Board of Supervisors.

MANDATE STATEMENT

City Charter Section 9.118(b) states that any contract entered into by a department, board or commission that (1) has a term of more than ten years, (2) requires expenditures of \$10 million or more, or (3) any modification of such contracts of more than \$500,000 is subject to Board of Supervisors approval.

Charter Section 9.105 states that amendments to the Annual Appropriation Ordinance are subject to Board of Supervisors approval by ordinance, after the Controller certifies the availability of funds.

BACKGROUND

The San Francisco Zoological Society (SFZS), a nonprofit, has managed and operated the San Francisco Zoo since 1993 under a Lease and Management Agreement between SFZS and the City, acting through the Recreation and Park Commission. The City leases the Zoo premises, including all permanent structures, facilities, and animals, to SFZS for a term not to exceed 99 years. Under the terms of the agreement, SFZS is responsible for Zoo operations and management, all required permits and accreditations, and maintaining the Zoo in a clean, safe, and attractive condition. In exchange for these services, the City pays SFZS a management fee of \$4 million annually, disbursed in monthly installments. The City remains the owner of Zoo land, improvements, and animals.

The agreement is automatically extended every five years. The City and SFZS have never renewed or amended the 1993 agreement in any way, and the \$4 million management fee has not increased since it was established in 1993.

The Recreation and Park Commission is the City’s representative party in the agreement and is responsible for reviewing and approving certain Zoo matters such as admission fee increases, SFZS’s annual budgets, and major capital improvements to the Zoo. The Joint Zoo Committee, an advisory subcommittee of the Recreation and Park Commission made up of three Commission members, three members of the SFZS Board of Directors, and one to two animal welfare advisors, reviews Zoo matters, receives public comment, and elevates issues and actionable items to the Recreation and Park Commission.

Through a motion (M24-125) passed on December 10, 2024, the Board of Supervisors directed the Budget and Legislative Analyst’s Office to conduct a comprehensive performance and management audit of the San Francisco Zoo based on a recommendation made in an October 10, 2024 report by the Joint Zoo Committee animal welfare advisors. The audit report was released on May 1, 2026 and contains 11 findings related to SFZS’s financial condition, strategic and capital planning, the Lease and Management Agreement, Zoo facilities condition and maintenance, contracting and procurement, SFZS Board of Directors oversight, worker safety, workplace culture, fiscal management and internal controls, animal care and welfare, and organizational impact and guest experience.

Plans to Bring Giant Pandas to the Zoo

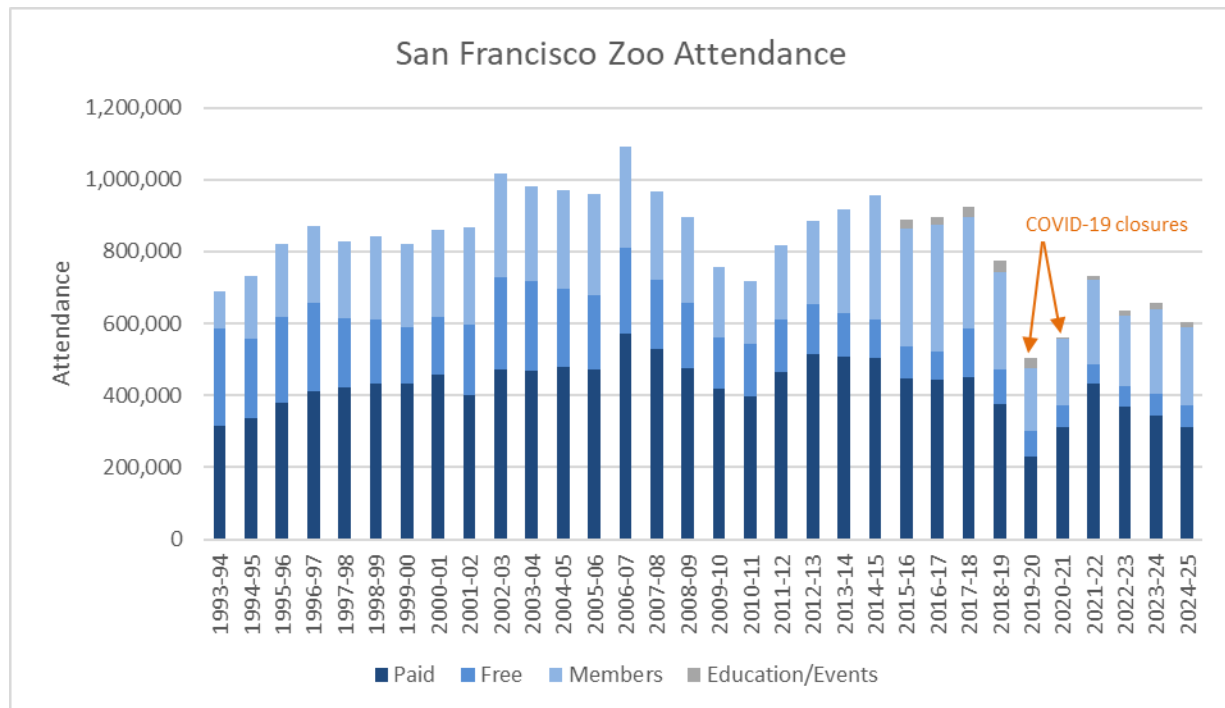
SFZS is currently working to bring giant pandas to the Zoo. According to Cassandra Costello, SFZS Chief Executive Officer, the technical agreement with China has not yet been executed. If the panda project is successful, two pandas would be loaned to SFZS for a 10-year period. SFZS is currently projecting the pandas will be on exhibit by the first quarter of calendar year 2028.

SFZS Financial Condition and Attendance Decreases

SFZS has operated with a structural deficit in its general unrestricted fund since at least FY 2018-19. Between FY 2018-19 and FY 2024-25, SFZS’s total operating revenues decreased from \$22.3 million to \$19.8 million, by \$2.4 million or 11 percent, while operating expenditures increased from \$24.5 million to \$27.8 million, by \$3.3 million or 14 percent. SFZS’s operating deficit grew by \$5.8 million, from \$2.2 million to \$8.0 million, during this period. To cover its annual operating deficits, SFZS has relied on non-operating revenue sources, many of which are highly variable and one-time, such as federal COVID-19 relief and estate bequests, and has also drawn on its investment reserves.

The primary cause of SFZS’s growing structural deficit is decreasing attendance. Attendance-driven revenue, including admissions, retail commissions, retail sales, and parking, accounts for roughly half of SFZS’s total operating revenue. Exhibit 1 below shows total Zoo attendance between FY 1993-94, when SFZS assumed responsibility for the management and operations of the Zoo, and FY 2024-25.

Exhibit 1: San Francisco Zoo Historical Attendance



Source: SFZS

According to an April 23, 2026 financial forecast prepared by SFZS, SFZS is projecting a two-year net operating cash deficit of \$11.89 million between January 2026 and December 2027. As of June 2025, the Zoo had \$9.2 million in net assets without donor restrictions and that figure is lower as of this writing due to an ongoing draw on that balance. Beginning in calendar year 2028, SFZS is projecting a net operating cash surplus due primarily to the panda exhibit and anticipated higher attendance, with corresponding increases in revenue from admissions, retail, camps, memberships, and contributions. To cover its projected operating cash deficit between January 2026 and December 2027, SFZS has requested a loan from the City. The *Performance and Management Audit of the San Francisco Zoo* recommends that the Budget and Appropriations Committee consider increasing City support to SFZS on a one-time basis in FY 2026-27 and FY 2027-28, conditional upon SFZS's demonstrated good-faith efforts to implement the recommendations in the audit report.

DETAILS OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

File 26-0393 is a proposed resolution that would authorize the General Manager of the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) to (1) execute a loan agreement with SFZS for \$6.5 million, with an additional \$2 million in reserve, for a total loan of up to \$8.5 million and (2) enter into additions, amendments, or modifications to the loan agreement that the General Manager determines, at their discretion, are necessary, in the best interest of the City, and do not materially affect the City's obligations, payments, or benefits. The loan agreement must be "substantially similar" to the term sheet included in the legislative file for this item.

The proposed resolution states that the Board of Supervisors finds it appropriate and in the public interest for the City to loan funds to SFZS.

File 26-0360 is a proposed ordinance that would de-appropriate \$2.5 million from the Open Space Acquisition Reserve and appropriate this funding to the Park, Recreation and Open Space Fund for the portion of the loan payment to be made to SFZS in FY 2025-26.

Loan Terms

The proposed resolution summarizes key loan terms and conditions and states that the terms of the loan will be in accordance with a draft loan term sheet negotiated by RPD and SFZS. These terms and conditions (from both the proposed resolution and the draft loan term sheet) are summarized in Exhibit 2 below. According to RPD staff, the formal loan agreement has not yet been drafted.

Exhibit 2: Loan Terms and Conditions

Terms and Conditions	
SFZS Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage a specialized zoo strategic and financial planning consultant • Engage in a long-term visioning process with the City and other partners • Produce the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Financial sustainability plan, including a loan repayment strategy ○ Five-year strategic plan ○ Quarterly reports on basic outputs (attendance, efficiencies, new members, fundraising), progress on financial sustainability plan, and progress on panda project • Make immediate expense reductions of a minimum of 10 percent • Not take on new liabilities or animals, except for pandas, that require habitat or staffing investments unless a dedicated outside funding source is secured* • Improve the capacity of the SFZS Board of Directors to support the Zoo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adequately staff the finance committee ○ Add a Board member with substantial financial management experience ○ Double the Board’s annual contribution goal each year and eventually reach a goal of 10 percent of SFZS’s annual operating budget • Achieve Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation** • Address concerns identified in the <i>BLA Performance and Management Audit of the San Francisco Zoo</i> • Meet specific milestones tied to release of loan funds (see Exhibit 3 below)
Total Loan Amount	\$6.5 million, disbursed according to specific milestones (see Exhibit 3 below), with an additional \$2 million in reserve. The \$2 million in reserve may be loaned to SFZS after a successful AZA accreditation review in 2027 if the City determines that SFZS has made sufficient progress towards financial sustainability and its long-term goals.
Loan Source	General Fund or debt financing at the City’s discretion, according to the draft loan term sheet. The proposed resolution indicates the source of funds is General Fund.
Interest Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If General Fund: City’s pooled investment rate (currently 3.7 percent) • If debt financing: rate will match the City’s debt issuance and financing costs (estimated 6.5 percent)
Repayment Period	10 years.
Repayment	Beginning in the first quarter of 2028, the City will decrease the management fee paid to SFZS by approx. \$1.02 million annually to cover the loan repayment.
Failure to Meet Milestones	The City may (1) terminate the loan, and/or (2) terminate the Lease and Management Agreement between SFZS and the City.

Source: File 26-0393; draft loan term sheet.

*Requirement applies until SFZS is deemed financially sustainable by the Controller.

**The San Francisco Zoo is currently AZA accredited. Its next upcoming accreditation visit will occur in spring 2027.

According to the loan term sheet, funds will be released when SFZS reaches the milestones shown in Exhibit 3 below. Prior to the start of the loan, SFZS must provide its current plans for increasing attendance and fundraising and a loan repayment plan. One year after the start of the loan, SFZS must provide its final financial sustainability plan and five-year strategic plan.

Exhibit 3: Loan Milestones

Timeline	Fiscal Year	Funds Released	Milestone Actions
Prior to loan start	2025-26	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current plans for attendance and fundraising growth, expenditure reductions • Loan repayment plan
Loan start	2025-26	\$2.5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin visioning process with City
Loan start + 3 months	2026-27	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire consultant • First-quarter data
Loan start + 6 months	2026-27	\$1.4 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft financial sustainability plan and draft strategic plan submitted to RPD and Controller’s Office • Second-quarter data
Loan start + 9 months	2026-27	\$1.3 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third-quarter data
By March 2027	2026-27	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve AZA accreditation
Loan start + 12 months	2026-27	\$1.3 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final financial sustainability plan and strategic plan submitted to Joint Zoo Committee • Fourth quarter data
If needed	2027-28 (anticipated)	\$2 million in reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2 million in reserve may be released if City determines sufficient progress has been made towards financial sustainability and long-term goals
As established in audit or with the City	varies	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address audit concerns and recommendations

Source: Draft loan term sheet.

FISCAL IMPACT

As shown in Exhibit 2 above, the loan term document states that the City may use either debt financing or General Fund support to pay for the loan. However, according to Antonio Guerra, RPD Director of Administration of Finance, RPD anticipates the loan will be entirely General Fund supported:

- The proposed ordinance (File 26-0360) would de-appropriate \$2.5 million from the Open Space Acquisition Reserve and appropriate this funding to the Park, Recreation and Open Space Fund in FY 2025-26. This \$2.5 million would be used for the initial loan disbursement, anticipated to occur in FY 2025-26, that coincides with the beginning of the loan. According to Director Guerra, RPD anticipates that a \$2.5 million General Fund transfer to restore the funding to the Open Space Acquisition Reserve will be included in the Mayor’s proposed FY 2026-28 budget, subject to Board of Supervisors approval.

- RPD anticipates that General Fund support for the remainder of the loan disbursements (\$6 million, inclusive of the \$2 million reserve) will be included in the Mayor’s proposed FY 2026-28 budget, subject to Board of Supervisors approval.

According to Director Guerra, while RPD considered the use of certificates of participation to fund the loan payments, this scenario was determined to be more costly to SFZS. The use of certificates of participation would have resulted in a higher interest rate and transaction costs to SFZS.

Planned Uses of the Open Space Acquisition Reserve

Charter Section 16.107 establishes the Park, Recreation and Open Space Fund, which is administered by RPD to provide park and recreational services and facilities. The City is required, though a voter-approved spending requirement, to deposit an annual property tax set-aside amount into the fund. According to Charter Section 16.107(g)(3), five percent of monies deposited into the fund annually are to be dedicated to the acquisition of real property, and any unspent or uncommitted amounts are carried forward to the following fiscal year.

According to RPD staff, the Open Space Acquisition Reserve fund balance is currently \$14 million. According to Director Guerra, given the large available appropriation in the fund, RPD operations would not be affected by the proposed \$2.5 million de-appropriation. Other future planned uses for the Open Space Acquisition Reserve include a potential acquisition in the Tenderloin, an upcoming acquisition of a PG&E parcel at India Basin, and future acquisition of open space at the Schlage Lock redevelopment site.

POLICY CONSIDERATION

Absence of Loan Agreement

The proposed resolution in File 26-0393 would authorize the RPD General Manager to execute a loan agreement without an opportunity for the Board of Supervisors to review. According to RPD staff, the City Attorney’s Office is currently drafting the agreement, but it has not been finalized. While the proposed resolution states that the terms of the loan would be “substantially similar” to the loan term sheet, the loan agreement itself has not been made available to the Board of Supervisors or Budget and Legislative Analyst.

Panda Scenario Uncertainty

As discussed earlier in this report, SFZS is projecting a net operating cash surplus beginning in 2028 due to higher attendance resulting from the panda exhibit and corresponding increases in revenue from admissions, retail, camps, memberships, and contributions. SFZS’s projected surplus would allow it to repay the loan via monthly decreases in the management fee paid by the City. However, SFZS’s ability to repay the loan will be compromised if it fails to execute the panda agreement with China, if the exhibit is substantially delayed, or if actual attendance levels, memberships, and contributions are not sufficient to generate an operating cash surplus. If SFZS does not achieve financial stability by 2028, when the loan repayment period begins, the reduction in the monthly management fee paid by the City could cause further financial distress

to SFZS and could compromise its ability to operate the Zoo and to repay the full amount of the loan.

According to RPD staff, no collateral secures the loan.

Lease and Management Agreement and Role of Joint Zoo Committee

The Budget and Legislative Analyst's *Performance and Management Audit of the San Francisco Zoo* contain recommendations designed to improve the operations, accountability, and long-term financial sustainability of SFZS and the Zoo overall. SFZS management has agreed with all the audit recommendations directed to SFZS, and execution of these recommendations is included as a requirement in the draft loan term sheet. However, the audit report also directs several recommendations to the Recreation and Park Department, including a recommendation that the RPD General Manager initiate negotiations for a new Lease and Management Agreement because the current agreement has become outdated and ineffective. In their response to this recommendation, the RPD Interim General Manager responded that although they agree that any agreement between SFZS and the City would need stronger enforcement mechanisms and updated roles and responsibilities, RPD disagrees that a new Lease and Management Agreement is immediately necessary, as the draft loan agreement between the City and SFZS will require SFZS to meet more robust performance benchmarks and reporting requirements and require City approval of certain plans that did not previously require approval.

The audit report also recommends the RPD General Manager dissolve the Joint Zoo Committee upon the execution of a new Lease and Management Agreement and establish a more direct working relationship between the Recreation and Park Commission and SFZS. The RPD Interim General Manager agrees with this recommendation. If this recommendation is implemented, the loan term that requires SFZS to present its final financial sustainability plan and strategic plan to the Joint Zoo Committee should be revised to replace Joint Zoo Committee with the Recreation and Park Commission.

Costs of Inaction

The April 7, 2026 BLA report *Projected Fiscal Impact from Cessation of San Francisco Zoological Society Operations* estimated that if SFZS is no longer able to operate the Zoo and the City must assume responsibility for Zoo animals and grounds, the three-year cost to the City could total between \$42.5 and \$64.9 million, with ongoing annual costs thereafter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Approval of the proposed resolution and proposed ordinance are policy matters for the Board of Supervisors.

Recreation and Park Department

San Francisco Zoological Society Loan Agreement, De-appropriation and Appropriation

Budget and Finance Committee, May 6, 2026



Inspire, Connect, Play!

Background: RPD–SFZS Operating Model

- City (RPD) owns SF Zoo (grounds, facilities, animals)
- Operations managed by the San Francisco Zoological Society (SFZS) under the 1993 Lease & Management Agreement
- RPD pays SFZS \$4M annual management fee
- SFZS manages Zoo operations
- Recreation and Park Commission reviews and approves certain Zoo matters (admission fees, budget, animal transactions)



Financial Challenges & Immediate Need

- Declining attendance since covid led to operational deficits
- SFZS faces operating-budget pressure requiring immediate cash support
- SFZS anticipates significant attendance and revenue increases in 2027 with the arrival of Giant Pandas



Loan Terms & Conditions

Loan Agreement:

- Up to \$8.5M total
- 4 payments in 2026-2027 totaling \$6.5M
- \$2M reserve

De-appropriation and Appropriation

- \$2.5M to facilitate first loan payment
- De-appropriation from Open Space Acquisition Fund and appropriation to the Park, Recreation and Open Space Fund



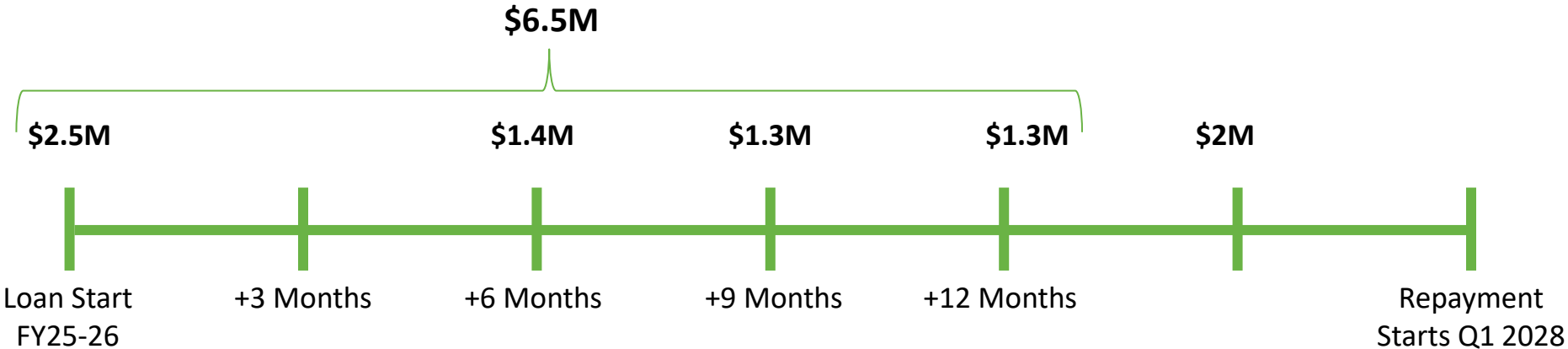
Loan Terms & Conditions

Loan disbursements: tied to specific conditions and milestones, including:

- Financial sustainability plan & aligned 5-year strategic plan
- Immediate expense reduction by minimum 10%
- No new financial liabilities/animals (Giant Panda exception)
- SFZS Board changes
- Quarterly reporting (attendance, cost reductions, membership, fundraising, long-term solvency progress, Giant Panda progress)

Repayment:

Starting in Q1 of 2028 and over 10 years, via management fee reductions



Requested Board Actions

- Approve Resolution:
Authorize RPD to enter into \$8.5M loan agreement with SFZS
- Approve Ordinance:
Allow budget action required for near-term cash infusion





THANK YOU

**SAN FRANCISCO
RECREATION
& PARKS**



SF Zoo Presentation for BOS Budget & Finance Committee

May 6, 2026

San Francisco Zoological Society

Connect, Care, Conserve

History of San Francisco Zoo & Gardens

- Established in 1929, the San Francisco Zoo & Gardens is a 100-acre park.
- SF Zoo is home to nearly 1,500 exotic, endangered and rescued animals representing more than 225 species, and seven distinct gardens full of native and unusual plants.
- SFZS is comprised of 30 Board Members and 50+ Emeritus Board Members. There are approximately 180 full-time employees and ~100 docents.



Who We Are

- We are an education and conservation organization serving the San Francisco and beyond.
- Our mission is to connect all people with wildlife, inspire caring for nature and advance conservation action.
- We are proud to serve our community and we have a talented team of experts who care for our animals, visitors, gardens and habitats each day.



Access Programs

- **San Francisco Resident Free Admission** - the First Wednesday of the Month
- The **Museums for all Program** allows guest to purchase up to 4 tickets for only \$5 each just by showing their SNAP EBT card and matching ID. Since this January, 12,166 adults and 4,800 children have come to the Zoo under the program.
- The **Discover & Go program** allows guests to check out free Zoo passes from their local library. Since August of 2025 2,578 adults and 1,373 children have enjoyed the program.
- **SFUSD Schools** also get free field trips during the School Year. And Rec & Park is also given free access for their group and summer programs.
- **Non-SFUSD Schools** receive a discount for field trip admission.
- **Discounted** admission fees for SF residents and seniors.
- **Membership** 14,200 members, 46% SF households



2026 Discount Promotions

- **January – Kids Free All Month**
 - Resulted in highest January attendance on record (~63,000)
 - Admission revenue exceeded prior year by 62.5%
- **February Presidents Day Promotion and Free Student Admission**
 - Students allowed free entry during teacher's strike
- **March – Student BOGO Month**
 - Attendance exceeded prior year by 31%
- **May – Mother's Day Weekend Promotion**
 - All Admission only \$5
- **June – Kids Free on Weekdays**
 - Expecting weekend attendance levels during weekdays



Volunteer & Education Programs



Youth Jobs & Volunteers

Jobs:

The Zoo has partnered with:

- JCYC (Japanese Community Youth Council)
 - SFYouthworks
 - Enterprise for Youth
- In collaboration with these organizations the Zoo has hosted over 30 paid interns over the past three years.

Volunteers:

- Every year the Zoo averages about **60 – 70 teen volunteers** for our Leadership Fellows program.
- The Zoo is celebrating our 50th anniversary of the Nature Trail Volunteer program, which works with youth ages 12-14 to provide education to the public about a particular animal or conservation initiative.
- The Zoo also hosts volunteers and interns in other areas of the Zoo including Children's Zoo, Insect Zoo, Conservation and Wellness and the Animal Rescue and Conservation Center.



Education Programs

- Summer Camp Enrollment
 - Over 1000 registrants
 - \$500,000 in earned revenue
 - 56 scholarships awarded
- Little Learners Early Childhood Program
 - Resurrected from pre-COVID era
 - 300+ registrants
- Wild Nights Sleepover Program
 - Pilot program launched in April with 50 attendees
 - Full reboot planned for Aug 2026



Educational Programs

- Relaunched Winter & Fall Zoo Camps
- Bilingual Camps (Chinese & Spanish)
- Over 100 Docents & Adult Volunteers
- Community Outreach: tabling at street fairs, festivals, cultural celebrations, schools
- Conservation Lectures



Recent Special Events, Upcoming Exhibits and Promotions



Highlighted 2026 Special Events

- **February – Member Appreciation Month**
 - Special Public Programming (Keeper Chats)
 - Extended Morning Hours
 - Lunar New Year Celebration
- **March – Neurodiversity Celebration Week**
 - Early “Quiet Hours”
 - Rides set to “Quiet Mode”
 - Free resource kits and visit guides
 - Elevated “Sensory Alert” exhibit signage
- **April**
 - “Eggventure” Easter Community Egg Hunt & Education
 - Earth Day collaboration with 14 community organizations
 - Sustainability education and community training
- **May – Asian American & Pacific Islander Month**
 - K-POP Day – Celebrating cultural impacts through food, dance, and wildlife education (May 23)
- **June – Pride Month**
 - Zoo’s 97th Birthday Celebration – June 13 & 14
 - Pride Celebration – June 21
 - Pride Parade



Upcoming Special Exhibits

- “Dinos Rule!” Animatronic Exhibit (June 29 – September 12)
 - Attendance Projection: +52,978
- Winter Light Festival- “Zoolightful” (October 23 – January 3)
 - Attendance Projection: +124,000



Citywide Promotions

- Street Pole Banners
 - In permitting process
 - May 2026 launch (est.)



- MUNI PSA campaign
 - 1000 interior bus cards
 - 15 Princess Banners
 - May 2026 launch (est.)



Public Relations

Recent Press Coverage

- Neurodiversity Access Programs
- Mexican Gray Wolf Repopulation Efforts
- KRON4 “Exploring Animals” Monthly Segment



Social Media Presence

Incremental Growth of Followers and Engagement YOY

- 277.2% increase in interactions on Facebook (see graph below)
- Follower increase of 71,014 accounts across all platforms
- Two posts in 2026 have gone viral with over 1 million views each



SF Zoo Mobile App Update

- Language Translations: 60+ languages
- Wayfinding without Paper Maps
- Data Collected:
 - Heat Mapping provides details on visitor flow, areas of highest interest, and public programming popularity
 - Visitor satisfaction data – 92% positive
 - Visitor demographic data
 - Native Language
 - Country and City of Residency



Board Governance and Financials

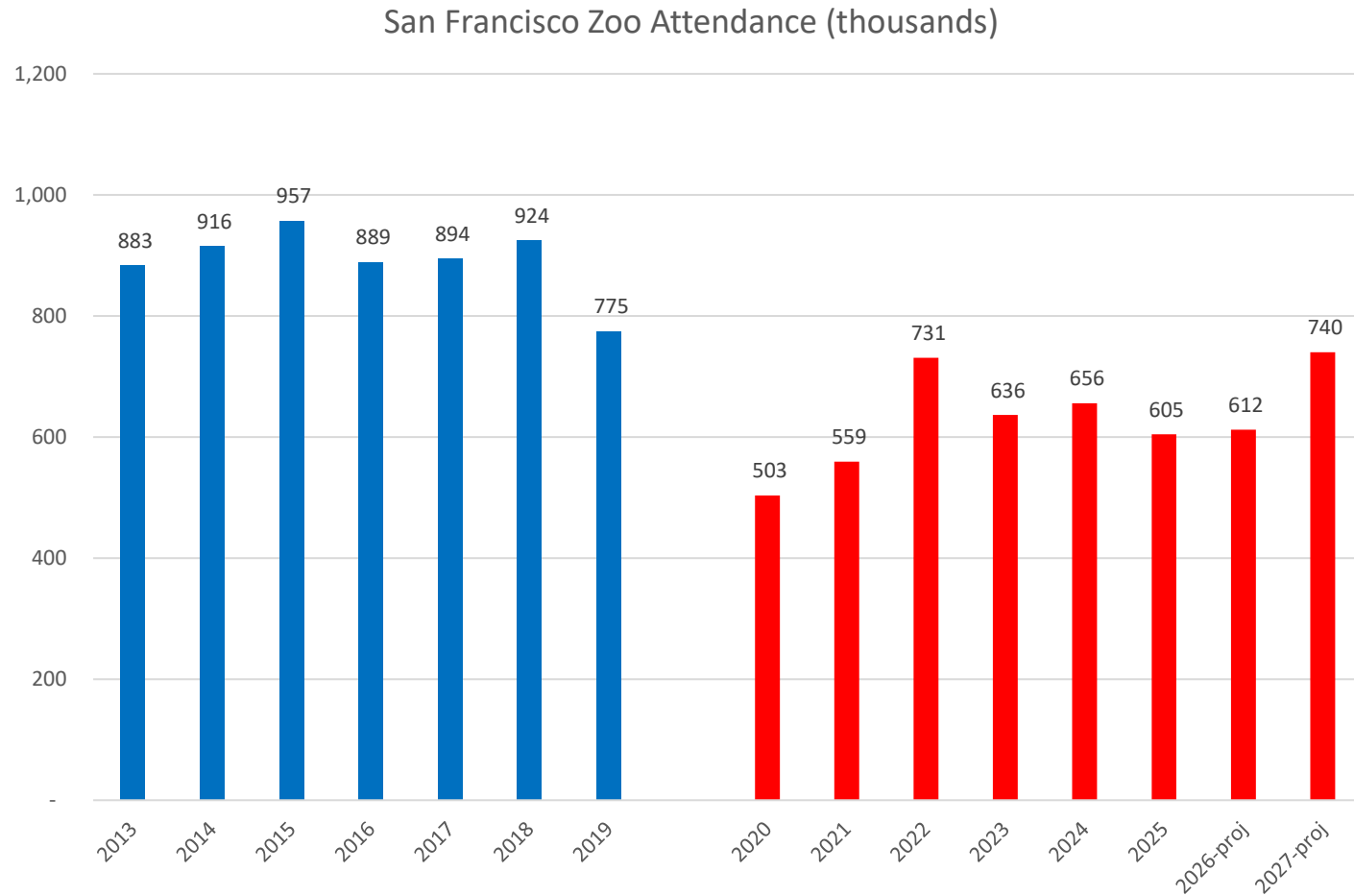


SFZS Board

- Continued growth of board membership and increased fundraising responsibility
- SFZS Board Retreat planned for 5/16-focus on strategic and business planning + governance



Historic, Current and Projected Attendance



Significant Cost Increases FY 20/21 to FY 25/26

	<u>5-Year Increase</u>	
• Utilities	83%	\$960K
• Health Benefits	34%	\$920K
• Supplies	97%	\$340K
• Security	38%	\$270K
• Animal Food	40%	\$230K
• Insurance	47%	\$160K
• Workers Compensation	82%	\$150K
• <u>TOTAL SIGNIFICANT COST INCREASES</u>		<u>\$3.03M</u>

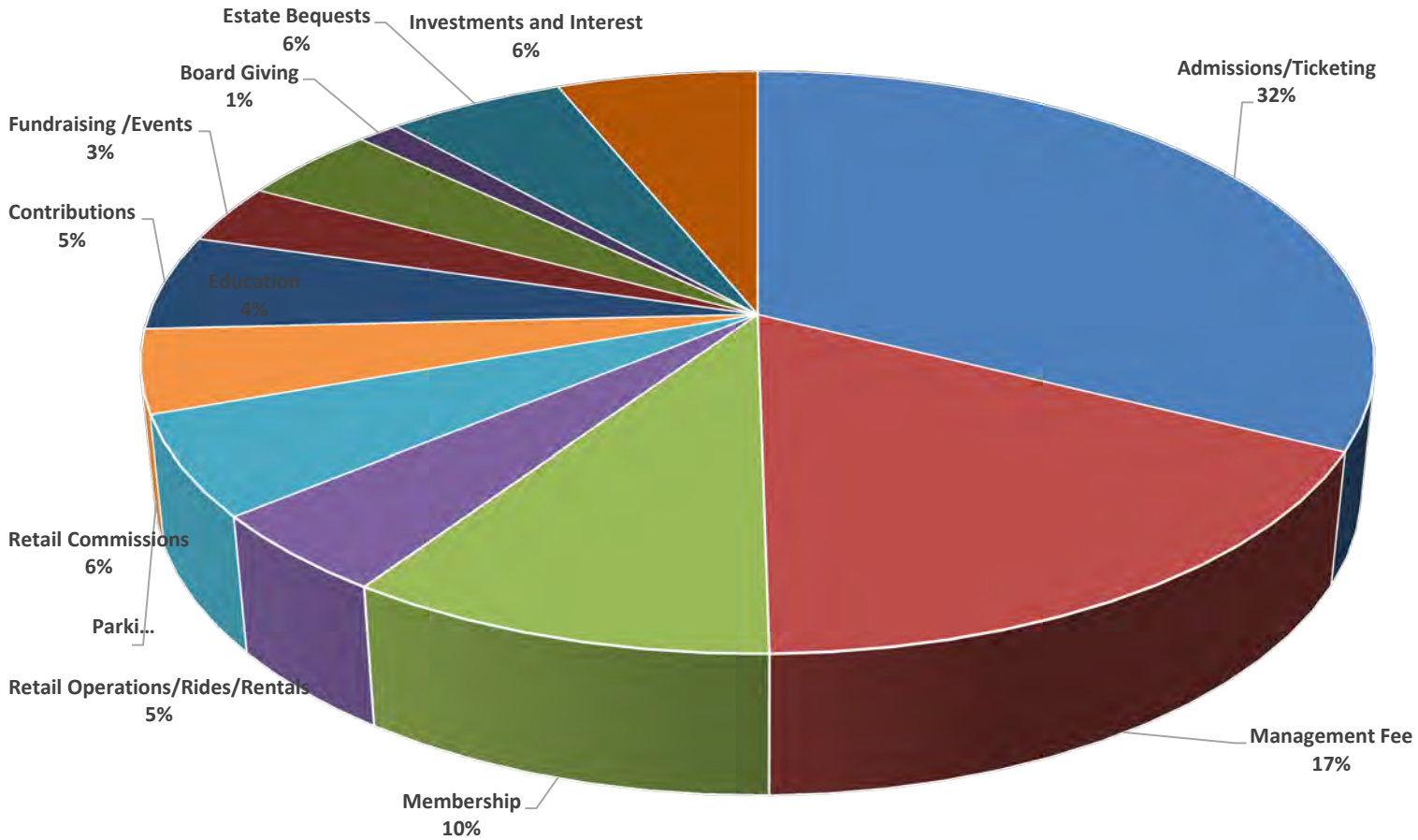
Note: These \$3.03M increases are 15% of ALL expenses in FY20/21

Zoo Revenues and Expenses October-24 to March-26 Excluding Investments, Bequests, and In-Kind



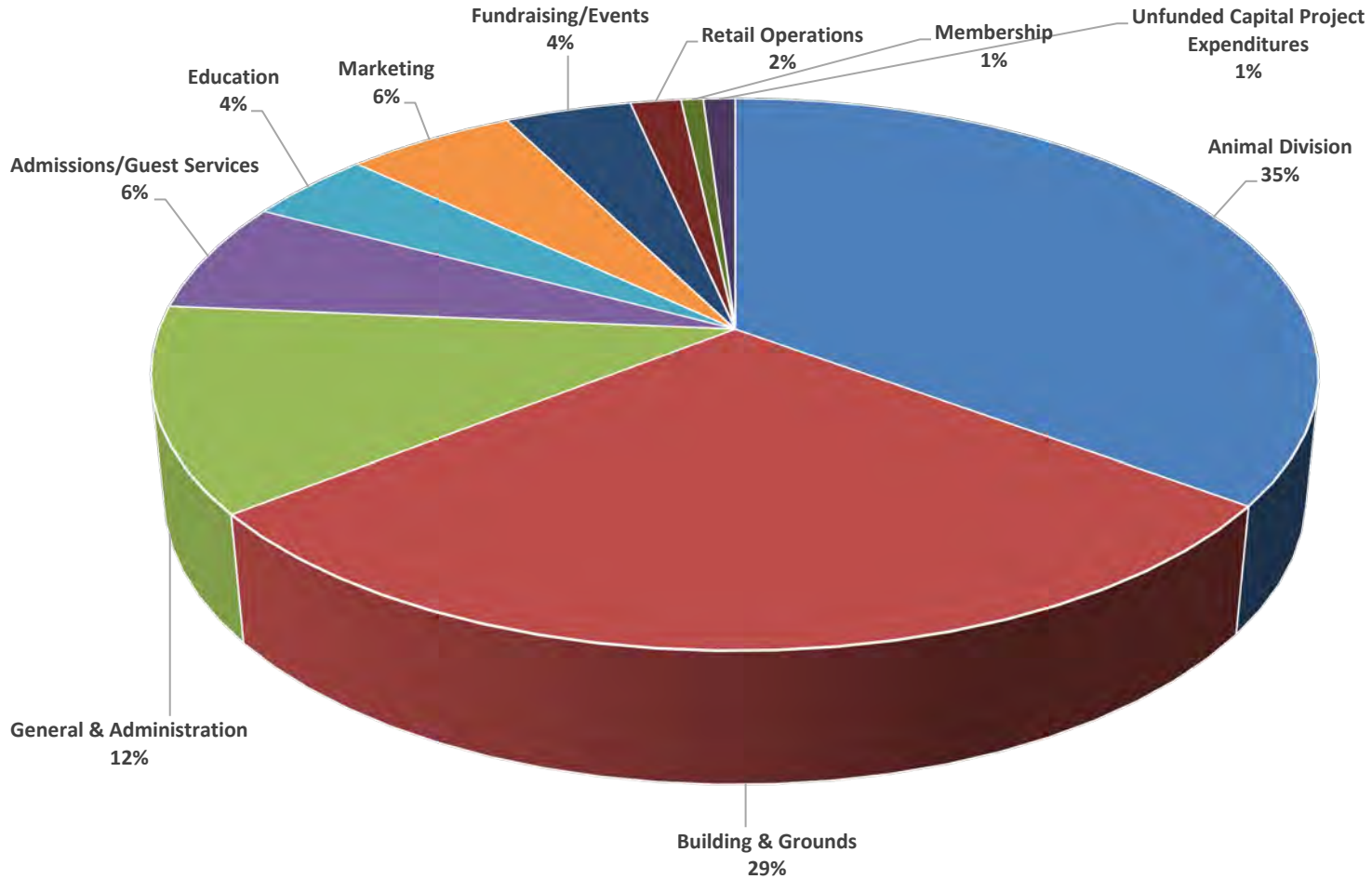
SAN FRANCISCO ZOO

PROJECTED REVENUES FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 - \$23.1M



SAN FRANCISCO ZOO

PROJECTED EXPENSES FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 - \$31.5M



Proposed Loan from the City to the San Francisco Zoological Society



Proposed Loan will allow SF Zoo to Continue Operations

- Continue operations without major damaging disruption
- Fundraising and sponsorships for future exhibits and events
- Capital Campaign
- Business, strategic and master plan work to set the stage for the future of SF Zoo and inspire investment
- Facilities Conditions Assessment
- AZA Accreditation, detailed application submission, inspection, and required maintenance work



What is AZA Accreditation?

- Association of Zoos & Aquariums' accreditation is the gold standard for animal care, awarded only to top-tier institutions meeting rigorous performance-based standards for animal welfare, veterinary care, conservation and education.
- AZA accreditation is vitally important as it enables zoos to work cooperatively with other professionally-accredited AZA institutions, such as participating in Species Survival Plans (breeding programs), AZA SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction), field conservation and scientific research.
- AZA renews accreditation every 5 years via an extensive written submission and a vigorous three-day on-site visit with expert AZA inspectors.
- SF Zoo has been continuously accredited since program started in 1979.
- Only 254 of the more than 9,000 USDA licensed animal facilities are accredited by AZA.



Thank you! Questions?



From: [kim](#)
To: [Board of Supervisors \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Our Zoo, Panda Funding and Other Thoughts
Date: Tuesday, May 5, 2026 6:10:52 AM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Hello Members of the Board of Supervisors,

Below are links to four recent posts to my Zoo related blog. I am forwarding these to you, as I believe each one contains information that should be of interest. At the very least, words I'd like to share.

>April 12

*All Entities Taking Responsibility, Revisiting Restructuring & Redefining Management

<https://iamnotananteater.blogspot.com/2026/04/all-entities-taking-responsibility.html>

>April 26

*Is The Selfish Panda Want Setting Our Zoo Up To Fail?

<https://iamnotananteater.blogspot.com/2026/04/is-selfish-panda-want-setting-our-zoo.html>

>May 2

*The Audit Findings - Excuse Me, But NO F**KING SHIT

<https://iamnotananteater.blogspot.com/2026/05/the-audit-findings-excuse-me-but-no.html>

>May 2

*The Audit - Furthermore To Zoo Board and City Officials... Do Not Say It!!!

<https://iamnotananteater.blogspot.com/2026/05/the-audit-furthermore-to-zoo-board-and.html>

Thank you
Kim Forwood

From: [Fleur Dawes](#)
To: [Jalipa, Brent \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Public comment and documents for file
Date: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 10:24:43 AM
Attachments: [MEDIA RELEASE Sneaky City Audit Release Shows San Francisco Zoo Hid \\$12 M in Unauthorized Spending as Politicians Push for \\$8.5 M Bailout & \\$27.5 M Panda Boondoggle](#)
[POL Westerman, Gosar Lead Investigation into CCP's "Save the Panda" Program - House Committee on Natural Resources.pdf](#)
[POL 2024.12.19_panda_letter.pdf](#)
[SF Chronicle SF Zoo audit.png](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Clerk Jalipa

Please find a comment below and documents attached which I request be place on the public record.

Thank you for confirming that they are now on record.

Fleur Dawes
In Defense of Animals
415-879-6878

Good morning, Chair and Committee members. My name is Fleur Dawes, I represent over a quarter million supporters of In Defense of Animals, Panda Voices, and SF Zoo Watch.

I respectfully urge you to vote NO on the \$8.5 million bailout for the San Francisco Zoological Society.

We acknowledge the CEO stepped down, but changing the captain does not salvage a sinking ship.

The City's own audit proves this operator fractured public trust. When accountability is erased, public money is laid to waste. They didn't just bend rules; they broke the bank. San Francisco Zoological Society hid \$12 million in unauthorized spending, masked structural deficits, and ran city-owned heritage buildings into the ground. Combined with the Animal Welfare Commission's dire warnings, the suffering of animals, staff, and city property is undeniable.

Worse, they want this handout to pave the way for a ruinous \$27.5 million panda project—a vanity scheme currently under federal investigation for financial misappropriation.

We cannot finance foreign schemes, while our facilities rip at the seams.

Past oversight was asleep at the wheel, but you can take back the keys today.

Approving this bailout tells every city contractor that a long relationship excuses chronic

failure.

Do not reward contract violations with a blank check. Reject this bailout, and instead build EcoPark SF—a sustainable sanctuary that benefits our community.

Please; choose a visionary park, not a financial shot in the dark.

Thank you.



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
**NATURAL
RESOURCES**
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

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Press Release

Westerman, Gosar Lead Investigation into CCP's "Save the Panda" Program

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 19, 2024 | [Committee Press Office](#) (202-225-2761)

Tags: [Oversight and Investigations](#)



Today, House Committee on Natural Resource Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.) and Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Chairman Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.) sent a letter to the U.S. Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Shannon Estenoz and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Director Martha Williams on the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) misuse of American donor funds intended for panda conservation. In

part, the members wrote:

"China's effort to dupe zoos and American donors into paying for infrastructure development and other projects unrelated to wildlife conservation under the guise of "save the pandas" is unsurprising. China is "widely recognized as the world's largest market for trafficked wildlife products." Beyond China's domestic demand for illegal wildlife products, the Chinese government's own wildlife-related regulatory scheme "creates opportunities for the illicit wildlife trade to flourish." Moreover, recent Chinese zoo scandals highlight the lack of seriousness with which China approaches conservation and wildlife education. In 2024, a Chinese zoo came under fire for painting Chow Chow dogs black and white in attempt to pass them off to visitors as pandas. After initially trying to fabricate a new animal called a "panda dog," the Chinese zoo was forced to admit its scam. Comically, China's dismal reputation for animal conservation is so well-known that, in 2023, it was forced to publicly deny that a Southeast Asian sun bear on display at a zoo was a man in a bear suit.

"What is most surprising, however, is FWS's eagerness to surrender ESA-related regulatory duties to zoos and to the Chinese government given the agency's history of ruling over the ESA with an iron fist. Although the purpose of listing species under the ESA is to aid in their recovery and delist the animals, FWS has historically worked relentlessly to keep species listed indefinitely. FWS's disingenuous ESA enforcement and deference to the Chinese government deeply troubles the Committee."

To read the full letter, click [here](#).

Background

Giant Pandas are native to China and are loaned to zoos around the world as a part of a conservation lease program with the Chinese government. In November 2024, the New York Times [reported](#) that money earmarked for conservation, most of which came from American donors, was instead used to fund Chinese infrastructure projects. The Committee has been presented with additional information confirming the New York Times' reporting, finding that the CCP duped American donors and that USFWS, responsible for oversight of the panda loan program, looked the other way. Specifically, USFWS did not maintain proper oversight of the funds provided to the CCP for the panda program and rubberstamped illicit payments to China.



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

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Contact Us

Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office
Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

P (202) 225-2761

F (202) 225-0534

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

December 19, 2024

Shannon Estenoz
Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Martha Williams
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Assistant Secretary Estenoz and Director Williams:

The House Committee on Natural Resources (Committee) is conducting oversight over the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) reported failure to properly account for funds exchanged under the giant panda (*Aliuropoda melanoleuca* or "panda") conservation lease program (panda program) with the Chinese government. As you are aware, pandas are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and are included under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade (CITES).¹ According to terms of the CITES agreement regarding loans of pandas from China to a foreign institution like a zoo, "every effort must be made to ensure that all the financial benefits from the exhibition of giant pandas, after the deduction of the costs incurred, are devoted to the conservation of the species in China, the vast majority being reserved for its conservation in the wild."² The Committee is concerned that FWS has not maintained proper oversight of the funds provided to the Chinese government for the panda program and, more broadly, FWS may have eschewed its regulatory responsibility by rubberstamping illicit payments to China in disingenuous enforcement of the ESA.

In November 2024, The New York Times (NYT) published an investigative report³ detailing how the Chinese government spent tens of millions of dollars earmarked for panda conservation on apartment buildings, museums, roads, computers, televisions, and other line items unrelated to wildlife conservation.⁴ China also refuses to account for millions more in funds meant for wild panda recovery.⁵ While deceitful fund allocation by the Chinese government is itself cause for concern, *these* funds were raised from donors by American zoos who effectively rent pandas from China for public display. Under the ESA, U.S. research institutions (typically zoos) may pay for and import protected species provided

¹ CONG. RSCH. SERV., IF12122, THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA'S PANDA DIPLOMACY (2022), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12122/2>.

² *Notification to the Parties: Loans of Giant Pandas*, CITES (Sept. 4, 1996), <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/notif/1996/932.shtml>.

³ See Mara Hvistendahl, *U.S. Zoos Gave a Fortune to Protect Pandas. That's Not How China Spent It.*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 29, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/29/world/asia/china-panda-money-us-zoos.html>; see also Mara Hvistendahl, *When Zoos Pay for Endangered Species: Our Correspondent Explains the Risks*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 29, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/29/world/asia/panda-zoo-money-investigation-explained.html>.

⁴ Perhaps the Chinese government plans to promote panda recovery by housing the bears in apartment complexes and teaching them to channel surf on new satellite televisions, but the Committee is unaware of such strategy advancements in wildlife conservation science.

⁵ See Mara Hvistendahl, *U.S. Zoos Gave a Fortune to Protect Pandas. That's Not How China Spent It.*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 29, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/29/world/asia/china-panda-money-us-zoos.html>.

that the money is used exclusively to conserve these threatened or endangered species.⁶ FWS is charged with enforcing this provision of the ESA.

Yet, despite previously freezing payments from zoos to China due to blatant disregard of ESA regulations and abysmal Chinese bookkeeping, FWS—after meeting with representatives of American zoos and Chinese officials in China in 2010—agreed to continue funding the panda program.⁷ In fact, rather than ensure that unsuspecting zoo donors passionate about wildlife conservation were *actually* funding the recovery of ESA-listed species, FWS openly chose to eliminate oversight of the payments and instead enable a system where zoo administrators could approve their own payments to China in exchange for pandas to display.

China's effort to dupe zoos and American donors into paying for infrastructure development and other projects unrelated to wildlife conservation under the guise of "save the pandas" is unsurprising. China is "widely recognized as the world's largest market for trafficked wildlife products."⁸ Beyond China's domestic demand for illegal wildlife products, the Chinese government's own wildlife-related regulatory scheme "creates opportunities for the illicit wildlife trade to flourish."⁹ Moreover, recent Chinese zoo scandals highlight the lack of seriousness with which China approaches conservation and wildlife education. In 2024, a Chinese zoo came under fire for painting Chow Chow dogs black and white in attempt to pass them off to visitors as pandas.¹⁰ After initially trying to fabricate a new animal called a "panda dog," the Chinese zoo was forced to admit its scam.¹¹ Comically, China's dismal reputation for animal conservation is so well-known that, in 2023, it was forced to publicly deny that a Southeast Asian sun bear on display at a zoo was a man in a bear suit.¹²

What is most surprising, however, is FWS's eagerness to surrender ESA-related regulatory duties to zoos and to the Chinese government given the agency's history of ruling over the ESA with an iron first. Although the purpose of listing species under the ESA is to aid in their recovery and delist the animals, FWS has historically worked relentlessly to keep species listed indefinitely.¹³ FWS's disingenuous ESA enforcement and deference to the Chinese government deeply troubles the Committee.

⁶ See *Id.*; Mara Hvistendahl, *When Zoos Pay for Endangered Species: Our Correspondent Explains the Risks*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 29, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/29/world/asia/panda-zoo-money-investigation-explained.html>. See also PERVAZE A. SHEIKH AND ERIN H. WARD, CONG. RSCH. SERV., R46677, THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT: OVERVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION (2021), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46677>.

⁷ See Mara Hvistendahl, *U.S. Zoos Gave a Fortune to Protect Pandas. That's Not How China Spent It.*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 29, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/29/world/asia/china-panda-money-us-zoos.html>; see also Mara Hvistendahl, *When Zoos Pay for Endangered Species: Our Correspondent Explains the Risks*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 29, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/29/world/asia/panda-zoo-money-investigation-explained.html>.

⁸ SUZANNA STEPHENS AND MATTHEW SOUTHERLAND, U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION, CHINA'S ROLE IN WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING AND THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE (2018), <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/2018.12.06%20-%20Wildlife%20Trafficking%20-%20Final%20Version.pdf>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ See Emily Crane, *Chinese zoo ADMITS what we all knew about its 'pandas'*, N.Y. POST (Sept. 19, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/09/19/world-news/chinese-zoo-admits-its-pandas-are-just-painted-dogs/>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² See Alan Yuhas and Chang Che, *Chinese Zoo Denies, in Voice of a Bear, That Sun Bear Is a Person in a Suit*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 1, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/01/world/asia/chinese-zoo-sun-bear-costume.html>.

¹³ See PERVAZE A. SHEIKH AND ERIN H. WARD, CONG. RSCH. SERV., R46677, THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT: OVERVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION (2021), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46677>; see also *Delisted Species*, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/species-delisted> (showing that a small fraction of listed species have been delisted, with an even smaller fraction being delisted due to recovery).

To be clear, the Committee does not take issue with zoos, the conservation work they support around the globe, or their displays of animals. However, the general public and all donors should be aware that their efforts to “save the pandas” may be funding something entirely different—possibly even something sinister. And it is deeply troubling to consider that their own government officials might be complicit in this situation.

The Committee requests a briefing from FWS related to the agency’s enforcement of the ESA and oversight of payments made by American entities to foreign governments, including but not limited to China and oversight of the panda program. The Committee also requests that you produce the following items in your possession, custody, or control in complete, unredacted, and electronic format as soon as possible, but no later than January 2, 2025:

1. All documents and communications between or among FWS and stakeholders, including but not limited to zoos and nonprofit organizations, related to any payments made to China or another foreign entity in exchange for animals, including but not limited to panda bears, listed under the ESA.
2. All documents and communications between or among FWS, stakeholders, and foreign entities, including but not limited to zoos, nonprofit organizations, and foreign governments, related to FWS oversight over the import or export of any species listed under the ESA.
3. All documents sufficient to show how all money subject to ESA regulation paid to foreign entities, including but not limited to the Chinese government, is spent or otherwise accounted for by that foreign entity.

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the requests from the Committee on Natural Resources. To schedule the requested briefing, please contact the Majority staff for the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee at (202) 225-2761 or HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov. Under House Rule X, the Committee on Natural Resources has “general oversight” of any matter relating to its jurisdiction, including all matters concerning the programs, operations, and regulatory responsibilities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We look forward to your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

Enclosure

BAY AREA // SAN FRANCISCO

Audit: S.F. Zoo spent \$12 million without required approval

The findings come as the city is set to finalize up to \$8.5 million in loans to the zoo

By [Aldo Toledo](#), [Tara Duggan](#), Staff Writers

May 1, 2026

Gift Article



A lion in Cat Kingdom at San Francisco Zoo in 2025. An audit released Friday found widespread failures in management, oversight and financial planning at the zoo.

Scott Strazzante/S.F. Chronicle



Listen Now:

Audit: S.F. Zoo spent \$12 million without required approval

About 5 Minutes

ix

4 Everfit

A scathing audit released Friday shows the San Francisco Zoo violated city rules by spending \$12 million on projects without required approval, amid financial instability and a toxic workplace zoo leaders allowed to fester.

The examination of the zoo's operations and financial decisions from 2019 to 2025 found widespread failures in management, oversight and financial planning, while the zoo operated at a deficit for years, misrepresented its financial situation and failed to raise the alarm.

Only once over the past six years did the zoo seek approval of an improvement project, as required, the audit found.



Introduction Form

(by a Member of the Board of Supervisors or the Mayor)



I hereby submit the following item for introduction (select only one):

- 1. For reference to Committee (Ordinance, Resolution, Motion or Charter Amendment)
- 2. Request for next printed agenda (For Adoption Without Committee Reference)
(Routine, non-controversial and/or commendatory matters only)
- 3. Request for Hearing on a subject matter at Committee
- 4. Request for Letter beginning with "Supervisor inquires..."
- 5. City Attorney Request
- 6. Call File No. from Committee.
- 7. Budget and Legislative Analyst Request (attached written Motion)
- 8. Substitute Legislation File No.
- 9. Reactivate File No.
- 10. Topic submitted for Mayoral Appearance before the Board on

The proposed legislation should be forwarded to the following (please check all appropriate boxes):

- Small Business Commission Youth Commission Ethics Commission
- Planning Commission Building Inspection Commission Human Resources Department

General Plan Referral sent to the Planning Department (proposed legislation subject to Charter 4.105 & Admin 2A.53):

- Yes No

(Note: For Imperative Agenda items (a Resolution not on the printed agenda), use the Imperative Agenda Form.)

Sponsor(s):

Subject:

Long Title or text listed:

Signature of Sponsoring Supervisor: