

17 July 2003

Mary Healy, Chairperson
Accreditation Commission
American Zoo and Aquarium Association
8403 Colesville Road/Suite 710
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3514

Dear Mary,

As per your letter of June 2, 2003, Topeka Zoological Park is very excited about being part of the AZA organization.

Since March 2003, we have been addressing the items noted:

Reorganization of staff - The reorganization has been in place since December 2002. Changes made have enhanced our communication with staff at all levels and allowed us to become more efficient and provide more clarity to the role of our staff members.

- Merle Miller has assumed the role of Curator/Registrar in a non-supervisory role. His performance in this area has exceeded expectations. This change has allowed him to focus on collection building and strengthening our conservation programs.
- Fawn Moser, Animal Care Manager has done an excellent job in supervision and training of zookeepers. The addition of Mr. Nichols to our staff has helped relieve her of elephant duties.
- Terry Gingrich, Operations Director - As we indicated in March 2003, Mr. Gingrich will leave animal issues and veterinary issues to appropriate supervisors: Fawn Moser, Animal Care Manager, Dr. Connie Ketz or myself. He has been excellent in his new role. Terry has provided invaluable assistance in handling day-to-day personnel issues. Terry and Fawn facilitate better communication among the zookeepers. In his new role he has been a boost to our staff morale. Our turnover rate for zookeepers has dropped. Currently, we have nearly all zookeeper positions filled except two. We are currently awaiting approval from City administration to fill both open positions. These vacancies were created by zookeeper Bobby Seal's decision to move back home to Florida and the termination of a probationary employee.

Zoo Graphics - Redesigned and installed in many areas of the zoo. As new exhibits are displayed, signage will be updated. We received additional funding of \$10,000 from Zoo Improvement Reserve Fund to continue updating signage throughout the zoo.

Employees' morale - As per my observations, and other supervisor's observations, staff morale is up. Zoo staff seem pleased with the status of zoo and on-going changes. Employee absence rate is low and employee turnover rate is low.

Elephant manager position - This position has been filled by Tim Nichols of Zoo Atlanta. He joined our staff on June 30th, 2003. To date the program has been doing very well. Mr. Nichols will be involved on a daily basis with the new project involving elephant pool/shade structure and the outside exhibit for hippos.

Communication between management and staff at all levels - Through the reorganization, communication has improved. Regular meetings are held with each division of the zoo and all staff meeting are held monthly.

Status of the following projects -

- Administrative/education building - We held an official ground breaking for this facility on June 27th. The new facility is dedicated to our former long-time Zoo Director, Gary K. Clarke. Actual construction began on June 30, 2003. Projected completion date is scheduled for early 2004.
- Outdoor Orangutan display - We officially dedicated this habitat on June 4th, 2003. The project was a joint venture between FOTZ, Security Benefit Group of Companies, and the City of Topeka.
- Elephant and hippo enhancements - We held the official ground breaking on July 11, 2003 for these projects. The elephants will have a pool available and a permanent shade structure in their outside yard. The zoo's hippos will have access to a 28,000-gallon pool and outdoor yard when completed. The contractor started on July 14, 2003. Projected completion date is scheduled for early 2004.

23 June 2005

Denny Lewis, Accreditation Manager
American Zoo and Aquarium Association
8403 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314

Dear Denny,

As indicated in Accreditation Guide and Standards "AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care", Topeka Zoological Park has every intention of being in full compliance with AZA guidelines for May 2006.

History of Topeka Zoo Elephant Program

- 1996 – elephant program converted from "free contact" to "protected contact". This change was made possible with assistance of Gary Priest of San Diego Zoo.
- 1996-1998 – modifications were made to our existing facility (hydraulic doors installed, expansion of outside yard to 32,500 square feet.
- 2001/July – hired an elephant management consultant to assist in continued development of program.
- 2003 – hired a new elephant management program supervisor.
- 2004 – Opening of new pool and shade structure for elephants.

To date Topeka Zoological Park (City of Topeka) has invested close to one million dollars over the last eight years in the elephant program

As part of our continued commitment to elephants, we have submitted a Capital Improvement Project for 2005. This project would allow for expansion of the elephant facility to accommodate up to 1.3 elephants, with ERD (attached is the CIP for Phase II - Animals and Man Building/elephants)

When this project is approved, planning would begin immediately with goal of having construction well under way by 2006, with the May 1st deadline as a target.

The Zoo collection has elephants as one of its premier species. Topeka Zoological Park has made a substantial financial and resource commitment to elephants. The community of Topeka appreciates the Zoo and their elephants, and continued investment in elephants and improvements at the Zoo. We believe that the Topeka Zoo elephant program can provide a significant contribution to the overall management of elephants in captivity and education for the public.

We welcome any comments on this plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael D. Coker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "D".

Michael D. Coker
Zoo Director

26 March 2004

Denny Lewis, Accreditation Manager
American Zoo and Aquarium Association
8403 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314

Dear Denny,

Last year USDA conducted a review of several deaths that occurred at the Topeka Zoo. This review was prompted by a private citizen and from a zoo staff person.

USDA reviewed the death of an African lion – euthanized due to cancer and death of 0.1 Bornean orangutan “Batu”; the mixing of African crested porcupines and Black and White Colobus; and the exhibition of Red fox in our Black bear exhibit.

Enclosed is their report provided to us in mid-March 2004. Please note the Topeka Zoo was cited for exhibition of red fox with black bears. Our last red fox was killed by a black bear in the fall of 2003. The cohabitation of red fox and black bears had been done successfully since the exhibit opened in 1996. Since the death occurred, we have no plans to add red fox to this exhibit again.

The red fox living in this exhibit had never been noted on any USDA reports. However, red fox will not live with black bears again.

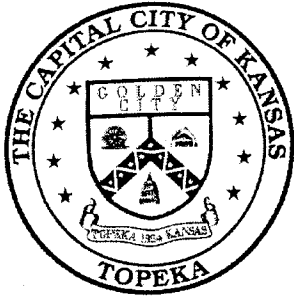
We are doing well at the Zoo. New eagle exhibits open April 23, 2004. Education/office facility to open on April 28th, 2004, Elephant/Hippos pools open May 7th, 2004. Jungle Cats exhibit for leopards and tigers should open in June 2004.

We will send photos of all of the openings.

Sincerely,



Michael D. Coker
Zoo Director



CITY OF TOPEKA

TOPEKA ZOOLOGICAL PARK
635 SW Gage Blvd.
Topeka, KS 66606
Tel.: (785) 368-9180



Michael Coker, Director
E-mail: mcoker@topeka.org
Fax: (785) 368-9152
www.topeka.org

26 March 2004

Denny Lewis, Accreditation Manager
American Zoo and Aquarium Association
8403 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314

Dear Denny,

Last year USDA conducted a review of several deaths that occurred at the Topeka Zoo. This review was prompted by a private citizen and from a zoo staff person.

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1 August 2002

Denny Lewis, Manager/Accreditation Programs
American Zoo and Aquarium Association
8403 Colesville Road, Suite 710
Silver Springs, Maryland 20910

Dear Mr. Lewis,

During the last year Topeka Zoological Park has gone through some significant changes:

New zoo director hired as of November 2001, had been acting zoo director since June 2001. Zoo Director reports to the Mayor

Mayor's budget for the zoo is recommending an 11% increase over last year's budget. The City Council will decide on the final budget for 2003, by end of August 2002.

The City Council and the Mayor appointed a blue ribbon committee. The committee has submitted their recommendations, dated July 23, 2002. The report reviews operations, funding, reporting structure. Report is attached for the commission's review.

City Council approved an expenditure of 1.2 million dollars in general obligation bonds with repayments through Zoo Improvement Reserve Fund, to design and build these projects: education/administration, entry/gift shop areas, elephant pool, outside hippo exhibit, jungle cats exhibit. Requests for proposals are being reviewed at this time.

City Council approved the expenditure of \$65,000 for the construction of a new animal quarantine facility at the zoo. This project is under construction at this time. Completion is expected for later this fall.

Outdoor orangutan habitat-ground breaking planned for mid-August, projected grand opening in Spring 2003. This is a \$400,000 project, funded by Zoo Improvement Reserve, FOTZ and private contributions.

City of Topeka has proposed these projects for the Capital Improvement list, which includes a new elephant barn in 2004, with planning to begin in 2003. In 2006, we have a Prairie dog exhibit on the list. Also, in 2008 an animal health center renovation project is planned. Projects suggested for 2003-2004 will be finalized as part of the 2003 budget process. City Council will finalize the list by the end of August.

Personnel update

Zoo Curator has been hired

Ten of the 12-zoo keepers positions have been filled. We have selected candidates to fill the last two remaining zookeeper positions.

Zoo Veterinary services have changed with the addition of Dr. Connie Ketz-Riley from Kansas State University. The State of Kansas provides veterinary services under contract with the City of Topeka. The program has increased



the quality of the care and the expertise available to the zoo collection. Dr. Connie Ketz lives in the area and works at the zoo four days a week, with the fifth day working or teaching at KSU. KSU veterinary staff is the back up medical coverage if needed. Dr. Connie Ketz-Riley is an associate professor at Kansas State Veterinary School of Medicine. She is also on call 24 hours/ 7days a week.

Staff training

Staff is provided the opportunity for training programs once a month on a variety of topics. i.e. emergency procedures, animal restraint, husbandry, etc.

Topeka Zoo did host a West Nile Virus Seminar in July 2002, for zoo staff and invited staff from zoos in the area.

Program changes:

The zoo officially closed their Conservation & Propagation Center in June 2002. The last of the Asian wild horses were transferred to the Mesker Park Zoo and Dakota Zoo with SSP approval. All American golden eagles have been transferred back to the zoo. The animal quarantine facility at C/PC was closed in February 2002. The zoo is constructing a new facility at the zoo.

Elephant management program

In August 2001, we hired elephant consultant Jody Watkins to provide a new direction for this program. Under his guidance the program was redirected and new staff trained to improve this program. Mr. Watkins left in February 2002 to accept a fulltime position at Virginia Zoo. Under his guidance the number of trainers has increased and our expertise increased too. Michael Roberts, Zoo Curator is the new elephant manager for this program.

Zoo education programs

The City of Topeka assumed the responsibility for all education programs at the zoo including personnel in June 2001. The Friends of the Zoo does provide financial support to the city to offset expenses for this program. Currently, we are budgeted for a full time Education Director and two half time education specialists in the department. Presently, we are reviewing resumes for a new education director. Mr. Jared Bixby accepted a similar position, in July 2002, in his hometown of Salina, Ks; at the Rolling Hills Wildlife Conservation Center.

The Zoo did receive a \$25,000 a year (three-year grant) from Junior League of Topeka to develop an outreach program called Alien Invaders. This program is set to launch in fall 2002.

The Zoo received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency for \$9,000.00, for development and publication of booklets for children.

The zoo received a \$1,000.00 grant from the Blanche Bryden Foundation for technology.

The zoo received a \$250.00 grant for education programming from the Palmer Family Foundation

The Zoo Docent program has been re-initiated.

Zoo Explorer program is set to return in fall 2002.

Conservation

The Zoo participates in 16 SSP programs at this time including: Andean condor, Asian small clawed otter, Bali mynah, Dumerils ground boa, Gorilla, Orangutan, Crowned pigeons, Lions, Elephants, Black & white colobus, Ruffed lemurs, Cotton top tamarin, Golden lion tamarin, Pallas cat, Grevy zebras, Giraffes.

The Topeka Zoo has become active again in the Golden eagle release program, working with Kansas Wildlife & Parks, USFWS, Westar Energy Corp and Pueblo Zoo. This program involves zoos providing captive hatched birds to the Topeka Zoo. Topeka Zoo produces offspring, provides transportation and materials for this project. The release site is located in central Kansas, near Salina, KS.



Facilities/Grounds

New restroom/hand washing station completed near the Security Benefit Children's Zoo

Renovation of the public restroom; all three facilities at the zoo are air-conditioned, ADA compliant facilities for the public.

New building signage has been installed

New animal graphic panels have been designed and will be fabricated soon; these signs will include English and Spanish.

Installation of new guardrails and sidewalks completed in several locations in the zoo.

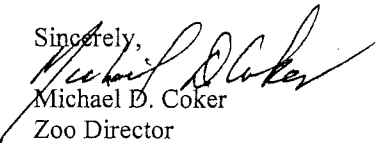
Animal quarantine facility under construction at this time.

Eight new outdoor exhibits built within the last year: provided space for Golden lion tamarins, parrots, small birds of prey.

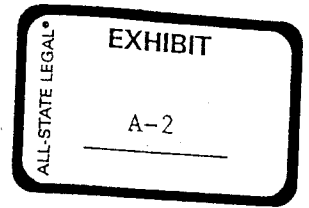
Topeka Zoological Park will be submitting their accreditation application to AZA before September 1, 2002.

Thank you for allowing me to present this report to the AZA accreditation commission.

Sincerely,


Michael D. Coker
Zoo Director





April 23, 2001

CONFIDENTIAL

Rec'd 4/27/01

AMERICAN ZOO AND
AQUARIUM ASSOCIATION
Accreditation
Commission

8403 Colesville Road
Suite 710
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314
Phone: 301-562-0777
Fax: 301-562-0888
<http://www.aza.org>

David Mask, Director
Topeka Zoo
635 Gage Blvd.
Topeka, KS 66606-2066

Dear Mr. Mask:

As you know, during its meeting in Colorado Springs, Colorado on March 22-23, 2001, the AZA Accreditation Commission voted to continue the tabling of the Topeka Zoo for another six months. This action was taken because the Commission believes that several issues need to be resolved before accreditation can be granted. These issues include:

- the low level of staffing (raising concerns about adequacy of animal care)
- the need for more training to bring staff experience in all areas up to industry levels
- the need to continue to advance the completion of elephant staff training
- the need to see continued efforts to improve management/staff relations

The Commission is encouraged by the progress made by the Topeka Zoo thus far and fully supports your efforts to address the concerns. Please be assured we stand ready to work with you in ensuring that the Topeka Zoo is well positioned at its next hearing before the Accreditation Commission in September.

Sincerely,

John D. Hewitt, IV
Chairman, Accreditation Commission

cc: Hon. Harry Felker, Mayor, City of Topeka
Ted Beattie, AZA President
Sydney Butler, Executive Director
Denny Lewis, Manager, Accreditation Programs
Accreditation Commission
Visiting Committee





ALL-STATE LEGAL
EXHIBIT
A-3

October 3, 2000

CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAN ZOO AND
AQUARIUM ASSOCIATION
Accreditation
Commission

3403 Coleridge Road
Suite 710
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314
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<http://www.aza.org>

David Mask, Director
The Topeka Zoological Park
635 Gage Blvd.
Topeka, KS 66606-2066

Dear Mr. Mask:

As you know, during its meeting in Orlando, Florida, on September 23-24, 2000, AZA Accreditation Commission voted to table the accreditation of the Topeka Zoo.

The Commission commends you for the excellent work you have done in moving the Topeka Zoo forward. Our primary concern is the elephant program. While great strides were recognized as having occurred in the elephant program, the number of qualified staff remains limited. We recognize the zoo's effort to accelerate the qualification of additional employees. However, the number of staff with the appropriate level of experience continues to be below best management practices.

Most importantly, though, we are gravely concerned by the continued exhibition of solitary elephants of two genera. This is in direct violation of *current* AZA Elephant Management Guidelines which state "both genera of elephants are highly social animals during all or significant portions of their lives. Females and immature males should *not* be kept alone on a *long-term basis*." Also, please keep in mind that AZA members who have or want elephant exhibits should keep them in collective groups so they can contribute to conservation through public education, scientific research and the support of field conservation. Keep in mind, too, that current elephant guidelines are being revised, and the enhanced revision will soon become the standard by which the Commission evaluates *all* elephant programs (beginning March, 2001).

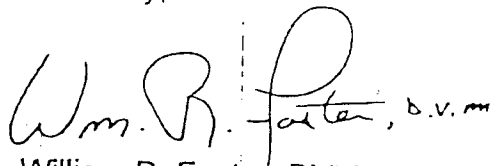
Tabling means that you are given *up to one year* to address the Commission's noted concerns. You must then appear before the Commission to discuss and document progress made, after which the Commission will take action to accredit or deny. Although you are given a full year to address the Commission's concerns, you feel you have resolved the concerns within six months, you may request that your hearing be scheduled for the Commission's March, 2001 meeting.



The AZA Board of Directors and the Accreditation Commission fully support your efforts to address the Commission's concerns. Members are available to provide valuable resources and to mentor you through this process, if you so desire. Please be assured we stand ready to work with you in ensuring that the Topeka Zoo is well positioned at its next hearing before the Accreditation Commission.

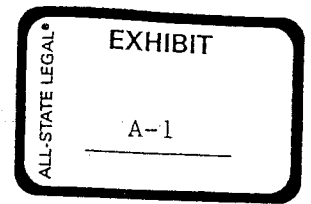
On behalf of the AZA Board of Directors and the Accreditation Commission, I encourage your continued pursuit of professional excellence throughout your institution.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of William R. Foster, DVM. The signature is written in cursive and includes the initials "Wm. R. Foster, DVM".

William R. Foster, DVM
Chairman, Accreditation Commission
[October 1, 1999 – September 30, 2000]

cc: Hon. Joan Wagnon
Ted Beattie, AZA President
Sydney Butler, Executive Director
Denny Lewis, Manager, Accreditation Programs
Accreditation Commission
Visiting Committee



September 25, 2001

CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAN ZOO AND
AQUARIUM ASSOCIATION

Accreditation
Commission

8403 Colesville Road
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<http://www.aza.org>

Mike Coker, Acting Director
Topeka Zoo
635 Gage Blvd.
Topeka, KS 66606-2066

Dear Mr. Coker:

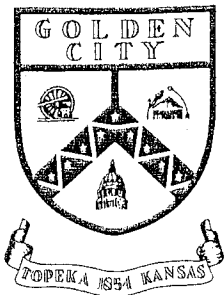
As you know, during its meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, September 5-7, 2001, the AZA Accreditation Commission denied the request to extend the accreditation of the Topeka Zoo for another year. The Topeka Zoo was last accredited in September 1995 for a five-year period ending September 30, 2000. Through tabling, the zoo's accreditation was extended for one year beyond that date to allow time for the zoo to adequately address concerns expressed by the Visiting Committee and the Commission. While second extensions may occasionally be granted in extenuating circumstances, the Commission believes there are too many serious issues that still need to be addressed in this case. Primary issues include:

- Reporting structure unclear regarding who makes decisions affecting the zoo
- Governance stability uncertain
- Long term operational financing uncertain
- Permanent Director not yet named
- Need to see continuing progress addressing long-term concerns

The Commission is aware of the change of leadership at the zoo beginning last June and commends you for the progress that has taken place under your leadership. The Commission is particularly impressed by:

- Improved demeanor and attitude towards AZA
- Additions to the budget
- Improved communication with staff
- Production of an institutional collection plan
- Increased staffing levels
- Increased staff morale & training opportunities
- Elephant training progress
- Progress resolving off-site facility issues





CITY OF TOPEKA

Topeka Zoological Park
635 SW Gage Boulevard
Topeka, Kansas 66606-2079
Phone 785-272-5821
Fax 785-272-2539

Accredited by



October 23, 2001

American Zoo and Aquarium Association
Executive Committee
8403 Colesville Road, Suite 710
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314

Dear Sirs:

Pursuant to the AZA Bylaws and Guidelines, the City of Topeka, on behalf of the Topeka Zoo (the Zoo), hereby appeals the ruling of the AZA Accreditation Commission, by letter dated September 25, 2001 (the Letter), to terminate the Zoo's accreditation effective September 30, 2001. A copy of the Commission's letter is attached for the Executive Committee's convenience. (A-1) We request a review of our status by the full Board of Directors as provided in the Bylaws.

Background

The Zoo was last re-accredited in September 1995. After a review in September 2000, re-accreditation was tabled for one year to allow for the correction of claimed deficiencies in staffing and the elephant program asserted by the Commission (A-2). These deficiencies included claims of insufficient staffing and the mixing of elephant genera, although no standards on either point have been established by AZA.

A copy of the Visiting Committee report narrative is attached. (See A-3. All reports and responsive actions are included in attachment A-3.) The concerns of the Committee included a general negative attitude between Zoo management and staff, a declining trend in Zoo budgetary support, deficiencies in the remote quarantine area and other aspects of the Zoo's property, and staff training, particularly with respect to the elephant program. Additional communications received the following year noted further concerns of AZA representatives that were not cited as reasons for tabling the Zoo's re-accreditation.

In the past year, the Zoo addressed all of these cited deficiencies, as demonstrated in its presentation to the Commission early in September 2001. These actions will be detailed below, but in general the City has undertaken to replace the Zoo director, has increased staffing, has increased budgetary support, and has improved facilities and programs at the

Zoo. In fact, the audit by USDA in the summer of 2001 resulted in a completely clean bill of health with no deficiencies or areas for concern cited. (A-4)

The Letter recognized these efforts, but cited a list of concerns, which had not theretofore been included in the issues to be addressed. The City and the Zoo believe these concerns are not currently valid, and should not be the basis for denying membership of the Zoo as an accredited institution.

The Letter

The Letter is deficient in two particulars. First, pursuant to Article VIII of the AZA Bylaws, a two-thirds vote of the Commission is required to terminate an institution's membership. There is no indication in the Letter that a vote was taken, or if it was, that a two-thirds majority voted for termination. The membership of the Commission should be polled to determine whether, in fact, such a super-majority was achieved. While the letter refers to allowing the accreditation to lapse, as would be suggested by the five-year term referenced, the by-laws do not speak of such lapsing, but only of affirmative decisions to terminate membership. This is appropriate given the serious nature of such a step. Where there is an apparent conflict between an action of the AZA and the by-laws, which govern its decision making, the by-laws must control.

Of greater concern is the vagueness of the issues upon which the Letter purports to terminate the Zoo's membership. The list of issues is so general and vague as to provide no guidance to the Zoo or the City in correcting any real or perceived deficiencies. We have every intention of meeting and exceeding the standards for accreditation in all possible ways, but the language of the Letter provides no specific deficiencies for us to address.

Reporting structure: The letter cites a lack of clarity regarding who makes decisions affecting the Zoo. Yet there has been no change in reporting structure since before the last re-accreditation in 1995. The Zoo director reports to the Director of Parks and Recreation, who reports to the Chief Administrative Officer, who reports to the Mayor and City Council. The Council is responsible for approving the budget and capital improvements plan, the Mayor for overall City administrative policy, the CAO for general management of City operations, Parks and Recreation for general management of parks operations, and the Zoo director for day to day management of the Zoo. This is no different from a large number, if not the majority, of publicly owned zoos.

Governance stability: We are unaware of what this issue means. Governance ordinarily relates to the process by which decisions in the management of an organization are made. If this is the intended meaning of the issue here, it is identical to the first issue. If not, it needs to be explained. Again, there has been no structural change since the last re-accreditation. If, however, the comment relates to the fact that City government is

subject to periodic elections, which may lead to changes in the personnel in the Zoo hierarchy, this concern would relate equally to all publicly owned zoos and aquariums.

(Governmental units own nearly half the institutional members of AZA.) It would be untoward, and outside the standards adopted by the AZA, to cite as a reason for removal of accreditation a community's exercise of the democratic process. For that reason, we presume that the latter definition is not what the Commission had in mind.

Operational financing: The Zoo did undergo a period of declining support for its operations other than compensation increases. As indicated in the presentation to the Commission in September, this trend has been reversed in two ways. First the City has increased budgetary support, as further detailed below. Second, Friends of the Topeka Zoo (FOTZ), the support organization, has substantially increased budgetary support to supplement City contributions. In 1998, for instance, FOTZ provided total financial support of about \$72,000. After entering a new contract with Topeka, FOTZ increased its support to nearly \$156,000 in 1999 and nearly \$181,000 in 2000. The 2001 FOTZ support budget is higher still, exceeding \$350,000. The combination of increased public and private support has provided adequate funding for the proper operation of the Zoo in all respects.

Permanent director: As noted, the director left the Zoo in June 2001. The City has advertised for a replacement, but in the interim it has appointed Michael Coker, a 30-year employee with substantial experience in all aspects of zoo management, as interim director. The Letter itself recognizes the salutary effects Mr. Coker's leadership has had on Zoo operations, and he is a candidate for permanent director. However, it is unreasonable, particularly in the climate of a tabling of the Zoo's re-accreditation, to expect a more rapid permanent appointment. The AZA Guidelines themselves recognize six months as an acceptable period to appoint a new director.

Continuing progress: Again, in light of the noted improvements cited by the Commission, it is unclear what deficiencies still exist in the progress of the Zoo, and what particular "long-term concerns" this issue relates to. As detailed below, both the Zoo and the City have moved significantly toward full compliance in all areas addressed in the re-accreditation report as well as other matters mentioned in ensuing communications. If there are still areas of dissatisfaction, they should be detailed in such a way that they may be addressed properly to AZA's satisfaction.

Summary: Nothing in the letter adequately advises us of what deficiencies, if any actually contributed to the decision to terminate the Zoo's membership. Such a letter cannot form the basis for corrective action, nor should it be acceptable to the Board as a basis of such a drastic outcome.

Donors and sponsorships are likely to decrease since some corporations will be unwilling to give because of accreditation status.

The loss of accreditation is painful to the Topeka community. The Topeka Zoo has worked extremely hard to retain its accreditation with more Friends of the Zoo support being provided over the last five years; which has resulted in tremendous physical plant improvements. The Topeka Zoo has always been considered a jewel within the Parks and Recreation department.

Topeka considers AZA membership to be both a valuable resource and an important professional relationship. The loss of accreditation has hurt staff morale, relationship within the AZA community, and community pride within Topeka.

Conclusion

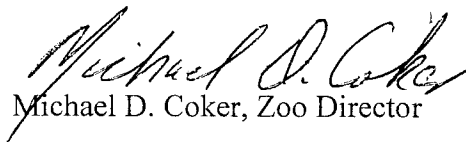
As demonstrated above, the City and the Zoo have taken significant and effective measures to correct all AZA concerns expressed in the Visiting Committee report of 2000, as well as concerns expressed in subsequent communications. Considerable progress has been made with regard to longer-term matters, which promise to bring the Zoo into a position of exceeding full compliance with all guidelines in short order. If the Board does not believe re-accreditation is appropriate at this time, it should afford the extension normally attendant with a change in directors to allow the completion of plans already well underway. Termination of membership at this time, particularly under the vague rationale provided by the Commission, could severely hinder full compliance and deprive both the Zoo and the AZA of a long and valuable association.

We appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Harry "Butch" Felker, Mayor



Michael D. Coker, Zoo Director