

San Joaquin County Grand Jury



Micke Grove Zoo:

Honoring the Past, Securing the Future

2018 - 2019 Case #0218



Summary

Micke Grove Zoo has long been considered a crown jewel within the San Joaquin County park system. However, over a period of years, the Zoo has lost some of its luster. Though still a favorite of many County residents, Micke Grove Zoo has suffered from inadequate funding and outdated facilities. Loss of accreditation, a failed Master Plan, and multiple departmental reorganizations have further compounded the challenges for this County-owned facility.

The San Joaquin County 2018-2019 Civil Grand Jury investigated the current operations at Micke Grove Zoo after receiving complaints alleging inadequate staffing and funding. The investigation revealed numerous findings regarding the Zoo, including:

- Lack of a Policies and Procedures Manual
- Lack of a Separate Itemized Budget
- Insufficient Staffing
- Deteriorating Infrastructure and Outdated Exhibits
- Performance Issues with Micke Grove Zoological Society
- Lack of a Vision and Master Plan for the Zoo
- Lack of Secured Funding Sources to Improve the Zoo

This report identifies numerous recommendations and opportunities to improve current operations at Micke Grove Zoo, and to create and fund a vision for the Zoo. These recommendations include:

- Developing a Master Plan
- Seeking Affordable Accreditation
- Renegotiating the Operating Agreement with Micke Grove Zoological Society
- Identifying and Pursuing Funding Sources to Improve the Zoo

These recommendations will not only help to improve Micke Grove Zoo today, but establish a vision and blueprint for the Zoo in years to come.

Glossary

- **AZA:** Association of Zoos and Aquariums
- **County:** San Joaquin County
- **GFAS:** Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries
- **MGZS:** Micke Grove Zoological Society
- **Taussig Report:** *Parks and Recreation Benchmarking and Assessment Report (June 2018)*
- **ZAA:** Zoological Association of America
- **Zoo:** Micke Grove Zoo

Background

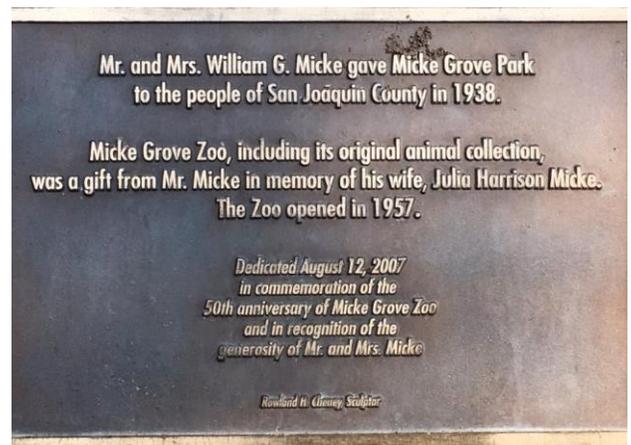
William G. Micke

William G. Micke was born in Herman, Missouri in 1874. At the age of 35, he moved to Lodi, purchased the old racetrack on the outskirts of town, and planted vineyards producing Tokay grapes. Mr. Micke and his wife Julia were married for over 50 years. After Mrs. Micke died in his arms in 1952 as they watched the Lodi Grape Festival parade, William G. Micke *"...actively began the development of Micke Grove along the lines of a recreational area with particular emphasis upon the welfare of children, which was the matter, so close to the heart of Mrs. Micke. They, having no children of their own, wanted to make the children of the area their children."* The 1954 will of William G. Micke listed several specific projects, one of which called for: *"Construction, activating, stocking, and placing in operation by said County of San Joaquin, through the Board of Supervisors thereof, in said Micke Grove, of such facilities may be required for the housing and display of birds and small animals for the education and enjoyment of children."*



Micke Grove Zoo

Micke Grove Zoo was gifted to the County and opened in 1957 as a memorial to Mrs. Micke's wishes and vision for children to enjoy. Despite serving the public well for many years, the Zoo eventually began to age and deteriorate. Original exhibits remained and included an extensive collection of animals of all sizes kept in undersized cages compared to today's standards. Improvements made during the 1980's culminated in Micke Grove Zoo receiving accreditation through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) from 1990-2006. To comply with evolving standards, the Zoo's animal collection changed to display smaller animals in existing renovated exhibits. The Zoo eventually lost AZA accreditation in 2006 due to outdated exhibits and insufficient veterinary space. Efforts to renovate Micke Grove Zoo through an ambitious 2008 Master Plan were stymied by the economic recession. Over the past decade, the Zoo has suffered through ongoing County budget challenges, changing management, staffing issues, deteriorating infrastructure, and lack of exhibit renovation.



Micke Grove Zoo is a small five-acre zoo located within the 132-acre Micke Grove Regional Park. The Park also includes a Japanese Garden, the San Joaquin County Historical Museum, and Fun Town Amusement Park. The Zoo remains under the ownership of San Joaquin County and is now managed by the Parks and Recreation Division of the General Services Department. The Zoo is currently home to over 170 individual animals, representing over 51 different species from six continents.

Micke Grove Zoological Society (MGZS)

MGZS was established as a nonprofit corporation in 1978 "...to initiate, sponsor, promote, and carry out plans, policies, and activities that will tend to further the prosperity and development of Micke Grove Zoo." MGZS signed an operating agreement with the County in 1999 to clarify its role and responsibilities. Over the past four decades, MGZS has provided San Joaquin County with capital funding, educational programs, and other activities to benefit the Zoo. MGZS is also credited with constructing an education building and veterinary clinic. Their efforts in collaboration with the County resulted in the Zoo achieving AZA accreditation in 1990. In 2012, MGZS made a concerted effort to take over Zoo operations from the County, but negotiations failed. MGZS assumed operation of the Zoo's popular Education Program from the County in 2013. In recent years, the fundraising efforts of MGZS have diminished significantly.

Reason for Investigation

The Grand Jury received a complaint that the San Joaquin County Parks and Recreation Trust Funds were being depleted. The investigation of that complaint resulted in 2018-2019 Grand Jury Report #0118. During the course of that investigation, additional complaints were received alleging inadequate staffing and funding at Micke Grove Zoo. As a result of those concerns, and the significance of Micke Grove Zoo to the surrounding community, the Grand Jury initiated a separate investigation that focused on current operations at the Zoo.

Method of Investigation

Materials Reviewed

- Agreement between the County and the San Joaquin County Zoological Society (dba Micke Grove Zoological Society) (July 13, 1999)
- Annual Budgets for the General Services Department and Parks and Recreation Division
- Board of Supervisors videos, agendas, and minutes
- Dave Taussig & Associates *Parks and Recreation Benchmarking and Assessment Report* (June 4, 2018)
- Internal Revenue Service Form 990's for Micke Grove Zoological Society and San Joaquin County Historical Society

- Memo of conversation between Mr. Micke and his attorney (December 1960)
- Micke Grove 2008 Master Plan, WDM Architects
- *Micke Grove Zoo Concept Planning*, Ursa International (September 2013)
- Newspaper Articles from the *Lodi News Sentinel* and the *Stockton Record*
- San Joaquin County website, mgzoo.com

Interviews Conducted

- County Administrative and Management personnel
- Current and former San Joaquin County Park Commissioners
- Current and former San Joaquin County Parks and Recreation staff
- Current and former Micke Grove Zoo staff
- Member of the Board of Supervisors
- Members of the Micke Grove Zoological Society

Sites Visited

- Micke Grove Zoo
- Micke Grove Zoological Society Meeting
- San Joaquin County Park Commissioner Meetings

Discussions, Findings, and Recommendations

1.0 Micke Grove Zoo Today

Policies and Procedures

San Joaquin County is one of few counties to operate a zoo. The consultant report prepared by Dave Taussig & Associates (Taussig Report) in June 2018 stated that *“County-run zoos are a bit of a rarity, and most tend to be larger in scale than Micke Grove.”* Operating a zoo presents many challenges. Providing proper care for animals and keeping accurate veterinary records is only one aspect of managing a zoo. Upkeep of the zoo grounds is critical. Buildings, pathways, fences, and animal enclosures must be properly maintained to ensure a safe environment for staff, visitors, and animals.

The successful operation of any organization is achieved by having policies and procedures that clearly define all duties and responsibilities for its employees. Policies are written documents intended to guide decisions and achieve goals. Micke Grove Zoo does not have a Policy and Procedures Manual. Protocols for animal trainings, safety issues, record keeping, and maintenance schedules are just a few of the procedures that must be created. The newly hired Parks

Administrator and Zoo Manager have recently begun writing a Policy and Procedures Manual for the Zoo.

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.

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.

Inspections/Permits

Micke Grove Zoo is required to undergo several annual inspections. The United States Department of Agriculture conducts an annual inspection to ensure proper animal care and that Animal Welfare Act rules regulating captive wild animals are being followed. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife also inspects annually to determine compliance with regulations pertaining to enclosures, fencing, and other basic maintenance. No major deficiencies were noted during the inspections conducted by these respective agencies during 2018. The Zoo Manager is responsible for ensuring all required standards are met, while the Zoo Curator is responsible for ensuring all required permits are current.

Budget

Adequate funding to maintain Micke Grove Zoo continues to be a challenge. Over the past 10 years the budget for San Joaquin County has increased by 39%, while the Parks and Recreation Division budget has declined 16%. Day to day operational costs, deferred maintenance costs, and capital improvement costs all compete with the many service demands that are deemed a higher priority by the County. According to the Taussig Report, *"...zoos of this form and size simply are not profitable. They rely heavily on donations, sponsorships, and foundation funding to remain operational."* Funding for the Zoo has historically been provided by the net operations of the Zoo, the General Fund, and fundraising by MGZS. Beginning in 2009, the County began using various trust funds to help balance the budget. Those trust funds are now near depletion and can no longer be relied on for financial support. That leaves the burden of funding the Zoo to the County and MGZS.

Contributing to the funding burden is the lack of a detailed and comprehensive budget for the Zoo. Currently, the Parks and Recreation Division has no means to track individual line item costs for the Zoo. Without a detailed budget, it is impossible to manage the Zoo effectively and determine the true cost of operating the Zoo. A well-crafted budget will allow for goal setting and financial accountability. It will also allow for adjustments to unforeseen changes in revenue or expenses.

Finding

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

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.

Staffing

Personnel are key to the successful operation of a zoo. Zookeepers must maintain a routine for the animals and be trained in animal safety. Duties include cleaning enclosures, feeding animals, and providing needed enrichment and training for each animal under their care. Proper training of animals is essential for safely moving them to clean their enclosures or provide veterinary care. Micke Grove Zoo is contracted with the University of California at Davis for needed veterinary care.

Micke Grove Zoo has experienced significant staff turnover during the past eight years. The Zoo did not have a permanent Manager from 2012 to 2017, during which time the position was vacant for two years. A capable Zoo Manager was hired in 2017 and left after one year. The current Manager was hired in October 2018 and has been a welcome addition. However, the significant turnover of administrators and staff within the Parks and Recreation Division during the past decade, coupled with multiple departmental reorganizations, has created a void of historical knowledge and a lack of continuity and leadership for Zoo staff.

The Taussig report finding that the Zoo is understaffed is not readily accepted by County management, who are more apt to cite staffing inefficiencies and a lack of cross-training. Although the report stated it would be detrimental to decrease staff at the Zoo, four part-time employees were laid off in June 2018, the same month the report was accepted by the Board of Supervisors. To their credit, the Parks and Recreation Division is proceeding with cross-training of Zoo staff in an effort to address inefficiencies. There are presently four full-time Zookeepers. This investigation confirmed that at least five full-time Zookeepers are needed to adequately staff the Zoo.

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.

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.

Infrastructure/Maintenance

Despite Micke Grove Zoo receiving a \$513,000 State grant in 2016 to replace perimeter fencing and complete sewage system repairs, there remain substantial infrastructure repairs needed to the water and sewage systems.

Another challenge for the Zoo is the maintenance of older structures and exhibits that need renovation or replacement. Compounding this issue is the lack of a preventive maintenance schedule for buildings, enclosures, and equipment. There is also a lack of recordkeeping for past repairs completed at the Zoo. The County is making repairs as needed, but lacks a proactive process to address maintenance problems before they occur.

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.

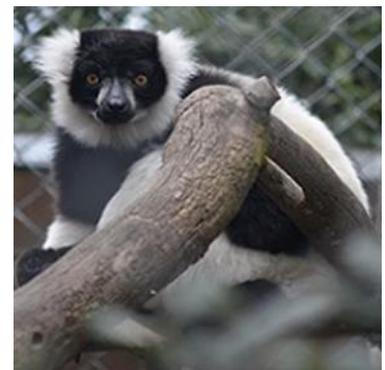
Recommendation

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.

Animal Exhibits

Despite being small, Micke Grove Zoo maintains an impressive diversity of animals. Many are rare, endangered, or threatened in the wild. Visitor favorites include the Snow Leopard, Lemurs, Puda, Fossa, Black Parrot, Ibis, Tamarinds, and California Golden Eagle.

Renovation or replacement of aging exhibits and enclosures has been minimal over the past decade. The Black Parrot exhibit was one recent renovation. However, many exhibits and enclosures need substantial repair or renovation, including the Snow Leopard enclosure.



Micke Grove Zoological Society (MGZS)

MGZS is led by a volunteer Board of Directors and currently manages the Membership Program, Education Program, and fundraising events for Micke Grove Zoo. MGZS oversees two full-time and

two part-time employees, and is responsible for conducting the Zoo Summer Camp and Zoo After Dark events. The County contributed \$100,000 in 2017 and 2018 to help fund the Education Program.

MGZS is contracted with the County to operate the gift shop and concession stand at the Zoo. The Taussig Report states, “The gift shop was previously not operational due to staffing constraints and has recently reopened on weekends with sporadic hours of operation. The concession stand has remained closed, as the business model has failed to attract new operators.” The closure of these venues is detrimental to the visitor experience and has resulted in lost proceeds for MGZS.



Despite having numerous volunteers and bearing the responsibility for fundraising, MGZS has experienced limited success in providing financial support for the Zoo in recent years. The Taussig Report recommended that the 1999 operating agreement between MGZS and the County be renegotiated to clarify roles and responsibilities between the two entities. The Report also recommended adding a provision that would require MGZS to provide and publish annual reports easily accessible to the public.

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.

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.

2.0 A Vision for Tomorrow

County Commitment

Consistent with William G. Micke’s original gift and intentions, San Joaquin County continues to retain ownership and responsibility for Micke Grove Zoo. Over the past decade, there have been various discussions by members of the Board of Supervisors regarding the viability of continuing to

operate the Zoo in a budget-challenged county. As a result of this and other factors, the County's long-term commitment to the Zoo has been rightly questioned.

Throughout this investigation, County leaders have consistently affirmed their support and commitment to Micke Grove Zoo. The expressed concerns of County leaders pertain primarily to the configuration and type of zoo that the County can financially afford moving forward. County leaders are supportive of a County-led improvement plan for Micke Grove Zoo, and are not considering privatization or closure of the Zoo.

Finding

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

Public Feedback

On October 25, 2016, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors requested that the General Services Department provide a "zoo action plan" that included details on "what residents want" at Micke Grove Zoo. General Services presented their "Micke Grove Zoo Survey Results" to the Board of Supervisors on July 24, 2018.

The public survey responses were generally favorable and supportive of Micke Grove Zoo. Positive comments were received regarding the beautiful location, the exotic animals, and the Zoo being a great place for small children.

Perhaps most helpful to a zoo seeking to increase its popularity and support were the critical responses and requested improvements for Micke Grove Zoo, including:

- Zoo needs updating
- Add new and more variety of animals
- Add interactive experiences, including opportunities to feed animals
- Reopen the concession stand
- Have staff present to answer questions
- More special events
- Create a VIP members program with privileges

As County leadership moves forward in determining the kind of zoo that residents want and the County can afford, the critical feedback received through the public survey will help guide the process to ensure public support and success.

Finding

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

Master Plan

After Micke Grove Zoo lost AZA accreditation in 2006 due to its outdated exhibits, an ambitious and expensive Master Plan was developed and unveiled in 2008. Due to the corresponding and prolonged economic recession, only a portion of the planned improvements were actually built. The 2008 Master Plan is currently viewed by County leaders as cost-prohibitive and no longer conforming to evolving AZA standards.

For most of the past decade, Micke Grove Zoo has continued to operate without a defined plan or vision. County leaders now acknowledge that a strategic plan to improve the Zoo is essential and indicate they are currently working towards that goal. It is noted that one of Micke Grove Zoo's stated "Guiding Principles" is *"Ensuring a Secure Future Through Balanced Development."* The recent Taussig Report included a recommendation that the County *"...evaluate its strategic options for Micke Grove Zoo"* as to their intention *"...to renovate and revitalize the Zoo."*

Prior to developing a master plan for physically improving Micke Grove Zoo, the County must decide what kind of zoo is both desirable and affordable moving forward. Decisions regarding the variety of animals (e.g. exotic and/or native species), the number of animals, the level of public engagement with animals, and the incorporation of educational opportunities, are just a few of the critical factors that will influence the configuration and operation of the Zoo into the future. The following statement is currently found on the Zoo's website: *"Micke Grove Zoo is focused on providing quality care to a diverse collection of exotic and native species that will provide you an opportunity to connect with nature in a way found nowhere else in the area."* The website also defines it as *"a small Zoo...committed to housing and displaying animals appropriate for the size and scope of our facility."* Such statements will need to be reevaluated to determine if they will continue to accurately reflect the vision and purpose of the Zoo.

A cost analysis of all needed infrastructure improvements must be done in conjunction with a new master plan for the Zoo. Additionally, County management and Zoo staff generally agree that the unfinished East End Project, including the snow leopard exhibit, is the necessary starting point for any renovation of the Zoo.

County leadership is admittedly inexperienced in zoo management. As such, the guidance and expertise of industry professionals in both determining and designing the future of Micke Grove Zoo is essential. Additional guidance might also be obtained through other zoos. The nearby Sacramento Zoo drafted a new Master Plan in 2017 and may be able to provide valuable assistance.

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 industry professionals in both determining and designing the master plan for Micke Grove Zoo in order to ensure its successful future.

Recommendations:

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.

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.

Accreditation

Most reputable zoological facilities, aquariums, wildlife parks, and animal sanctuaries in the United States seek accreditation approval through a recognized professional association. The main accrediting organizations for such facilities are:

- The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)
- The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS)
- The Zoological Association of America (ZAA)

AZA accreditation is often considered the "best" accreditation a zoological facility can attain, due to their incredibly high standards and stringent requirements. Accreditation through AZA is a long and often expensive process for facilities. AZA accredited zoos must reapply for accreditation every five years, and are continuously evolving as standards are constantly being raised.

ZAA is the second largest professional association in the zoological sector, with more than sixty accredited members. ZAA claims that their safety record is the best of any of the major zoological associations. ZAA also states that their "accreditation has been recognized by federal, state, and local governments who frequently adopt or incorporate our standards into their respective wildlife requirements." ZAA accredited zoos must also reapply for accreditation every five years.

GFAS is the equivalent accrediting organization for animal sanctuaries, rescue centers, and rehabilitation centers.

The benefits of accreditation through a recognized professional association are numerous and include the following:

- Enhanced public confidence by ensuring the zoo meets current professional standards
- Increased eligibility for funding and grants from certain foundations and organizations
- Improved public perception that encourages potential donors and sponsors
- Increased access to animals from other accredited zoos for loan and/or breeding
- Enhanced opportunities to participate in animal conservation programs
- Improved ability to attract and retain a high-quality, professional staff
- Opportunities for mentorship, collaboration, and consultation with experienced colleagues

County staff and the MGZS collaborated to fund and achieve AZA accreditation for Micke Grove Zoo in 1990, and again in 1995, and 2000. The Zoo lost accreditation in 2006 due to its outdated exhibits. Zoo professionals have emphasized the importance of regaining accreditation for Micke Grove Zoo. However, it was also reported that many of the existing structures are so outdated that meeting the current standards for AZA certification would be cost-prohibitive. The opportunity for the Zoo to achieve accreditation through ZAA appears to be more realistic considering the current condition of the Zoo and the financial limitations of the County. ZAA accreditation offers many of the same benefits as AZA, but allows more flexibility and affordability for the County. Like AZA, ZAA also has a mentorship program for facilities pursuing accreditation. The Orange County Zoo is another county-owned zoo that is currently accredited by ZAA.

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.

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.

3.0 Funding the Vision

County Responsibility

As the owner of Micke Grove Zoo, San Joaquin County retains the primary responsibility to determine the future vision for the Zoo, as well as to ensure that sufficient long-term funding is secured to finance that vision. This presents a significant challenge for the County based upon numerous factors delineated in the recent Taussig Report, including:

- Operating the Zoo is not profitable
- The County General Fund contribution to Parks and Recreation is below average (per capita)
- Limited fundraising contributions from MGZS in recent years
- Lack of corporate sponsorship

- Depletion of Parks Trust Funds

The Taussig Report emphasized the County's funding challenge with the following statement: *"The identification of avenues to future financing will prove paramount to the Zoo's fiscal viability going forward."*

The essential first step for the County is to cast the vision for the Zoo's future. Vision always precedes provision. Additional next steps for the County to fulfill that vision include:

- Ensuring adequate fundraising through MGZS or another non-profit foundation
- Obtaining accreditation to enhance sponsorship and grant opportunities
- Establishing corporate sponsorships
- Obtaining State funding through grants and voter-approved ballot propositions
- Replenishing Trust Funds for future capital projects
- Facilitating collaboration amongst all partners and stakeholders

One of Micke Grove Zoo's stated policies is: "Revenue resources will be identified and cultivated to assure continued ability of the Zoo to serve the entire community." Multiple funding sources and partnerships will be necessary to fulfill the future vision and Master Plan for the Zoo. San Joaquin County must either initiate or delegate the pursuit of various funding opportunities, then follow through to ensure accountability in cultivating those opportunities.

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.

Micke Grove Zoological Society

Since its inception in 1978, MGZS has been instrumental in raising millions of dollars to fund capital improvements and new animal exhibits. However, the ability of MGZS to raise funds for Micke Grove Zoo has substantially diminished over the past decade. The decline in fundraising resulted from numerous factors, including: economic recession, County budget cutbacks and departmental reorganizations, abandonment of the 2008 Zoo Master Plan, failure to complete the East End Project, and the transfer of all educational program responsibilities from the County to MGZS. While placing blame on the County for lack of commitment and priority for the Zoo, MGZS also acknowledges their responsibility in being unable raise funds to pay for new exhibits. The end result has been a strained and dysfunctional relationship between the County and MGZS that lacks necessary collaboration and no longer complies with the requirements of the 1999 operating agreement between the two entities. That agreement specifically gives MGZS the responsibility to *"carry-out plans to initiate, sponsor and promote activities that will raise money to encourage the prosperity and development of the Zoo."*

The Taussig report made clear that *"Zoos rely heavily on donations, sponsorships, and foundation funding to remain operational."* The report also stated that *"...third party non-profit organizations affiliated with the benchmarked zoos provide a high-level of support by assisting with operational*

demands and sourcing and administering corporate sponsorships and fundraising events.” The report further concluded that the fundraising efforts for Micke Grove Zoo “...have yielded limited results in recent years” and that the County should renegotiate their operating agreement with MGZS.

A review of tax documents from 2010-2016 for both MGZS and the San Joaquin County Historical Society (see Appendix A) reveals an obvious disparity in fundraising results between the two non-profit organizations. If MGZS is to remain the designated organization responsible for raising funds for the future Micke Grove Zoo, then collaboration with the Historical Society would prove beneficial in improving fundraising efforts moving forward.

Financing the vision for the future Micke Grove Zoo requires a third-party non-profit or foundation capable of raising significant funds. The County and MGZS need to determine if MGZS will be that essential fundraising organization or whether a separate charitable foundation, similar to the Happy Hollow Zoo Foundation in San Jose, should be established. It is the County’s responsibility to ensure compliance with their operating agreement with MGZS and to renegotiate that agreement as necessary.

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 Micke Grove Zoological Society are insufficient to support the necessary improvements for Micke Grove Zoo.

Recommendation

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

Corporate Sponsorships

Perhaps the most promising of all long-term funding sources for Micke Grove Zoo is the potential for corporate sponsorship. The proximity of the Zoo to the increasingly successful Lodi wine industry offers an opportunity for significant support and possible naming rights. The marketing potential in this relationship is presently being tapped for the MGZS fundraising event “Wild About Wine” being held in June 2019. It should be emphasized that the potential for obtaining corporate sponsorships is greatly enhanced by accreditation and the development of a clear vision and plan for the future Zoo.



State Funding

Proposition 68 was approved by California voters in June 2018 and is intended to “...*expand access and infrastructure in State and local park systems*”. The County should explore this and other available options for State funding.

Grants

Additional funding through public and private grants may be available and should be pursued. The Taussig report stated that, “*Coordination and outreach with San Joaquin County’s Department of Community Development is vital to accessing additional sources of grant funding.*” The report also emphasized that “...*accreditation improves access to grant programs.*”

Tax Measure

The viability of obtaining voter approval of a sales tax measure to improve Micke Grove Zoo is questionable at this time. The Fresno Zoo was successful in the passage of Measure Z, a .1% sales tax measure approved by two-thirds of voters in 2004. Ironically, a billboard advertising the Fresno Zoo was recently sighted in San Joaquin County.

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.

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.

Conclusion

More than 60 years ago, Julia Micke had a vision which resulted in her husband’s efforts to build a zoo for the enjoyment of all, especially children. San Joaquin County remains the designated caretaker of that vision. After years of neglect, the vision needs refreshing and reimagining in order to benefit future generations.

After Micke Grove Zoo lost its accreditation in 2006, the AZA accreditation commission stated that: “*This zoo has great potential with the area increasing rapidly in population. Without a forward-thinking governing authority, strong advocates in community, and a clear vision in direction from staff, the potential cannot be realized.*” That assessment remains true for Micke Grove Zoo today.

The 2018-2019 Grand Jury has indicated numerous findings and recommendations to help current conditions at the Zoo, while providing direction for both developing and funding a vision for the future of the Zoo. Though much has changed in the past 60 years regarding standards for animal care and conservation, the core vision remains of Micke Grove Zoo as a place “...for the education and enjoyment of children.”

Acknowledgements

The Grand Jury would like to acknowledge the many dedicated individuals, County employees, MGZS members, and Park Commissioners that lovingly serve Micke Grove Zoo, and who desire to see this jewel of San Joaquin County shine once again as an enjoyment for future generations.

Disclaimers

Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon the specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Section 911. 924.1 (a) and 929). Similarly, the Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Sections 924.2 and 929).

Response Requirements

California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05 require that specific responses to all findings and recommendations contained in this report be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court within 90 days of receipt of the report.

The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors shall respond to all Findings and Recommendations.

Mail or hand deliver a hard copy of the response to:

Honorable Linda L. Lofthus, Presiding Judge
San Joaquin County Superior Court
180 E Weber Ave, Suite 1306J
Stockton, California 95202

Also, please email a copy of the response to Ms. Trisa Martinez, Staff Secretary to the Grand Jury, at grandjury@sicourts.org

Appendix A

Table 1. Revenue comparison between the Historical Society and Micke Grove Zoological Society

Fiscal Year	Membership Dues		Fundraising Revenues		Grants	
	Historical Society	MGZS	Historical Society	MGZS	Historical Society	MGZS
2016	\$86,895	\$33,982	\$63,518	\$8,420	\$349,965	\$0
2015	\$96,161	\$34,547	\$73,326	\$24,178	\$349,965	\$0
2014	\$84,902	\$47,911	\$76,727	\$21,484	\$349,965	\$0
2013	\$79,695	\$37,814	\$77,002	\$16,071	\$333,300	\$0
2012	\$78,750	\$26,174	\$30,283	\$28,129	\$303,000	\$0
2011	\$81,807	\$22,340	\$53,724	\$28,948	\$275,000	\$0
2010	\$80,294	\$17,165	\$48,901	\$15,375	\$243,000	\$0