



June 20, 2014

Chris Monzel, President
Hamilton County Commission
138 E. Court Street, Room 603
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Dear Commissioner Monzel,

I am writing today to ask you to seriously consider including the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden in a Cultural Facilities Levy. As you know, the Zoo is the # 1 year-round family attraction in our region. Having a world class Zoo adds to the quality of life in our community 365 days of the year and gives our businesses one more selling point for recruiting talent with families to our region. More than 1.5 million people visit the Zoo each year, we are the #3 driver of overnight stays in local hotels, and we drive tens of millions of dollars of economic impact into this County.

During the past ten years, the Zoo has expanded our parking and embarked on a dramatic master plan to convert surface parking lots into more gardens and spaces for visitors to engage with wildlife. We are quite proud of what is new at the Zoo...however our 140 year-old campus has beloved buildings that are in great need of infrastructure upgrades, major maintenance and capital improvements. We have three buildings that are on the National Register of Historic Places, and dozens of others that experience the wear and tear of cleaning, feeding the animals who live there, and public visitation *every day of the year*.

Each year, the Zoo operates on a balanced budget and invests any income above the costs of operations into capital maintenance. All of our new facilities have been funded through generous private donors and some state and federal grants. However, our capital needs, including major maintenance, are in excess of what we can expect to raise privately or fund through operational savings. All of the other Zoos in Ohio receive public funding for capital needs. Cincinnati is the only one that does not.

The Zoo has received tremendous support from the voters of Hamilton County. Our operating levy passed with an 80 percent approval rating in the fall of 2013. We are grateful for the public

funding we receive, which, by contract with the County, is directed exclusively to our operating budget.

The Cincinnati Zoo is one of our region's gems. We believe it is a natural fit to add the Zoo to the levy request being made by Museum Center and Music Hall. Repair and upgrade of our aging facilities will position the Zoo to continue to succeed during the next century.

Please let me know if you would like us to provide more details on the facilities needs of the Cincinnati Zoo. We would be happy to provide them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thane Maynard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Thane Maynard
Director, Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden