



MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Supervisor Kathleen Vincent - District II

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Supervisor Vincent Explores Future of Milwaukee County Zoo Seal and Sea Lion Facility Following Wednesday Tour

MILWAUKEE – On Wednesday, November 22, 2023, Supervisor Kathleen Vincent, alongside Supervisors Ryan Clancy and Steven Shea, toured the Milwaukee County Zoo's Ocean Connections seal and Sea lion facility. The tour, conducted by Ocean Connections CEO Shelley Ballman and Zoo staff, aimed to address the factors leading to the imminent closure of the facility on December 3, 2023, and to explore potential strategies to maintain operations in the future.

On September 14, 2023, Ocean Connections Incorporated, the nonprofit responsible for operating the marine mammal show and interactive programs, announced the relocation of the seals and Sea lions. The decision was attributed to the aging pool, requiring restoration to meet housing standards for marine mammals, and the lack of allocated zoo funding for the necessary project.

Supervisor Vincent issued the below statement following her tour on Wednesday:

"The closure of this unique facility, the only one of its kind in Wisconsin, is a substantial loss for our community. Having worked at the Milwaukee County Zoo and this particular exhibit early in my career, I witnessed firsthand the educational and inspiring interactions visitors have with these magnificent creatures. The joy and inspiration these animals bring have allowed us to introduce thousands of children to the world of marine mammals, offering them a newfound appreciation for the natural world. While I understand the magnitude of operational challenges Milwaukee County faces, I wish there had been an opportunity for public input when the decision was made not to renew contracts with Ocean Connections. I urge Zoo Director Amos Morris to consider continued work with Ocean Connections and Shelley Ballman, an internationally renowned marine life expert, in the future."

Supervisor Vincent plans to keep the public informed as conversations progress with Zoo and Ocean Connections leadership. In addition, Supervisor Vincent will recognize Ocean Connections for over 30 years of service to Milwaukee County at the final show on December 3rd and at the December Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors meeting.

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