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July 18, 2012

TO: Audit Committee

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **SUNSET REVIEW FOR THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE COUNTY ARBORETA AND BOTANIC GARDENS**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit Committee recommend to the Board of Supervisors (Board) to extend the Board of Governors of the County Arboreta and Botanic Gardens (BOG) sunset review date to June 30, 2013.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) work with County Counsel to revise the County Code to indicate how often the BOG should meet.

The Audit Committee instruct the BOG to work on improving the BOG's attendance. The one-year sunset date extension is intended to permit a reevaluation of the BOG to determine whether sufficient changes have been made to justify extending the BOG beyond June 30, 2013.

BACKGROUND

The Board established and has continued the BOG pursuant to Los Angeles County Code Chapter 2.26. The Board approved the most recent sunset review date extension in June 2002.

The BOG advises and provides support to the Board and the Director of DPR on the general management of the County's Arboreta and Botanic Gardens.

The BOG has 15 members, three appointed by each Supervisor. The County Code does not specify how often the BOG is required to meet. The BOG's Fact Sheet, which

is maintained by the Executive Office of the Board, indicated the BOG should meet monthly. However, in June 2002, the Board approved changing the BOG's meeting frequency from monthly to quarterly. Because the BOG's meeting frequency is not stated in the County Code, we recommend DPR work with County Counsel to revise the County Code to indicate how often the BOG should meet. After our review, we were advised that County Counsel and DPR had started working on changing the County Code to include meeting frequency requirements.

BOG members are not compensated for their service. DPR estimates that they spent approximately $5,600 for BOG staff support, mileage, and services and supplies during Fiscal Year 2010-11.

JUSTIFICATION

The BOG met 12 times between January 2009 and December 2011 (four times a year), with an average attendance of 4.3 (29%) members. We noted in prior sunset reviews in 1995 and 2001 that the BOG had unsatisfactory meeting attendance of approximately eight (53%) and six (40%) members, respectively. The BOG indicated that its low average attendance is partly due to unfilled vacancies. We confirmed that an average of 4.7 (31%) of the 15 BOG positions were vacant during our review period. The BOG has indicated that it will work with the Board to fill vacancies. In addition, DPR will help the BOG improve its attendance by sending meeting notices to members, and reminding members about the importance of attending meetings.

Despite the BOG's unsatisfactory attendance, DPR management believes the BOG has an important mission, and should be continued. In addition, although the BOG's average attendance was low, the BOG fulfilled its duties. During this review period, the BOG's accomplishments included:

- Advising DPR to offer discount memberships on the Groupon website, which features daily discounts to local businesses. One of the County gardens offered discount memberships, and sold approximately 1,800 memberships.

- Developing a program for National Public Gardens Day to promote the value of the County's Arboreta and Botanic Gardens. The BOG is also working with DPR to prepare a press release to advertise the event.

- Suggesting DPR work with garden foundations to offer free admission certificates to the gardens as an auction item for local fundraisers. The admission certificates would be funded by the garden foundations, and would help publicize the gardens and possibly increase membership/admissions revenue.

The BOG's objectives for the next review period are to:

- Improve meeting attendance by working with the Board to fill vacancies, sending meeting notices to members, and reminding members about the importance of attending meetings.

- Continue to tour gardens on a quarterly basis to stay informed about upcoming garden events, new projects, and facility developments.

- Continue to advise DPR on ways to promote the County's Arboreta and Botanic Gardens to the public.

Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Robert Campbell at (213) 253-0101.

WLW:JLS:RGC:TK

Attachment

c: Gudrun Kimmel, Member, Board of Governors of the County Arboreta and Botanic Gardens
Russ Guiney, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation
Angie Johnson, Chief, Commission Services

SUNSET REVIEW
BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE COUNTY ARBORETA AND BOTANIC GARDENS
REVIEW COMMENTS

Mission. (Does the mission statement agree with the Board of Supervisors' purpose and expectations?)

The stated mission is as set forth in the Board order creating the BOG. **CONCUR**.

Section 1. Relevance. (Is the mission still relevant and in agreement with the Board of Supervisors' purpose and expectations?)

The BOG advises and provides support to the Board and the Director of DPR on the general management of County's Arboreta and Botanic Gardens.

The BOG's mission appears to be **RELEVANT**.

Section 2. Meetings and Attendance. (Are required meetings held and is attendance satisfactory?)

The BOG met 12 times between January 2009 and December 2011 (four times a year), with an average attendance of 4.3 (29%) members. The County Code does not specify how often the BOG is required to meet. The BOG's Fact Sheet, which is maintained by the Executive Office of the Board, indicated the BOG should meet monthly. However, in June 2002, the Board approved changing the BOG's meeting frequency from monthly to quarterly.

The BOG indicated that its low average attendance is partly due to unfilled vacancies. We confirmed that an average of 4.7 (31%) of the 15 BOG positions were vacant throughout the review period. The BOG has indicated that it will work with the Board to fill vacancies. In addition, DPR will help the BOG improve attendance by sending meeting notices to members and reminding members about the importance of attending meetings.

The BOG's meeting frequency is **SATISFACTORY**, while the BOG's attendance is **UNSATISFACTORY**.

Sections 3 and 4. Accomplishments and Results. (Are listed accomplishments and results significant?)

During this review period, the BOG's accomplishments included:

- Advising DPR to offer discount garden memberships on the Groupon website, which features daily discounts to local businesses. One of the

County gardens offered discount memberships, and sold approximately 1,800 memberships.

- Developing a program for National Public Gardens Day to promote the value of the County's Arboreta and Botanic Gardens. The BOG is also working with DPR to prepare a press release to advertise the event.

- Suggesting DPR work with garden foundations to offer free admission certificates to the gardens as an auction item for local fundraisers. The admission certificates would be funded by the garden foundations, and would help publicize the gardens and possibly increase membership/admissions revenue.

The BOG's accomplishments and results are **SIGNIFICANT**.

Section 5. Objectives. (Are the objectives compatible with the mission and goals and relevant within the current County environment?)

The BOG's objectives for the coming period are to:

- Improve meeting attendance by working with the Board to fill vacancies, sending meeting notices to members, and reminding members about the importance of attending meetings.

- Continue to tour gardens on a quarterly basis to stay informed about upcoming garden events, new projects, and facility developments.

- Continue to advise DPR on ways to promote the County's Arboreta and Botanic Gardens to the public.

The BOG's future objectives appear **RELEVANT**.

Section 6. Resources. (Are the resources utilized by the entity in support of the entity's activities warranted in terms of the accomplishments and results?)

BOG members are not compensated for their service. DPR estimates that they spent approximately $5,600 for BOG staff support, mileage, and services and supplies during Fiscal Year 2010-11.

The BOG's expenses appear to be **WARRANTED**.

Section 7. Recommendation.

EXTEND THE SUNSET REVIEW DATE FOR THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE COUNTY ARBORETA AND BOTANIC GARDENS TO JUNE 30, 2013.