

Dear Ms. Zhou,

We are SF Zoo Watch, In Defense of Animals, and local citizens, a dedicated group of San Francisco citizens eager to gain a deeper understanding of each candidate's stance and perspective on the San Francisco Zoo. Recent concerns highlighted in an op-ed in the SF Standard [1] underscore the importance of this issue. Given that both the zoo grounds and animals are owned by the city of San Francisco and managed by the SF Zoological Society, your responses to the following questions will significantly influence our decision as to which candidate to support with volunteer efforts, money, and our votes. We seek to understand your vision and approach to the zoo's management, welfare of the animals, and overall contribution to our community.

* Do you support the acquisition of giant pandas for the San Francisco Zoo despite the current issues faced by the zoo?

Ellen: What is the benefit for residents when we face homeless dying on the streets, and drug abusers losing lives? Isn't human lives over animals? May I ask why is it important to SF to have giant pandas that cost so much, unless it is a donation that costs nothing to the taxpayer, then that is okay. The tickets from entry fees can not offset the expense.

* What are your plans to manage the potential financial burden on the City due to the panda exhibit?

Ellen: Due to 36% of businesses leaving SF more residents face hardship. We have to deal with human beings and human needs first. Unless you work with schools and different groups to raise donations and fees to take care of such extra tasks.

* Considering the high costs associated with housing pandas (estimated up to \$70 million over 10 years), how do you plan to finance this without diverting resources from other critical needs of the zoo and the city?

Ellen: There is no need at this critical time due to the economic hardship the city will face. Unless the people want to join in and raise money from donations, maybe some from the city budget, there is no need for such an extra burden for now. What is the main point? Benefit to who?

* What are your thoughts on the current management of the San Francisco Zoo?

Ellen: Not sure. I have not gone to the zoo for a long time. But I believe it is a well-run public zoo. If you can promote more with schools and community centers, make it more fun and more beneficial to the public, increase attendance to increase entry fees to make it self-efficient.

* Do you support the idea of ending the management agreement with the SF Zoological Society?

Ellen: I am not sure what that is. Any agreement should be beneficial to the public, not government waste, and must be a win-win situation.

* Do you support the idea of transitioning the zoo to a rescue and rehabilitation facility as recommended by the Commission on Animal Control and Welfare in 2008?

Ellen: If space and facilities are appropriate, the zoo can expand such a service. It can be operated by Zoo like right now and, at the same time, expand service to rescue and rehabilitation facilities.

* Do you believe in the importance of establishing an independent oversight commission focused on zoo animal welfare? If so, how would you structure it?

Ellen: SF has more than enough commissions, over 130 commissions already, that have nothing to do with the quality of life of the residents. Many of the current commissions are to benefit career politicians. If anything needs to be set up, it must be volunteer and neighborhood watch groups, should NOT burden the city for any money, maybe free lunch for meetings.

* What is your long-term vision for the San Francisco Zoo?

Ellen: The zoo is an iconic place in San Francisco. I loved going to the zoo when my kids were young. We have a lot of fun time. I saw many people love to see animals too. SF Zoo needs to expand services and activities to attract residents and tourists, increase its income vs expenses, and make it self-efficient. In the long run, I would love to see the zoo have places for private parties, and birthday events during off hours, weekends, and holidays, to allow people to best use the zoo for family fun, maybe rent space out to private companies to open restaurants and rest areas, or up to a hotel, so people can stay and have fun at the Ocean beach for vacation.

* How do you plan to balance the zoo's role as an educational and recreational facility with the need to prioritize animal welfare.

Ellen: I will learn and know more once I am in the Mayor's office. Please remind me about this question. Come to city hall and look for me. Thank you.

We would appreciate your response by August 1. Thank you for your consideration.

You are welcome and may God bless our zoo/animals to cheer people up!

Sincerely,

David Holloway
SF Zoo Watch

Links:

[1]

<https://sfstandard.com/opinion/2024/04/23/mayor-breed-return-the-pandas-and-fix-the-san-francisco-zoo/>