



County of Onondaga
Office of the County Executive

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Media Release

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Rosamond Gifford Zoo Celebrates Centennial Year, Unveils Compelling Vision for its Future

Syracuse, N.Y. – Onondaga County Executive Joanne M. Mahoney this afternoon unveiled plans to commemorate the Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s centennial year and the results of a 13-month comprehensive strategic master planning process charting a roadmap for the zoo’s future. Plans were shared during a special meeting of zoo membership, volunteers and supporters.

Opened in 1914, the zoo will celebrate its 100th anniversary during the summer season. The zoo’s strategic master plan was a joint effort between the County and the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo to build on its storied history and create a compelling vision for its future.

“As we reflect on and celebrate our zoo’s 100-year history as a community asset, we are excited to share our vision for its future,” **said Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney.** “Innovative ideas, exceptional commitment and dedication by the County and the Friends, and a plan guided by true collaboration and solid business practices will lead our zoo into its next century,”

“The board fully embraced the zoo’s strategic master planning process. This vision will move the organization in an exciting direction and we look forward to supporting it,” **said Carl Austin Jr., chair of the Friends of the Zoo board of directors.**

“As we celebrate our 100th anniversary, the time is right to take the zoo to the next level. A compelling vision has been laid out for the Rosamond Gifford Zoo to become a truly exceptional regional destination and leader in wildlife conservation,” **said Ted Fox, zoo director.**

“Although this is the end of the planning process, it is the beginning of a new future for our zoo. This is a time of great excitement, and we thank our County partners for their full commitment. We look forward to making the plan real, seeing the results and celebrating our successes,” **said Janet Agostini, president of Friends of the Zoo.**

Throughout 2013, the zoo engaged in a strategic planning process guided by Zoo Advisors LLC, a national zoo planning firm, together with architecture firm GLMV to integrate a facility master plan. Both are firms at the top of their field with years of zoo planning experience. Planning activities included data gathering, dreaming big, bringing expectations back to reality and preparation of a final plan. The process was inclusive and included many voices from the County, Friends and zoo leadership, board and staff members, community leaders, volunteers, outside perspectives and a Blue Ribbon Panel.

“The Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s new strategic plan sets the launch pad for transformative growth and change at the zoo, and a commitment to a new and revitalized institutional mission. By setting a bold vision for the future, zoo leadership—from both the County and the Friends—has demonstrated the foresight and determination to become a first-class regional destination in Central New York,” **said David Walsh, principal and founder of Zoo Advisors.**

Site analysis yielded a 20-year vision for the zoo that integrates strategic goals and business recommendations. A new mission, vision and core values were developed for the zoo, in addition to strategic focus areas. Recommendations for master plan initiatives include a mix of long-term, near-term and “quick success” projects to re-energize the zoo experience, take maximum advantage of its beautiful physical site and location, and advance its conservation and education mission.

Founded as a small four-acre facility, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park has had a wild adventure of growth and progress over the last century. Now home to approximately 700 animals on 43 acres, the zoo is a treasured attraction in Central New York and has undergone continuous improvements to infrastructure and exhibits. Its Centennial Celebration will be observed during the summer season, with activities including a re-dedication day with reduced admission, a project to support conservation efforts in the wild and raised awareness across social media platforms using the hashtag #SyrZoo100. Further details on each Centennial Celebration activity will be shared under separate announcement.

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The Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park is **among the top 10 percent of zoos in the country** as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is focused on conserving, exhibiting and interpreting a living animal collection in order to promote public recreation, understanding of the relationships between animals and people, and action to sustain the environment we share.

Committed to conservation, the zoo actively collaborates with Friends of the Zoo to save endangered Asian elephants, Amur tigers, golden lion tamarins and amphibians, which are facing a global crisis due to the Chytrid fungus. Other projects include studies on Chittenango ovate amber snails, Turkmenian markhors and Humboldt penguins.

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$8 for adults (19-61), \$4 for youth (3-18) and \$5 for seniors (62+). Children two and under are free. For more information, call the zoo at (315) 435-8511 or visit the zoo’s website at www.RosamondGiffordZoo.org.