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January 26, 2022

Mr. Stephen A. Weeks
Los Angeles Pony Rides, Inc.
11095 Wrightwood Lane
Studio City, CA 91604

**GRIFFITH PARK PONY RIDE CONCESSION – REQUIRED ACTIONS BASED ON
FINDINGS FROM THIRD PARTY GRIFFITH PARK PONY RIDES POLICIES AND
PRACTICES ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Dear Mr. Weeks,

As you know, the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) has received complaints regarding the health and welfare of the ponies at the Griffith Park Pony Ride concession. Due to these concerns, RAP retained a third-party equine expert, Dr. Rachel Sachar, DVM, CVA, to assess the conditions at the facility and conduct a thorough examination of the animals to evaluate their health and welfare. Visits to the concession were made on December 18, 2021 and January 3, 2022. In addition to inspecting the facility, Dr. Sachar observed the working conditions of the animals; and reviewed veterinary records and charts of operation. Attached to this letter is a copy of the report which details the findings of the assessment.

While Dr. Sachar found the working conditions to be satisfactory and did not witness any gross violations related to the care or the treatment of the animals, based upon the report, RAP has determined that immediate action is required for the following listed items to improve the health and welfare of the animals and to ensure compliance with legal standards set forth by California Health and Safety Codes:

VETERINARY CARE

- 1) **Immediately remove from service ponies needing treatment or currently being treated for saddle sores, farrier care, or additional veterinarian follow-up care.** As discussed during a telephone conversation on January 18, 2022 with LaTricia Jones of my staff, a recommendation that needed immediate attention was the removal from service of three ponies that were identified as having saddle



sore lesions. Two additional ponies were identified as needing follow-up and continuing veterinarian care and one additional pony was identified as needing immediate farrier care. During a follow-up conversation, you mentioned that three of the ponies were not in service and are currently being medically treated or evaluated; the others would be examined and cleared by a veterinarian before returning to service. **Prior to returning the identified ponies back to service, please provide records to our office from a licensed veterinarian showing that their treatment has been completed and that they are certified as being fit for rides.**

- 2) For the animals listed in the report as needing immediate dental care, please schedule appointments for care within **two weeks** from the date of this letter. For the other ponies that have been identified as needing dental care within a timely manner, please provide proof of care **within six (6) months** from the date of this letter.

RECORDS

- 1) **Individualized identification of each animal on the premises.** California Health and Safety Code Section 25988 (i) states "Each [pony] shall be individually identified, using humane methods such as a detailed description including but not limited to name, breed, color, markings, size, age, sex, and photograph". Please submit identification documentation for each animal within **two weeks** from the date of this letter along with confirmation that such individualized identification will be maintained going forward.
- 2) **Records of veterinarian and farrier care for each animal on the premises. Records should also include information pertaining to vaccinations, deworming, diet, and workload restrictions and practices for each animal.** California Health and Safety Code Section 25988(j), states that all farrier and veterinary receipts shall be retained and all such receipts shall identify each equine treated. In addition, California Health and Safety Code Section 25988(k) requires you to produce all farrier, veterinary, and feed records upon request. Given the deficiencies noted in Dr. Sacher's report, please submit receipts for all veterinarian and farrier care for each animal within **two weeks** of the date of this letter. If records for any individual ponies are unavailable or do not exist, please provide proof to our office of scheduled upcoming appointments for equine veterinary examinations. For those ponies without corresponding records, please be advised that, effective the date of this letter, an equine veterinarian will need to certify that that the pony is fit for labor prior to that pony being used for rides.
- 3) **Update Griffith Park Pony Ride Employee Manual.** A thorough review and update to the employee manual should be made to improve current policies and practices, specifically as it applies to acceptable working temperatures for the

ponies and the care that must be provided during times when the temperatures rise and fall. This should include the establishment of a new protocol to modify and/or shut-down operations during times of inclement weather such periods of extreme heat. Please provide a copy of your employee manual with updated information within **60 days** from the date of this letter.

FACILITY AND EQUIPMENT IMPROVEMENTS

- 1) **Repair of fencing in pony enclosures.** During the inspection of the pony enclosures, parts of the chain-link fence surrounding the area were found in disrepair where wires were bent out of shape and protruding into the pony enclosure causing a hazard to the ponies inside. Per California Health and Safety Code Section 25988(c), "Buildings, premises, and conveyances used in conjunction with equines shall be kept free of sharp objects, protrusions, or other materials that are likely to cause injury". Additionally, in accordance with Section 10A.1 of your Concession Agreement, you are required to maintain all improvements, which includes fences, on the premises. Please attend to the areas of the chain-link fence that need repair within **two weeks** of the date of this letter
- 2) **Safer breakaway halters.** For ponies that require a halter to be left on, a safer breakaway halter is needed to mitigate injuries to the ponies should the halter become accidentally attached to the fence. Please provide our office with the name and model of a safer halter that will replace the existing halters, within **30 days** from the date of this letter.
- 3) **Improved wind and rain protection for the ponies.** The current outdoor pony enclosures were found provide insufficient protection from extreme winds or rain. Please discuss options with RAP for the installation of wind breaks or some type of barrier to block or reduce the amount of wind the ponies are exposed to during times of extreme winds within **30 days** from the date of this letter. RAP will also coordinate with you on drainage issues to help mitigate pooling of excess water after heavy rains.
- 4) **Improved water access and shading for the ponies.** Please submit plans for improved access to water, such as lowering water troughs, and improved shading for the ponies to include areas behind the barn. These plans should be forwarded to our office within **30 days** from the date of this letter.
- 5) **Increase transparency to the public regarding care of the ponies during inclement weather and working pony breaks.** To raise the public's awareness of the care that is provided to the animals, increased transparency is required. Some suggestions for greater transparency include installing a temperature gauge in the pony ring area for customer and employee visibility, displaying information to the public on how the ponies are cared for during times of extreme heat or cold,

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and creating a designated area for pony breaks with “break signage” visible to the public. Please plan to discuss these options and other ideas for increased public transparency with RAP within **30 days** of the date of this letter.

Thank you for your immediate attention to the aforementioned actions. Please forward all requested information to LaTricia.Jones@lacity.org. While some of the action items listed above extend six-months from the date of this letter, it should be noted that the initial 5-year term of the concession agreement between RAP and Los Angeles Pony Rides, Inc. naturally expired on December 22, 2021 and, therefore, the two parties are operating on a month-to-month status under the same terms and conditions..

If you have any questions or would like to speak further on any of the items listed above, please feel free to contact LaTricia Jones, at the above email address or contact me at Rachel.Ramos@lacity.org.

Sincerely,



RACHEL RAMOS
Concessions Manager

RR:lj

CC: Michael Shull, General Manager
Matthew Rudnick, Assistant General Manager
Stefanie Smith, Superintendent, Griffith Park
LaTricia Jones, Management Analyst, Concessions