

[Click Here To Close This Window](#)

Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation

Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.

**PRESENTATIONS BY
Ms. Jane Pisano
Director, Natural History Museum
Los Angeles County**

May 6, 2010

Overview of the Natural History Museum

Commissioner Ikejiri greeted Jane Pisano, Director of the Natural History Museum and welcomed her while turning it over for Ms. Pisano to speak to the Economy and Efficiency Commission.

Museum Overview

Ms. Pisano stated that the Natural History Museum is comprised of three museums: (1) The Natural History Museum protects over 35 million specimens, dating back 4.5 billion years. She stated that it is also a resource for Southern California teachers, and is an authority on the "big picture" of the planet, the natural and the cultural world. She stated that it tracks the Earth's biodiversity, because knowing what is out there is the first step to conservation. (2) She stated that the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits is the only consistently active urban Ice Age excavation site in the world. She stated that this museum houses one of the world's largest and most diverse collections of Late Pleistocene fossils. She also stated that this museum now hosts Project 23, an excavation project that can inform new research on global warming, geological change, and biodiversity. Ms. Pisano also stated that this unique Southern California attraction displays Ice Age fossils of animals from sticky asphalt deposits 10,000 to 40,000 years old, including saber-toothed cats, mammoths, dire wolves and mastodons. Also on display are the fossilized remains of microscopic plant remains, insects and reptiles. She stated daily visitors can watch scientists and volunteers clean, repair, and identify fossil remains inside the glass-enclosed Fishbowl Lab. During the summer, visitors can watch the live excavation of fossils (3) The William S. Hart Ranch Museum and Park in Santa Clarita. She stated that silent film star William S. Hart purchased ranch property in Newhall, north of Los Angeles, in 1921. She stated that he built a 22-room mansion and filled it with Western art, Native American artifacts, and early Hollywood memorabilia. Hart bequeathed the entire estate to Los Angeles County for the enjoyment of the public at no charge. She also stated that tours and programs such as silent movie screenings take place frequently at the park and museum. Ms. Pisano stated that among the ranch's permanent residents is an assortment of animals, including a small herd of bison, a gift from the Walt Disney Studios in 1962.

Ms. Pisano stated that all the Museums are a public-private partnership that is governed by a Board

comprised of 15 members appointed by the Board of Supervisors, and 30 members who are a part of a non-profit Board. She stated that the Board has 45 members which serve as one Board with all of the committees and Board itself.

Renovation and Preservation

Ms. Pisano stated that the history, science and art collection of the Museum gradually outgrew the capacity of the 1913 Building, and the original structure was expanded. She stated that in 1963, the Art Department relocated to its own museum in Hancock Park (the Los Angeles County Museum of Art). At that time, the Exposition Park facility became the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. Ms. Pisano stated that the Museum was joined by other major cultural facilities in the park, most notably: the Memorial Coliseum, Sports Arena, Swimming Stadium, California Science Center, California African American Museum, and the largest municipal-owned Rose Garden in the nation. She stated that after more than two years of renovation and architectural preservation, the 1913 Building re-opened in the spring of 2009. She stated that in addition to a seismic retrofit, the early phase of construction also focused on the restoration of the brilliantly colored stained glass skylight at the apex of the Rotunda. Ms. Pisano stated that this exacting work was carried out by David Judson, grandson of the skylight's designer, Walter Horace Judson. She also stated that using extensive data from the Natural History Museum's own archives — including historic drawings, photos and documents—the project team uncovered the original design, layout and construction methods of the original building and its subsequent 1920s additions in order to restore the building, while modernizing it inside and out. She stated that the 1913 Building's first exhibition, the new Age of Mammals hall, debuts in 2010.

Ms. Pisano stated that on April 22, 2010, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County announced a \$30 million dollar plan to create an expansive North Campus on the Museum site in Exposition Park where 3.5 acres of urban wilderness experiences and exhibits served as a new front yard for the Museum, and a new nature destination in the heart of Los Angeles. She stated that the North Campus is the first outdoor expression of the Museum's master plan, an historic transformation of public spaces and visitor experiences leading up to its centennial in 2013. Ms. Pisano stated that inside, the metamorphosis has included renovations and seismic retrofitting to the 1913 building (the Museum's original home), seven new galleries, five new permanent exhibitions, and a slate of new visitor amenities, including a renovated store and café.

Ms. Pisano stated that last year, the North Campus part of the museum was taken up by two parking lots and a walkway and staircase to the second floor entrance. She stated that now one parking lot has been demolished, and the other is being rebuilt into two stories. Ms. Pisano stated that this is a part of her idea called "the Pursuit of a more compelling mission for a natural history museum in the 21st century." She stated that the park will have 11 thematic areas, Urban Edge, Transition Garden, Car Park, Living Wall, Entrance Plaza, Urban Wilderness, Pollinator Garden, Shadow Garden, Get Dirty Zone, Home Garden and 1913 Garden will be interwoven with landscape features such as a pond and dry creek, groves of trees, and walking paths.

Natural History Museums Future

Ms. Pisano stated that the evolution at the Natural History Museum means exciting new experiences and resources will open to the public each and every year through 2013:

July 2010: The milestone reopening of the Museum's 1913 Building begins this summer with a new Age of Mammals experience and exhibitions inside the iconic Haaga Family Rotunda.

July 2011: The opening of North Campus and the highly anticipated exhibition Dinosaur Mysteries.

Fall 2012: Under the Sun, an exhibition exploring the natural and cultural history of Los Angeles and Southern California opens to the public, along with a new hands-on indoor space that replaces the museum's existing Discovery Center.

2013: More transformed gallery spaces are unveiled, leading to the celebration of Natural History Museum's Centennial in 2013.

Ms. Pisano stated that the project, based on conceptual plans, has an estimated budget of \$30 million. She stated that the County of Los Angeles funded one third of the project with a grant of \$10 million for the car park, and the remaining \$20 million budgeted to cover the urban habitats, an indoor/outdoor teaching lab, a permanent exhibit pavilion for butterflies, and a living canopy for the car park is being raised from individuals and private donors.

Ms. Pisano also stated that the exhibits are set to open in July 2011, North Campus will increase the programming area of the Museum by 50 percent and give visitors the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the natural world before walking through the Museum's doors. It will serve as a main entrance for the public, connecting with a new Metro Link Expo Line stop in front of the Museum and creating an extraordinary destination and resource for Angelenos and visitors to Los Angeles.

Questions

Commissioner Lee asked if there is an entrance fee. Ms. Pisano replied yes. She stated that school groups are welcome throughout the year, and groups that schedule their reservations at least three weeks in advance receive free admission. She explained groups with 10 or more students, Grades Pre K - 12, from public schools, private schools, home schools, Head Start programs, and child development centers are considered school groups. She stated that discounted general admission rates are available for groups of 10 or more qualifying individuals with 72 hours advance notice. (Qualifying individuals are those people who would not normally be admitted free of charge. For example, Museum members, teachers, children 4 and younger, and military members would not count toward the 10 person minimum.) She stated that group general admission prices are: \$8.00 for adults; \$5.50 for seniors (62+), adult students with valid college ID, and teenagers (13-17); and \$1.00 for children (5-12). Children 4 and younger, Museum members, teachers, and active duty military service members are free.

Commissioner Cole asked how long it would take to tour the Museum. Ms. Pisano replied it depends on how long one would like to stay. She stated that it depends on how deep of an experience you want and that one could learn a lot from just an hour tour. She also stated that if younger children are involved then 2 hours is the perfect time limit to spend including a visit to the new café.

Commissioner Fuhrman asked what is the annual budget and source of revenue. Ms. Pisano replied that the Museum's annual budget is \$28 million and that \$14 million is given from the County and the rest comes from foundation raised sources. She stated that this includes spending from the Museum's endowment which is \$3.5 million a year. Annual funds are about \$5 million from admissions, and memberships.

Commissioner Cox asked if the Museum has put together a classroom hands-on project for teachers and students so they are able to prepare before coming to the Museum. Ms. Pisano replied that this is her goal. She stated that the Museum is already going in this direction by letting teachers design guides for the museum. She also stated that a more in-depth approach would be to have these lessons that are grade-specific with essential questions and a sequence of pre-, during, and post-field trip activities.

Commissioner Kalm asked if the Museum has any collaboration with its neighbors such as the Coliseum and the Sports Arena. Ms. Pisano replied that the staff is really working hard to collaborate with museums in the park such as the Science Center, and the California African American Museum. She stated that she doesn't know how she would partner with the Coliseum or the Sports Arena. She stated that Museum certainly does a lot of partnering with USC.

Commissioner Fuhrman asked how many school districts have visited the Museum. Ms. Pisano replied that there are kids that come on buses from Orange County, Pasadena, Antelope Valley, San Fernando Valley, Simi Valley, Bakersfield, and even Barstow.

Commissioner Glassman asked what is the number of staff working with the Museum. Ms. Pisano replied that there are about 250 foundation staff and 25 County staff. Ms. Pisano stated that the personnel changes happened over a long period of time.

Vice Chairman Lee expressed his appreciation to Ms. Pisano and Ms. Garrett for coming to speak to the EEC and the Commissioners applauded

[Return to Top of Presentation](#)

[Return to Agenda](#)



Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, Room 163, 500 West Temple St.,
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone (213) 974-1491 FAX (213) 620-1437 [E-Mail eecomm@co.la.ca.us](mailto:EEComm@co.la.ca.us)
WEB eec.co.la.ca.us