

North Alabama Zoological Society Clarifies Public Asset Status Amidst Commission Resolution

HUNTSVILLE, AL, June 18, 2024 – The North Alabama Zoological Society (NALZS) wishes to address the recent resolution passed by the Limestone County Commission opposing the use of taxes or fees imposed on the public to pay for the construction or operation of a privately owned zoo. We want to clarify our position and the public nature of our proposed zoo project.

Public Asset and Non-Profit Structure

NALZS is committed to creating a public asset in the form of a zoo that will serve the community of Limestone County and North Alabama. Unlike privately owned entities, our zoo is designed to operate under a non-profit organization dedicated to the public good. This means that any funds raised through municipal bonds or tax initiatives and then allocated to the zoo project will be utilized solely for the benefit of the public, ensuring that the zoo remains a community-driven resource.

Commitment to Public Benefit

Our primary goal is to establish a zoo that offers educational, cultural, and economic benefits to the residents of Limestone County and North Alabama. The zoo will provide valuable educational opportunities, foster environmental stewardship, and significantly contribute to local tourism and economic growth. As a public asset, the zoo will be managed transparently and responsibly, with all revenues reinvested into its maintenance and enhancement for the community's benefit and enjoyment.

Response to Commission's Concerns and Public Misconceptions

We understand and respect the pressures facing the Limestone County Commission from those opposed to the tax. It is our position that much of the public outcry, however, stems from misconceptions and assumptions formed by snap judgments influenced by confirmation biases. Unfortunately, we see that several of these flawed arguments and misconceptions seeped in as truths during the commission meeting, further perpetuating misinformation.

We are dedicated to continuing on and actively engaging with the community to dispel these misconceptions. There is growing support to those when we have had the opportunity to clarify our proposed plan. It is crucial to emphasize that the proposed zoo would be a publicly owned entity, operated for the public's benefit just like the majority of the zoo and museums in the nation. The bond/tax initiative is designed to fund a public resource and asset, not a private venture. This approach has been a proven strategy used by leading cities and counties to enhance their success, boost tourism, reduce the overall tax burden, and significantly benefit their citizens. Failing to embrace such visionary projects risks falling behind in providing the quality of life and economic growth that defines a prosperous community.

Going Forward

NALZS represents a significant portion of the community that recognizes the benefits—quality-of-life improvements educationally, recreationally, economically, and financially—significantly outweigh the cost and wants us to build them a zoo. We will continue to engage with the public and

businesses to clarify the proposed public funding initiative, address concerns, and improve it through public feedback via future town halls, receptions, booths at local festivals, and media articles. NALZS is advocating for the democratic right of Limestone County residents to express their views through a vote. We urge the leaders to honor this fundamental principle of democracy and allow the community to decide on this pivotal project in the proper and appropriate manner for such issues. It is important to emphasize that the proposal not only outlines the funding mechanism but also highlights the tangible benefits that each resident will receive in return.

The North Alabama Zoological Society is excited about the opportunity to create a world-class zoo that will serve as a treasured public asset for generations to come. We look forward to continuing our work with the Limestone County Commission, local officials, and the broader community to bring this vision to life.

For more information, please contact:

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About North Alabama Zoological Society

The North Alabama Zoological Society (NALZS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to establishing and operating a public zoo that provides educational, cultural, and economic benefits to the community. Founded in 2019, NALZS aims to create a world-class zoological institution that fosters environmental stewardship and offers enriching experiences for visitors of all ages.