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News Release

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Abilene Zoo Director announces retirement

ABILENE, Texas – Abilene Zoo Director Bill Gersonde has notified Abilene City Manager Robert Hanna of his decision to retire effective November 27th, 2018.

“After 34 years in the incredibly rewarding zoo business, 27 years as a zoo director, I’ve decided it’s time for me to enjoy a less “wild” life and retire from the zoo profession. A new set of eyes and ideas will take on the exciting opportunity to lead the Zoo into the future,” said Gersonde.

Gersonde joined the Abilene Zoo as Director in July of 2010, coming from the Idaho Falls Zoo in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

“I appreciate the projects and programs Bill has accomplished for the Zoo. He has left the number one attraction in Abilene better than he found it,” said Abilene City Manager Robert Hanna.

Abilene Zoological Society President Dr. Ralph McCleskey says the Society has enjoyed the opportunity to work closely with Mr. Gersonde over the past eight years.

“During his term as Executive Director of the Abilene Zoo the quality of the zoo experience has improved significantly for both zoo guests and zoo inhabitants. We wish Bill the best as he begins a new phase of his life,” said Dr. McCleskey.

“Over the past eight years we’ve accomplished a great deal at the Abilene Zoo thanks to the efforts of staff, community and the Abilene Zoological Society Board. It’s been an honor to be a part of those achievements. Now the Zoo is poised to begin a new chapter in its illustrious story. I wish the Abilene Zoo family, including the furred, feathered and scaled members and the Abilene community my best as they move forward into their next wonderful chapter,” said Gersonde.

Assistant Director of Community Services Chris Gibson will lead the Abilene Zoo as acting Director as the City of Abilene begins the search for a new Zoo Director. Mr. Gersonde has agreed to make himself available for consultation purposes as needed during 2019 while the Zoo completes its upcoming accreditation process with the Association of Zoos & Aquariums.

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