



November 30, 2021

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Program Manager

The Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA) is a non-profit organization that works to end the private ownership and commercial exploitation of big cats and other wild cats, while providing expert resources to its sanctuary members aimed at improving the health and welfare of rescued captive wild cats.

Winchester Town Advisory Board
Clark County Department of Administrative Services
500 S. Grand Central Parkway, 6th Floor
Las Vegas, Nevada 89155

Re: Oppose UC-21-0645-World Buddhism Association Headquarters' Permit

Dear Chairperson Mikes, Ms. Siegel, Mr. Delibos, and Mr. Becker:

On behalf of the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA), whose membership is comprised of reputable sanctuary operators and highly regarded national and international partner organizations, we urge you to deny the proposed permit for a recreational facility that involves tigers at the World Buddhism Association Headquarters.

The proposal for this permit raises serious public safety and animal welfare concerns, including the following:

Proposed fencing specifications are unsafe.

Tigers are very powerful and agile animals capable of jumping heights well over 10 feet. Yet the applicant proposes a 10-foot-high wooden fence around the perimeter of the "tiger sanctuary" (cages), topped with barbed wire. Not only is the fencing too low, a full-grown tiger could easily climb it. In 2007, a tiger at the San Francisco Zoo escaped an enclosure with a 12.5-foot concrete wall, killing one person and injuring two others. Claw marks were found at the top of the wall. Best practices at the time suggested a minimum fence height of 16.5 feet – a full 6.5 feet higher than the proposed fence height in this permit application. There is no guarantee that the barbed wire atop the proposed fencing would stop a tiger; it also could cause the animal grievous bodily harm.

Existing perimeter fencing that would surround the proposed recreational facility is even lower, at only six feet. An escaped tiger could easily scale this fence, allowing access to the surrounding community which includes an adjacent multiple family development.

Transport plans to and from the performance tent need to be detailed.

The risk of escape is elevated during transport of the tigers from their enclosures to the performance tent and back. The BCSA agrees with the assessment by Clark County Animal Control that the applicant would need a detailed transport plan and structures in place including transport doors, proper transport cages, and a double door safety system on the primary enclosures. If a tiger were to escape during transport, the proposed six-foot-high fencing surrounding the recreational area would not contain the cat.

Performing onstage with tigers is an accident waiting to happen.

It is extremely dangerous to present a performance in which there is no physical barrier between tigers and an audience. There is no foolproof way to constrain a predator as large and powerful as a tiger. The cats may be captive born and hand raised but they are not domesticated animals. Big cats retain their wild instincts and can attack suddenly and

without warning with tragic results. It is extremely dangerous for any performer to think this could not happen to them or that a tiger could not escape into the audience. Illusionists Siegfried and Roy performed thousands of shows before a 400-pound, 7-foot long male white tiger attacked and critically injured Roy, lacerating his throat and dragging him offstage in front of hundreds of people.

The use of big cats in temporary shows adversely affects animal welfare.

Tigers may be trained to perform, but they remain wild animals with distinctive needs. There is simply no scientific evidence to suggest that their needs can be met in a temporary facility such as that proposed. In fact, animals may develop health problems and/or unusual behaviors as a result of the persistent stress of handling and exposure to loud sounds and crowds. Tigers in these types of exhibits commonly exhibit abnormal repetitive behaviors such as pacing, which is widely recognized as a sign of poor welfare. In addition, exhibitors may use inhumane training methods to manage the animals and ensure they perform consistently. Exposure to extreme temperatures is also a factor, and it is unclear how the tigers in the proposed facility will be fully protected.

Tigers, such as those used in magic shows and other commercial displays, are obtained from unscrupulous breeders who have no regard for animal health or genetic integrity. As a result, many animals suffer serious, lifelong health problems (several of our member sanctuaries have ended up caring for these animals). This is especially true of white tigers. Today, these cats are mainly found in disreputable roadside zoos, circuses, magic shows, and traveling acts – where they are exploited for profit. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums formally banned the breeding of white tigers in 2011.

The applicant misuses the word “sanctuary” to whitewash the exploitation of captive tigers.

The BCSA takes issue with the fact that the applicant refers to the animals’ cages as a “tiger sanctuary.” A true sanctuary does not buy, sell, breed, trade, or commercially exploit its animals, and direct contact with big cats of any age is not allowed. True sanctuaries provide lifelong care for their animal residents, who are not made to travel or perform. Calling the proposed tiger cages a “sanctuary” is false advertising, meant to deceive unsuspecting tourists who may have genuine concerns about tiger exploitation and welfare.

Using tigers as props serves no education or conservation purpose.

Tiger acts simply send the wrong message about this highly endangered species. Published research suggests that seeing wild animals perform for entertainment purposes can actually harm conservation efforts. It may also increase the likelihood that someone will consider a wild animal to be appealing as a pet, even though these animals are extremely dangerous.

Based on serious public safety and animal welfare concerns, we strongly urge you to deny the proposed permit.

Sincerely,



Kathy Blachowski
Program Manager, Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance

BCSA Sanctuary Members

Big Cat Rescue
Black Pine Animal Sanctuary
Carolina Tiger Rescue
Cedarhill Animal Sanctuary
Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch
Crown Ridge Tiger Sanctuary
Elmira’s Wildlife Sanctuary
Forest Animal Rescue

Keepers of the Wild
Lions, Tigers and Bears
Performing Animal Welfare Society
PrideRock Wildlife Refuge
Safe Haven Wildlife Rescue
The Wildcat Sanctuary
Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge
Wildcat Ridge Sanctuary

BCSA Partner Members

AAP Primadomus
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Bears, Etc.
Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries
International Fund for Animal Welfare
The Humane Society of the United States
Tigers in America
World Animal Protection