

NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

MEMORANDUM

cc: Messrs. Merck, Tee-Van,
Driscoll

TO: Fairfield Osborn

November 21, 1960

FROM: William G. Conway

SUBJECT: New Aquatic Bird House -- Status Report

It would seem healthy at this time to review our present position on the new Aquatic Bird House and its future financial demands upon the Society.

You will remember that this project was initiated in November, 1958; that a budget of \$400,000. was set up, one-fourth of which the Society agreed to contribute. Architects Goldstone and Dearborn were engaged and planning was commenced.

To date, we have enough plans to nearly carpet the floor of the Members' Room. Harmon, Charlie and I have exchanged well over one hundred pages of correspondence, and innumerable meetings have been held with architect, engineer, Park Department and the Budget Department.

But, things have dragged on for a long time.

When Mr. Engle visited the Park several weeks ago in reference to the Society's Capital Budget request, he suggested that the budget for the Aquatic Bird House (out of \$400,000., \$362,000. has actually been allotted to construction) be upped to \$440,000. He asked that the Society pay for one-half of this increase. We pointed out that the Society would have the final preparation costs of the building and could not possibly improve upon the three-to-one ratio which we presently enjoy. Budget finally agreed to this arrangement.

Since this time, the plans in process have met several set-backs, one of which is a new building code regulation (enacted May, 1960) which demands that a 42-inch masonry parapet be erected on top of the building. This single item increased our already bulging budget by \$25,000., and with an 11% building cost increase since 1958 and with other building code modifications, have now raised the total budget to approximately \$470,000., and the Society will be asked to put in a further one-fourth of the additional \$30,000.-increase. This budget, happily, has been approved by Abraham Beame, but if the Board of Estimate finally approves the building at the increased budget and it is constructed within the budget and turned over to the Society, the Society may expect that further building preparation costs in the form of exhibit decoration, labelling, stocking, as well as

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special effects, may range somewhere between \$15,000. and \$20,000. additional. Thus, we may expect to invest \$117,500. in original construction and \$20,000. in exhibit preparation.

It is disturbing to reflect that many wonderful features, through the constant need for economy, have been lost or pared down.

1. The originally planned Aquatic Bird House was attached to the Flying Cage, permitting major exhibits to fly indoors and out, with a wonderful balcony in the Flying Cage.

2. The great Tropical Lake Cage public walk-through on the bridge was lost.

3. Many individual exhibits for diving birds and others were lost.

4. The research and breeding area have been lost.

5. The size limits of the remaining open-fronted exhibits, which are four in number, are now at an unfortunate minimum. If an open-fronted exhibit is too small, it becomes difficult to operate, for the birds do not feel as comfortable within it and are more likely to fly out. Our building is at a size where our exhibits are smaller than we would wish. I believe them to be workable, but we will not be able to hold the collections within these exhibits that we might have originally hoped for.

6. Only 12 exhibits remain in the building, thus, while we have retained many fine features, we should not ignore the fact that this is not the building that we originally described and set out to build.