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06/ 08/ 2026

# City of El Paso Appoints Permanent Zoo and Botanical Gardens Director

**EL PASO, Texas**—The City of El Paso is pleased to announce the appointment of Gary Lunsford as the permanent Director of the El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens following a national search. He has served as Interim Director of the Zoo since September 2025.

“We are excited to name Gary Lunsford as the zoo’s permanent Director. With more than 30 years of experience in zoo operations and an unwavering dedication to our animals and the teams who care for them makes him the ideal leader for the Zoo’s next chapter,” said City Manager Dionne Mack.

Lunsford has built a career as dynamic as the wildlife he protects. He has served as an accreditation inspector for both the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and Canada’s Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA).

He came to El Paso from Massachusetts where he served as Director of the Buttonwood Park Zoo. Prior to that, he led the Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, where he oversaw a team that commissioned the Journey to Churchill exhibit – an award-winning \$90 million transformation of 10 acres of the Zoo to an immersive experience of northern culture and biodiversity.

Lunsford developed extensive operational and animal care expertise across roles at the Oklahoma City Zoo, Tulsa Zoo, Assiniboine Park Zoo, Milwaukee County Zoo, and Buttonwood Park Zoo. His leadership approach centers on elevating animal welfare, enhancing guest experiences, and expanding conservation impact.

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**Good Governance**  
Leadership that is responsive + reliable

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