



November 30, 2021

Robert O. Mikes Jr., Chair
Patrick Becker, Member
John J. Delibos, Member
Judi Siegel, Member
Winchester Town Advisory Board

Via e-mail: zoningmeeting@clarkcountynv.gov; victoriabelleb@gmail.com

Re: Opposition to Agenda Item 3 for Parking Lot Tiger Caging, Circus Tent, and Magic Show World Buddhism Association Headquarters/The Shekinah Project I, LLC/ Jay Owenhouse Application No. UC-21-0645

Dear Board Members:

We're writing on behalf of PETA—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally, including over 47,000 in Clark County—and Las Vegas-based CompassionWorks International to request that the Winchester Town Advisory Board deny Montana-based magician and tiger owner Jay Owenhouse's land use application (No. UC-21-0645) to construct caging for three tigers and a tent for use in a magic show for a period of one year in a busy area near the Las Vegas Strip.

Please don't be duped by the "humane washing" of this application: calling a couple of cages in a parking lot a "sanctuary" is simply smoke and mirrors. Owenhouse uses tigers as props in his illusions, and his plans include storing the wild animals in 30-foot-by-30-foot metal cages surrounded by the Sahara Monorail Station, a monorail maintenance shed, a condominium complex, and several busy and noisy intersections. In nature, tigers spend their time roaming vast, remote forest territories and swimming in streams. Keeping them caged near the busy Las Vegas Strip—particularly when temperatures reach life-threatening summer highs—is cruel, dangerous, and exploitative. It also perpetuates the hideous cub-petting industry that horrified viewers of the Netflix series *Tiger King*, and which churns out baby tigers, tears them from their mothers, and then discards them when they're too large and dangerous to be used as photo props. Owenhouse has admitted to [obtaining his tigers from Bhagavan "Doc" Antle](#), a notorious [tiger breeder](#) currently facing felony charges for wildlife trafficking.

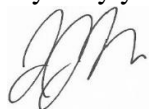
Owenhouse's tiger show also presents a significant threat to public safety. Tigers are wild animals who possess tremendous strength and speed and can react unpredictably, especially when confronted with novel environments that may cause stress. They can attack with little or no warning, as Las Vegas knows well from the 2003 attack on Roy Horn during a show. [These attacks](#) can result in death and serious injuries: tigers can puncture and crush a human's skull, vertebrae, larynx, or airway or sever major blood vessels. In [2019](#), Owenhouse admitted that he and his daughter were injured by the tigers, and his daughter's laceration required a doctor to close the wound with super-glue. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [cited](#) Owenhouse in 2019 for risking the safety of a juvenile tiger and the public by failing to ensure that sufficient distance or a barrier was in place between the tiger and the public. The agency noted

that “[b]ecause of the strength and speed of tigers, there is inherent danger for both the viewing public and the exhibited animal” in such situations. These incidents should come as no surprise because Owenhouse has no formal training or education in tiger care.

Consistent with the known dangers associated with tigers, Clark County Code § 10.18.010(b) prohibits the public exhibition of “inherently dangerous exotic or wild animals,” which includes tigers. Owenhouse’s exhibit, scheduled to last for a year, doesn’t qualify for any of the exemptions in Clark County Code § 10.18.020. In a letter sent on behalf of Owenhouse to Clark County Chief of Code Enforcement Jim Andersen, his lobbyist argued that he was exempt from the prohibition because of an arrangement with a veterinarian purportedly “*endorsed* by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (“AZA”).” However, the AZA does not have a veterinary “endorsement” program, and the Clark County Code does not speak of AZA “endorsements”—it only allows for an exemption for “a location where any portion of the property is occupied by a person *accredited* by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums,” among others. Clark County Code § 10.18.020(a) (emphasis added). [Owenhouse’s tiger show is not accredited by the AZA](#), nor is the veterinarian mentioned by his lobbyist. AZA accreditation is only available to zoos and aquariums that have undergone a thorough evaluation for compliance with the organization’s standards for animal welfare, care, and management. Owenhouse’s show and parking-lot cages do not even approach meeting AZA [standards](#), which warn that free contact with tigers—such as Owenhouse’s practice of handling tigers who are chained to the stage during his shows—“is very dangerous, and is not recommended.” The AZA also staunchly [opposes](#) “the treatment of animals as disposable and replaceable parts in a roadside menagerie.”

This type of animal act is outdated and has no place near the Las Vegas Strip, as evidenced by recent decisions made by several Las Vegas landmarks such as Caesars Palace, the MGM Grand, and the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino, which have all [rejected magic acts involving tigers](#). Because this application proposes a magic show that would run afoul of the law, present significant threats to public safety, and cause the needless suffering of three tigers, PETA respectfully urges the Winchester Town Advisory Board to deny Owenhouse’s application for this dangerous magic show.

Very truly yours,



Jonathan Morris
Counsel, Captive Animal Law Enforcement
PETA Foundation
360-994-0336 | JonathanM@petaf.org



Carrie LeBlanc, M.A.
Executive Director
CompassionWorks International
805-708-3121 | CarrieL@cwint.org

cc: Commissioner Tick Segerblom, District E (ccdiste@ClarkCountyNV.gov)
Commissioner Justin Jones, District F (ccdistf@ClarkCountyNV.gov)