

July 8, 2019

Jesus A. Garza
City Manager
City of Victoria

Via e-mail: jgarza@victoriatx.org

Dear Mr. Garza,

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide regarding the upcoming Carden International Circus shows at the Victoria Community Center. Considering that Victoria City Code §§4-5, 4-1 makes it unlawful to possess wild animals in Victoria, along with the egregious cruelty and threat to public safety inherent in circuses that use animals, **I urge you to think carefully about these facts and consider at least requiring that the scheduled performance of this cruel circus go forward without elephants, tigers or any other animals.**

According to Victoria City Code §§4-5, 4-1, "[a]ny animal normally found in the wild state" is included in this ordinance, and there is no exemption for traveling circuses. Elephants and tigers are wild animals and have never been domesticated. The city must also consider that these dangerous wild animals are capable of killing or grievously injuring humans, particularly in a circus setting where there are no meaningful barriers between the animals, handlers, and the public.

Carden International Circus is one of several similarly named circus companies—all run by Brett Carden, his father George Carden, and other members of their family—which exhibit elephants, camels, and other animals and currently hire outside exhibitors to provide tiger acts. Carden family members have been cited for numerous violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act, including citations of the George Carden Circus International for failing to provide an elephant who had open wounds with veterinary care and failing to provide tigers with proper nutrition and adequate space—records show that they were confined to a transport cage 23 hours a day. They also have a history of endangering the public, such as when two elephants escaped from a Shrine circus sponsoring George Carden Circus International and ran amok, injuring a child.

A 2017 investigation of Ryan Easley, a recent tiger exhibitor with this circus, showed frequent whippings and constant confinement of the tigers. An animal-behavior expert described Easley as using “training methods which entail fear, force and punishment.” That same year, witnesses at Shrine circuses exhibiting elephants provided by Brett Carden documented that an elephant swayed in apparent distress while confined alone backstage and that another elephant suffered from chronic, apparently painful lameness.

Public opposition towards exploiting animals for entertainment has never been higher. Ringling Bros. Circus shut down, Cole Bros. Circus stopped touring, Stardust Circus dropped its elephant act, and Kelly Miller Circus went animal-free. Now, more than 650 venues and dozens of communities nationwide prohibit or restrict circuses that use animals. **May I please hear from you by July 12 as to what action you will be taking?** Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Melanie Johnson
Senior Campaign Coordinator, Animals in Entertainment
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)