

Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds – Fair Board Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2022 – 11:30 am
98 W. Custer Ave., Helena MT 59602

Attendees:

Board members: Phil Porrini, Greg Pace, Jo Young, Mike Murray, Mark Menke, Dave Duffy, Robert LaRue

Staff: Kevin Tenney, Logan Gustafson, Sandy McIntyre

Lewis & Clark County Commissioner: Tom Rolfe

Phil Porrini, Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:35 am.

Welcome:

New Fair Board member Robert LaRue was introduced to the Board and staff.

Other newly appointed Board members are Wilbur Rehmann and Marilyn Greely.

Approval of Minutes:

There were no corrections or additions to the February 23, 2022 minutes. Mark Menke motioned to approve the February 23, 2022 minutes, seconded by Mike Murray. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

- Julie Cruse followed up on the proposal for the Fairgrounds to house the homeless at its campsites:
 - The proposal requests:
 - Use of the Fairgrounds campsites as emergency shelter for homeless with vehicles from November through April.
 - Occupation of sites for longer than the current campsite 7 day limit.
 - Full use of the campground electricity, toilets and showers.
 - She said the proposal/use of the Fairgrounds campsites for homeless with vehicles would be for next year.
 - She said that current resources for the homeless such as God's Love are inadequate in meeting the needs and that proposals for affordable housing won't come to fruition for years.
 - Board members and Fairgrounds staff reiterated concerns about the proposal expressed in the February 23, 2022 Board meeting with additional concerns:
 - There is no water in the campground and only pit toilets. Other restrooms and showers are located on the other end of the Fairgrounds.
 - Public health and sanitation issues affecting public use of the campground and Fairgrounds generally.
 - Public safety issues – Will number of vehicles be limited per space? Will tents be allowed? Dog control? Firearms? Use of propane in extreme winter cold and during dry winters could pose safety and fire hazards.

- Fairgrounds and Extension staff safety – Staff are not trained security nor are they mental health experts.
- Staffing and maintenance – Use and maintenance of main restrooms and showers requires Fairgrounds staff time, as does maintenance of the campground including plowing, garbage removal and pit toilet maintenance.
- Payment for use – Fairgrounds facilities must be paid for before use including campsites, picnic shelters, buildings and arenas. The Fairgrounds is an enterprise fund and there is no precedent for not charging for use of the facilities.
- No financial information was included with proposal including anticipated costs/expenses or funding/revenue sources.
- County Commissioner Tom Rolfe commented:
 - Statistically, there are significant substance abuse and mental health issues within the homeless population.
 - Any homeless shelter proposal should include how to deal with substance abuse and mental health issues as part of a continuum of care.
 - There is no continuum of care in Lewis and Clark County for mental health issues including the homeless population.
 - Proposal offers a free place to stay without health continuum of care.
 - Other communities with greater resources and no continuum of care that have provided housing for the homeless have been abject failures.
 - Health care (including mental health and substance abuse) must be addressed first before providing free housing.
- In response to Board members and County Commissioner Rolfe:
 - Julie Cruse said that volunteers will staff the showers, Tim Matthews said the Methodist church provides showers with volunteers as monitors.
 - Julie Cruse said the intention is to use a FUSE model (Frequent Users Systems Engagement) to look at potential campers and work with individuals.
 - Tim Matthews said the proposal should be cost neutral.
- Mike Murray made a motion to form a subcommittee comprised of the Fairgrounds Manager and two Fair Board members to review the proposal and the costs to the Fairgrounds. Mark Menke seconded the motion. The motion passed with 4 yes votes and 3 no votes.

Financial Report:

Kevin Tenney reviewed financials:

- January and February revenue is down approximately \$21,000 due to Covid-related event cancellations.

FY23 Budget:

- The draft FY23 budget includes 100% of line item expenses & income.
 - Kevin continue to work with CFO Nancy Everson on the budget and a final budget should be done in April.
- The Capital Improvements Summary is included in the Board packets. Major items are:
 - Brush mower

- Panels for arenas
- Chairs and tables (for rentals)
- Ground roller
- Heating system work
- 2018 Ford ½ ton F-150 truck (already purchased)
- Main arena video structures
- Main arena ground improvement
- There is a need for security cameras on the grounds due to increased vandalism. Priority would be main bathrooms as they are regularly vandalized. Previous proposals ranged from \$24,000-\$44,000. We will continue looking into this.

Events Report:

- Made In Montana had 150 booths and over 5000 people attending the public day.
- HBIA had 140 booths with a terrific weekend turnout.
- Upcoming events - Last Chance Gobblers (National Wild Turkey Federation), Pam Tillis concert (Montana Narcotics Officers Association), Helena High prom

Stampede and Fair:

Kevin Tenney gave an update on the 2022 Last Chance Stampede and Fair.

- Concert artists will be announced in mid-April.

Operations Report:

Kevin Tenney reported on operations:

- Main entrance video board need a firewall which IT will install and should have sign working next week.
- Paving Project – KLJ submitted the first work order to the County Commission. KLJ will submit total cost and phase in the project depending on funds allocated by the Commissioners.
- Duck Pond – We are getting costs for shore stabilization and those will be added to the FY23 budget. Mike Murray said he met with Fairgrounds maintenance and really appreciates the work they have done on the area.
- Trees – We received a \$750 grant for trees, which will be planted May 14th. The City arborist will trim trees.
- Horses – The horses that were being held by the Sheriff's Department are gone. The Sheriff's Department is currently cleaning stalls, fixing ground damage and damage to the facilities.
- Springfest – Rodeo and concert ticker are on sale. Carnival tickets will soon be at the outlets – both Albertson's, Murdoch's and Van's Thriftway.
- Jo Young suggested Kevin give a tour of the Fairgrounds with Board members. Kevin agreed that is a good idea and will do that in the near future.

Adjournment:

- Mike Menke moved to adjourn the meeting. Mike Murray seconded the motion. It passed unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 12:44pm.