

Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds – Fair Board Meeting Minutes
April 27, 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, Marilyn Greely, Jay Sherley

Staff: Kevin Tenney, Logan Gustafson, Sandy McIntyre

Lewis & Clark County Commissioner: Tom Rolfe

Phil Porrini, Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:30 am.

Welcome:

New Fair Board member Marilyn Greely was introduced to the Board and staff.

Approval of Minutes:

There were no corrections or additions to the March 23, 2022 minutes. Mike Murray motioned to approve the March 23, 2022 minutes, seconded by Jo Young. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

Approximately ten members of the public were in attendance.

- Chair Phil Porrini noted that the Board was on a limited time frame to complete two meetings today and asked citizen attendees to limit their comments to 5 minutes each.
- Public comment centered on support for a proposal by the Helena Solidarity Network to use the Fairgrounds campsites as emergency shelter for homeless from November through April.
 - Speakers supporting the proposal – Bill Entwistle, Theresa Ortega, Vee Yang, George McCauley, Emily McVeigh, Jim Smith
- After public comments ended, Chair Phil Porrini stated a subcommittee of the Fair Board had met to discuss the Helena Solidarity Network proposal to use Fairgrounds campsites and showers for the homeless from November through April.
 - Kevin Tenney, Fairgrounds Manager reported the subcommittee did not recommend moving ahead with the proposal for the following reasons:
 - Public, staff and event attendee safety and security
 - Drug use at the campground and Fairgrounds property
 - Labor – Garbage removal, bathroom and shower cleaning, and snow removal takes labor which the Fairgrounds is not staffed for.
 - The Fairgrounds is an enterprise fund and must generate revenue to cover expenses. The proposal adds significant expenses for the Fairgrounds including labor, garbage removal, potential property damage, and security services which, contracting with commercial services is not budgeted for.

- Kevin Tenney made a motion on behalf of the subcommittee to recommend not supporting the Helena Solidarity Network proposal to use the Fairgrounds campground in the winter to house homeless.
 - The motion was seconded by Dave Duffy.
 - Chair Phil Porrini opened the floor for discussion. Discussion by Board members included comments that there has been a great deal of discussion about the proposal over the past 3 months; allowing people to camp in sub-zero temperatures does not make sense; and the Board as well as Fairgrounds staff do not have backgrounds in social issues such as homelessness, mental health, or substance abuse.
 - Mike Murray called the question for a vote on the motion. The motion to recommend not supporting the Helena Solidarity Network proposal to use the Fairgrounds campground in the winter to house homeless passed, one vote opposed.

Break: Chair Phil Porrini called for 10 minute break at 11:50 am. The meeting re-convened at 12:00 pm.

FY2023 Budget:

Kevin Tenney reviewed the FY2023 Budget which Board members had received in their monthly packets. He noted that revenue should increase due to Fairgrounds events with two additional Stampede concerts, a Fall concert and SpringFest. He also noted that the CIP (capital improvement) funds would be used for water truck repair, main arena parts and gate, upgrades to the heating system, a new video screen structure for the main arena and sand to upgrade main arena ground. We have already purchased a 2018 Ford ½ ton F-150 truck.

The floor was opened to questions about the proposed FY2023 budget:

- Phil Porrini asked about the front entrance video board. Kevin responded that it is being worked on this week, there is an IT issue with firewalls that needs addressing.
- Mike Murray asked about duck pond improvements and repairing the shelter there. Kevin said that we are waiting for the bank stabilization assessment as the bank will need to be stabilized before any work on the shelter can be done. Kevin will look into getting an estimate for the shelter building repairs.

Mike Murray moved to approve the Fairgrounds FY2023 budget. Dave Duffy seconded the motion. The motion to approve the Fairgrounds FY2023 budget passed unanimously.

Operations:

Kevin Tenney reported on operations:

- Main entrance video board software is here and will be installed shortly.
- Paving project – Kevin will meet with KLJ on Friday about the paving project. The County Commissioners set aside \$2 million for paving, which we have until 2026 to spend. We may hold off on construction until the engineering reports are all reviewed. We do not want construction occurring during the Stampede.

- Trees – MSU Extension ordered replacement trees to replace dead trees on the west side of the Exhibit Building, however the trees delivered were much smaller than the ones ordered. Extension will plant and put cages around to protect them from deer. New trees will be planted along the south park area in mid-May. Kevin talked to the County arborist who is unable to trim trees due to funding issues. Kevin has called a commercial arborist who will examine Fairgrounds trees and make recommendations.

Stampede and Fair:

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

- Wednesday night's concert will be co-headlined with Randy Houser and Jimmy Allen, with both playing 70-90 minute shows each.
- Friday's night concert in the Exhibit Hall is Dillan Scott.
- Saturday's night concert in the Exhibit Hall is Hairball.
- Stampede concessions are set.
- Commercial booth contracts are still coming in. There will be no indoor vendors this year as the Exhibit Hall will be used for stage shows during the day and the night concerts on Friday and Saturday. Commercial vendors will be outside under the Exhibit Hall awning and under a tent on the Promenade.
- Sheriff Leo Dutton is interested in promoting the "Man Up Crusade" against domestic violence as a special Stampede night. There are some ideas about raffles, T-shirts, etc. to raise money, which would go to the Friendship Center. This may replace Friday's Tough Enough to Wear Pink night.
- Springfest – all tickets are on sale. The Carnival is having problems securing staffing and there is a possibility they may have to cancel.

Events Report:

- In April, the Last Chance Gobblers banquet (Wild Turkey Federation) and the Pam Tillis concert both had good turnouts.
- Other April events included Helena High School prom, ACT tests, Beerfest and Upcountry Vintage.
- Upcoming May events include Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation banquet; Springfest with Michael Ray in concert and Montana All Star Pro-Am Challenge Rodeo; 406 Consignary; dog agility, and; Treasure Chest Craft show.

Other Business:

- Chair Phil Porrini reminded the Board that the by-laws will be reviewed at the May board meeting.

Adjournment:

- Mike Murray moved to adjourn the meeting. Greg Pace seconded the motion. It passed unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 12:25pm.