

Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds – Fair Board Meeting Minutes
August 24, 2022 – 11:30 am
98 W. Custer Ave., Helena MT 59602

Attendees:

Board members: Phil Porrini, Greg Pace, Dave Duffy, Marilyn Greely, Jo Young, Jay Sherley, Mark Menke

Staff: Kevin Tenney, Logan Gustafson, Sandy McIntyre

County Commissioner: Tom Rolfe

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

Approval of Minutes:

There were no corrections or additions to the June 22, 2022 minutes. Greg Pace motioned to approve the June 22, 2022 minutes, seconded by Jo Young. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

Julie Cruse attended the meeting, representing Bill Entwistle of the Helena Solidarity Network. There was no public comment.

Financials:

Kevin Tenney reviewed fiscal year-end financials and noted that there is approximately \$131,000 in reserve funds as of the end of FY22.

Operations:

- Maintenance has been working to get the grounds in order after Fair.
- The office air conditioning hasn't been functioning correctly. It has been serviced a number of times, most recently during Fair. The office A/C system is separate from the Entry Hall and Exhibit Hall system. We will be getting a bid for the whole system within the next couple of weeks. We hope to get by until next spring, and may need to replace another budget item with the air conditioning work.
- The water truck is now non-functional. It is over 30 years old and while maintenance has kept it going, it's now to the point of not being fixable. The County Public Works Department helped us out with two recent events where the main and west arenas needed numerous waterings. Public Works has a water truck they are retiring at the end of the year, which we plan on purchasing.

Events Report:

- The Monster Truck event was very successful with significantly increased beer sales over last year.

- The Mule Deer Foundation fundraiser was also very successful with good attendance and a large silent auction.
- NorthStar Amusements carnival will be here September 15-18. There is also an ArenaCross (motorcycle) event September 16-17 in the Main Arena.
- In addition to a few smaller events scheduled for September, there is the AKC dog show and the Last Chance Pow Wow starts September 29.

Stampede and Fair Report:

- Fair week went well. It helped that we had more seasonal maintenance workers this year over last.
- Concerts – Friday and Saturday night concerts in the Exhibit Hall did well with ticket sales covering costs and making a profit. Wednesday night's concert lost money as we needed to sell 3000 tickets to break even.
- Concessions were the highest ever, and we netted \$30,000 in profit.
- Rodeo sold out all three nights for the first time ever. Last year Friday and Saturday night rodeos sold out.
- Sponsorships – Stampede sponsorships totaled \$140,204 - \$103, 100 cash contributions, \$37,104 in-kind/trade. Our sponsorship levels/amounts are significantly lower than other major cities in the state. For 2023 we will consider both an increase in sponsorship amounts and decrease in rodeo ticket benefits. We give out about \$100,000 in rodeo tickets as part of the sponsor benefits and Military night (1000 tickets). We may also stop the 406tix half off tickets and media advertising trade, and will revisit arena seating reserved for volunteers.
- Expenses increased this year. Adding to increased costs this year were: \$10,000 for the commercial vendor tent; stage in the beer garden for after-rodeo bands; increased lodging costs for entertainers and rodeo personnel; meals/food in the VIP hospitality room; and finding rental vehicles for concert artists. Kevin Tenney said that on review of 2022 Stampede expenses, he has identified approximately \$40,000 of expenses that could be cut in 2023.
- The Fair steering committee is meeting next month to debrief, evaluate and look at what we can do better next year. Kevin Tenney noted that the steering committee is made up of volunteers who in turn have scores of volunteers they work with to make the Stampede happen each year.
- Phil Porrini asked if there were any safety/gun issues this year. Kevin Tenney said there were not any issues at the concert and rodeos. Bags were limited at the concerts and there may end up being metal detectors/wanding at future concerts due to artist requirements.

Slaughter House on Grounds:

Helena area-based Old Salt Co-op approached the Fairgrounds about leasing land near the Multi-Purpose Building to build a meat processing facility on. The information has been sent to the County Commissioners and Old Salt Co-op will make a presentation at the September Fair Board meeting.

Naming Rights:

- Fairgrounds Manager Kevin Tenney said that due to the Fair, this issue has been on the back burner and it's time to move forward with getting bids on the naming rights to Exhibit Hall building (which would include the Entry Hall).
- Based on research of other major Fairgrounds facilities around the state as well as the dramatic increase of foot traffic and use of our facilities, the figure under consideration would be at least \$100,000. This would be the annual payment under a 5 year lease agreement.
- Bids will be procured through legal notices, social media, and personal meetings with potential sponsors.
- Photos of where the signs would be placed were distributed to the Board. Commissioner Tom Rolfe suggested the naming rights package include the sponsor name on the Fairgrounds front gate, or an additional sign at the front gate with the sponsor name.
- Kevin Tenney will distribute a list of potential sponsors to the Board for their review, and welcomes any additional sponsor ideas.

Other Business:

There was no other business.

Adjournment:

- Mark Menke moved to adjourn the meeting. Greg Pace seconded the motion. It passed unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 12:14pm.