

Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds – Fair Board Meeting Minutes
August 25, 2021 – 11:30 am
98 W. Custer Ave., Helena MT 59602

Attendees:

Board members: Phil Porrini, Allen Cormany, Greg Pace, Dave Duffy, Mark Menke, Judy Rolfe, Linda Grady, Jay Sherley, FayDee Hamilton, Mike Murray, Dirk Anderson

Lewis and Clark County Commissioner Andy Hunthausen

Staff: Kevin Tenney, Logan Gustafson, Sandy McIntyre.

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

Approval of Minutes:

There were no corrections or additions to the June 2021 minutes. Mike Murray motioned to approve the June 23, 2021 minutes, seconded by Dave Duffy. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

A number of Board members expressed “kudos” to the Fairgrounds staff for a successful and well-run Last Chance Stampede and Rodeo, especially in view of the 2020 hiatus due to the Covid pandemic.

Financial Report:

Kevin Tenney reviewed financials:

- Last Chance Stampede: Tickets, concessions, commercial booths and carnival revenue was up compared to 2019, with a preliminary estimate of an increase of 20% over 2019.
- The Fairgrounds is debt-free.

Operations Report:

Kevin Tenney reported on operations:

- Wind storm damage
 - An August wind storm toppled 6 trees on the fairgrounds, with roof damage to 3 barns. The \$7,380 in repair costs was covered by insurance.
- Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Department
 - The horses that are being held as evidence in an active legal case will continue to be at the Fairgrounds until the case is closed. They will most likely be here until spring and the Sheriff's Department is currently working on a plan for winter.
 - The horses are looking better, but cannot be adopted until the case is closed.
 - The Sheriff's Department is using Fairgrounds equipment to keep the horses.
 - Kevin is talking to the Sheriff's Department about exchanging rent owed the Fairgrounds for housing the horses for the Sheriffs' services at the Fair.

- Grounds Cleanup
 - The Fairgrounds maintenance staff generally has up to 10 temporary, seasonal employees to help with the Stampede and summer maintenance. In spite of attempting to fill these positions, only 2 positions were filled.
 - Priority right now is to get stalls cleaned for the August 27-29 high school rodeo. Last year, 3+ barns (approx. 44 stalls/barn) were rented for this event.
 - Weed management plan: There is a weed management plan for the Fairgrounds. The duck pond area is considered wetlands and originally the Fairgrounds was directed not to manipulate vegetation, though that changed and we are now allowed to manipulate vegetation. The Fairgrounds will be borrowing equipment from the Extension office to remove weeds from the duck pond area.
- Entry Hall
 - There is floor damage due to the Covid testing and vaccination clinics.
 - We are waiting for a quote on the work and are looking for available concrete companies to quote and do the work. 3 different companies scheduled meetings to discuss the work, and did not show up.
 - Repair costs will not be paid for by Fairgrounds.
 - Finding time to do the repairs is an issue due to booked events.
 - Lewis and Clark County Health Department is also interested in doing weekly Covid booster vaccine clinics beginning in October.
- Roads and Road Repairs
 - The RFQ to hire engineers is being advertised with a deadline of September 16 for bids.
 - Physical road work may get underway in Fall 2022.
- Main Gate Reader Board
 - Main gate reader board is currently not working and the sign company will be here next week to repair it.
- CARES Act and ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds
 - Commissioner Andy Hunthausen discussed the County's CARES and ARPA funds after numerous questions from Board members about Fairgrounds' projects that may qualify for the funds. Commissioner Hunthausen said the County is currently developing a process for applying for CARES and ARPA funds.

Events Report:

- Logan Gustafson gave an update on Events.
 - In August, the Mule Deer Foundation, Monster Truck Show and gun show all reported successful events with significant increases in attendance and revenue.
 - Based on 2020, the high school rodeo, scheduled for August 28-29 will probably fill most of the available stalls.
 - Larry the Cable Guy is scheduled for September 18, with tickets selling well. If the event would need to be cancelled due to Covid, we would definitely try to reschedule him.

Last Chance Stampede and Fair:

- As reported in the Financial Update, overall revenue is up from 2019.
- Attendance for the rodeo and carnival was up. Gate admission was not charged this year, so actual numbers are hard to estimate. However, Friday and Saturday night rodeo tickets sold out. Also, prolonged traffic congestion on Custer and Henderson indicate increased attendance.
- There were more Stampede sponsors this year, which resulted in more rodeo tickets comped. Rodeo tickets are part of the Stampede sponsorship packages.
- Fairgrounds maintenance was very short-staffed with only 2 temporary workers in addition to Fairgrounds staff. In spite of that, Kevin Tenney and Board members said that maintenance did a great job during Fair.
- Commercial booths were up with more outdoor exhibitors. 4-H indoor exhibits were down.
- The Fairgrounds is exploring using the Exhibit Hall for post-rodeo indoor concerts on Friday and Saturday nights. Beer sales would continue after the rodeo for the indoor concerts. The Exhibit Hall would host free indoor entertainment during the day and provide seating for eating. Large tents would be set up on the Promenade for vendors.
- Kevin is talking with StarPlex for a security contract in 2022.
- Kevin plans on meeting individually with Steering Committee members to talk about improvements for next year's Stampede.
- Linda Grady thanked the Fairgrounds for bringing in Dana Bowman to open the rodeo performances, saying he was "incredibly moving".
- Allen Cormany asked if not charging gate admission this year is considered a lack of revenue. Kevin Tenney said that while gate admission generally accounts for about \$30,000 in gross revenue, there were significant expenses associated with collecting gate admission including contracts for gate attendants as well as County accounting staff. No gate admission most likely brought in more attendance and there was an overall increase in gross revenue.

Other Business:

- Allen Cormany expressed his thanks to all Fairgrounds staff for their work during the Covid pandemic.
- Allen Cormany asked if the Fairgrounds had considered televising the Stampede rodeo on RFD-TV. Kevin said the Fairgrounds doesn't have sufficient technology (broadband) for that to happen.

Adjournment:

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