



NEBRASKA STATE FAIR BOARD
Meeting Minutes
Friday, October 20, 2023

The regular meeting of the Nebraska State Fair Board was held on Friday, October 20, 2023, at 1:00 pm at the Nebraska State Fair Administrative Offices in Grand Island, NE. Public notice of this meeting was published in the Grand Island Independent newspaper on October 13th & 14^h, 2023; posted to the Nebraska Public meeting calendar website; and on the Nebraska State Fair website. The public was invited to attend in person.

Roll call was read with the following Board members present: Dawn Caldwell, Chair; Boyd Strobe, Treasurer, via Zoom; Tom Schellpeper, Secretary; Bob Haag; Kevin Jorgensen; Lanna Hubbard, via Zoom; Steve Wehrbein; Tom Dinsdale, Ryan Hassebrook; and Brett Lindstrom, via Zoom. Absent: Jeff Kliment, Kathleen Lodi, Beth Smith.

Others in attendance:

Jaime Parr, Executive Director; Tammy Baker, Business Administrator; Lindsey Koepke, 1868 Foundation, via Zoom; Joe Stump, AMGL; Ray Massie, Marketing Director; Keaton Irwin, Sales Director; Karli Schulz, Events Director; Vaughn Sievers, Ag Director; Tina Thuernagle, Operations Director, via Zoom; and Jeff Bahr, Grand Island Independent.

Dawn Caldwell announced the meeting had been properly advertised as an open meeting and informed those in attendance of the posting location of the Open Meetings Act.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Motion made by Tom Dinsdale for Approval of Consent Agenda which included Regular Meeting Minutes of September 4, 2023.

Second by Bob Haag.

Upon roll call vote, motion to approve consent agenda passed unanimously.

Financial Report by Joe Stump & Jaime Parr

Motion made by Bob Haag to approve Financial Report for August 2023 for State Fair and Aksarben Stock Show.

Second by Tom Dinsdale.

Upon roll call vote, motion approved.

Motion made by Boyd Strobe to approve September 2023 Financials for State Fair and Aksarben Stock Show.

Second by Kevin Jorgensen.

Upon roll call vote, motion approved.

Board Committee Reports

Agriculture – Meeting postponed

Events by Steve Wehrbein

- **Recapped 2023 State Fair**
 - **County Fair Day and Board Reunion**
 - **Heritage and Pioneer Farm Families**
 - **List of Grand Marshalls in January at Convention**
 - **Veterans Day went well this year.**

- Changes slated for marching bands – staging area, times, locations due to new construction.
- Pleased with Opening Ceremonies.
- Tractor Pull, Sporting Events
 - May continue or go with something less expensive in 2024.
 - Karli has some ideas – will discuss.
- Demo Derby
- Karli will discuss concert information in her report.

Facilities by Tom Schellpeper

- Capital purchases – some equipment hasn't arrived yet.
- Windmill restoration – ongoing process
- ARPA funding projects – turning dirt within month.
 - MOUs signed.
 - Bids received (3)
 - Olssen letter of recommendation

Tom Schellpeper made a motion to approve Olssen Letter of Recommendation to award Elsberry Construction, LLC the contract for phase one of infrastructure improvements.

Second by Kevin Jorgensen.

Roll call vote, motion carried.

- Need to meet with all our entities to work on a strategic funding plan for future projects.
- Intention to have plans in place to match fundraising efforts.

Finance by Boyd Strobe

- Joe & Jaime reviewed financials in greater detail.
- Jaime reviewed status of CDs – few coming up for renewal.

Boyd Strobe moved to authorize Jaime Parr to negotiate the final renewal of CDs.

Second by Bob Haag.

Roll call vote. Motion carried.

- Keaton discussed vendor pricing.
 - Have not had an indoor vendor increase in six years (2017).

Boyd Strobe motioned to increase indoor commercial space fees by up to 14%.

Second by Lanna Hubbard.

Roll call vote. Motion passed.

- Karli gave presentation on 2023 Events.
 - Dirt events
 - Concerts
- Karli approached podium and made comments regarding concert budget.
 - Last year's budget increased to \$750,000 from year prior.
 - There will not be Bill Marshall Volleyball Classic in 2024, leaving room for more concerts in Events Center.
 - Proposed three (3) indoor shows and four (4) outdoor shows.
 - Prices for good acts are going up.
 - Unless we spend more, we'll consistently have lower ticket numbers.
 - Asked that Board approve a budget of \$1.5 million for up to seven (7) concerts in 2024.

Boyd Strobe motioned that the Board confirm Karli's budget request of \$1.5 million for 2024 concerts.

Second by Steve Wehrbein.

Roll call vote. Motion carried.

- Jaime currently doing personal assessments with staff (Dept Heads).
 - Discussed Cost of Living and Merit Rewards for upcoming salary changes.
- IAFE will be held in Salt Lake City after Thanksgiving.
 - Policies provide for two (2) from Executive Committee and two (2) from Board to attend.
 - Jaime presented a budget timeline – by December, should be able to pass budget, giving full consideration.

4-H Committee Report – Kathleen Lodl not present

- Survey results from 4-H exhibitors will be available next month.

FFA by Ryan Hassebrook

- Ryan commented that FFA exhibitors survey results will be included in report next month.
- Will post State Fair Wrap-Up next week for FFA side.
- Team will look at what went well and improvement opportunities.
- Scheduling time to meet with State Fair Ag Team.
- Appreciate Fair Board support in 2023 and looking forward to 2024.

Executive Committee by Dawn Caldwell

- Did not meet.

HR Committee – Beth Smith not in attendance

- HR and Exec Committee will be working on Assessment/Review for Jaime in Executive Director position.

Staff Department Reports

Sales by Keaton Irwin

- Referred to handout – 2023 State Fair Booth & Space Turnover Rates
- Congratulated Jenny Lech, Sales Manager – 35 days on job as Fair started. Did a wonderful job.
- Strategic Plan outlines seven (7) 5-year objectives.
 - Focusing on Managing Vendor Turnover to 20% or less.
 - Overall turnover rate of 14% increase over 2022 – attributed to relocation of 4-H/FFA building.
 - 30% cancellations – average consistent with numbers from last three years.
 - Improving Customer, Patron, Exhibitor, Sponsor, and Volunteer Satisfaction
 - Positives – cumulative satisfaction rate – 95% (5% increase over 2022)
 - Shipping & Receiving Team
 - Outstanding Volunteers
 - Food vendors reported increase (overall 11%) in numbers.
 - Opportunities for improvement:
 - Move-out logistics
 - Clear building hours
 - Post-Fair communication
 - Enhancing vendor lounge
 - Generators and down-time
 - Sales Department will now focus on feedback to make improvements for 2024 Fair.
 - Will continue to review and create 2024 budget.

Marketing by Ray Massie

- Numbers – How did we improve?
 - Increased attendance:
 - 311,909 – State Fair

- 40,000+ -- Aksarben
- Digital Assets:
 - 561,000 page views on mobile app and 8,000+ downloads
 - 716,000 web views (StateFair.org)
 - 1.4 million views of Facebook content
 - 173,000 people looked at our website.
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Sponsorship by Ray Massie (for Shirley McCallum)

- Sponsorship retention in 2023 is 95%
- 14.5% revenue increase
- Moving sponsorship recaps online in 2024.
- 88% satisfaction rate among sponsorship personnel (same as 2022)
- 88% satisfaction in sponsorship value
- 64% recommendation rate (2022 – 22%)
- Marketing staff has removed their “Rookie Stripes”

Events by Karli Schulz

- Ticketed Events:
 - 2023 lineup received great feedback.
 - Profit/Loss reports shared with Finance Committee.
 - Working on offers for 2024 with Board direction and new budget.
- Grounds Entertainment – well received.
 - Few things confirmed for 2024 so far.
 - IAFE Convention coming up.
 - Grounds Entertainment booking early this year.
- Events surveys:
 - 92% satisfaction rate – great feedback
- Wrapping up 2023 financials and getting 2024 budget ready.
- Education – attended International Entertainment Buyer’s Association Conference in Nashville.
 - Mainly for those buying large entertainment (National Acts)
 - Met agents, buyers, other Fairs – gained agent and artist’s point of view.
- Super thankful for Olivia who was only full-time for about a month before Fair started.

Agriculture by Vaughn Sievers

- Did not meet today, but plan to on October 30.
- Commended Ag Team for execution, discipline and staying accountable to budget.
- Thanked all who helped with State Fair & Aksarben Stock Show.
- Thanked Jeff Kliment, Chairman of Ag Committee, for his leadership and guidance.
- Competitive Events – 79% satisfaction rate
- Livestock/Equine – 84% satisfaction rate
- US Foods Arena Stage and Livestock/Equine Events – audio conflicts
- Fieldhouse – move from Concourse building to Fieldhouse: space constrictions.
- Education moved to Bosselman Conference Center – reduced traffic.
- Exhibits stacked up due to lack of space.
- Poultry/rabbit area – largest growing area over recent years. Running out of room quickly.

Operations by Tina Thuernagle

- First year as Operations Director (13th year total) SUCCESSFUL!
 - Recognized Operations Team individually.
 - Thanked Fonner Park Maintenance Team.
 - Thanked Board members for engagement.
 - Recognized entire State Fair Staff Team.
- Working on budgets, capital purchases, and plans for 2024 Nebraska State Fair and Aksarben Stock Show.

1868 Foundation – Lindsey Koepke

- Foundation has had great year financially: 1.4 million in assets (thru September 2023) – considering \$250,000 investment toward projects, programs, and capital.
- 4-H/FFA premiums went over well with donors.
- \$25,000 for Volunteer Program
- Contributed through programming:
 - Chainsaw Carver
 - Three Dog Night
 - \$150,000 for Livestock barn screens
- Truck raffle
 - Opportunity to try something new.
 - Helped Foundation with exposure.
 - Exploring new options to enhance this guest experience.
- Blue Ribbon Kickoff/Great Steak Debate presented by Tom Dinsdale Automotive
 - Brought in over \$100,000.
 - Tent size bigger – attendance increased by about 100.
- Board met Wednesday, also met with members of the Finance Committee and Dawn Caldwell.
 - Discussed fundraising mechanisms: feasibility and potential.
 - Fundraising for next steps of ARPA.
- Brought on two Board Members this year.
- Reaching out to Nebraska businesses who deferred donations to “next fall”.
- Thanked Nebraska State Fair staff, Board members, and donors.

Executive Director’s Report by Jaime Parr

- Meeting weekly 1:1 with Directors, group of department heads twice a month, and weekly staff meetings.
- Aksarben Stock Show update
 - Thursday – check-in day: Move-in went well.
 - Friday – Market show; Showmanship closed out Friday night.
 - Saturday – Market show and Grand Drive
 - Sunday – Breeding and Judging Contest
 - Vendor Trade Show throughout.
 - Beyond the Ring feature
 - Study Hall
 - Indoor play area for kids
 - Outdoor play area for exhibitor-age kids
 - Movie Theatre
 - College Fair – 15 schools participated.
 - Entries up – beef, swine, goats, and broilers – 3,386 animals shown by 1,304 exhibitors.
 - Placer numbers (attendance) – 40,000
- Nebraska State Fair met and exceeded financial goals.
- 2023 Fair wrapped up.
- Finalizing settlements with partners.
- Feedback from Volunteer Superintendents.
- Staff Team, Supervisors, Managers – went through feedback submitted by Team.
- Presented awards to Battle of the Businesses through Volunteer Program.
- Administrative:
 - Maria has joined front desk as support.
 - Team working through annual employee evaluations.
- Will produce budget draft in November – possible Board vote in December.
- Fonner Park Partnership
 - Boer Goat Show
 - Grounds handed back over to Fonner Park.

- Elite Casino ground works – construction site setting up.
- Phase 1 of ARPA project underway.
- CERT Training – put on by Hall County Emergency Management
 - Disaster Preparedness Training
- IAFE Safety and Security Bootcamp
 - 6 virtual sessions
 - Communication w/peer Fairs
 - Culminated at South Carolina State Fair this week.
- IAFE Annual Convention reminder
- Community Give Back
 - Harvest of Harmony Parade
 - Field Contest
 - Rotary meetings
 - Kiwanis meetings
- Appreciate Staff Team, Seasonal Managers, Pre-Fair Volunteers, and Board members.

Next meeting: November 10, 2023 at 1pm.

Motion to adjourn made by Steve Wehrbein.

Seconded by Bob Haag.

All in favor. Motion passed.

Minutes of October 20, 2023

Nebraska State Fair Approved:

Date: November 10, 2023

By: _____

Tom Schellpeper, Board Secretary