

FLATHEAD COUNTY FAIR COMMISSION

Fair Board Workshop September 17, 2013

A workshop of the Flathead County Fair Commission was convened at 6:00 pm, September 17, 2013 in the conference room of the Solid Waste office, 4098 Hwy. 93 N., Kalispell.

Members present: Wes McAlpin, Sam Nunnally, Michael Moffitt, Butch Woolard, and Gary Krueger were present.

Staff present: Mark Campbell

Guest present:

Pam Holmquist, County Commissioner

Cal Scott, County Commissioner

Sue Austin, MT Board of Horse Racing

Sharon Askelson

Ron Thibert

Vona Sundberg, neighbor of fairgrounds

Rose Behrens, neighbor of fairgrounds

Lynnette Hintze, Daily Inter-Lake

Mike Pence, Flathead County

Public comment: Sue Austin provided a report of the 4-day horse race in Great Falls this summer. She outlined the financial contributions, race handle, and attendance. Volunteers were key to the success of this year's meet with happy customers throughout. She would like to see it happen in Kalispell. Vona and Rose are representing the neighbors and are seeking information about what is being planned for in the future.

Fairgrounds planning and project development: Wes turned the meeting over to Mark who explained the packet was in chronological order. The first step in planning was to focus efforts on the exterior defining entrances, some character elements, public access and amenities. He described the concept with a public walkway and its dual purpose. The landscape architect estimate for the total was slightly over \$1 million. Mark described the concept and key focus areas of the interior plan which included vehicular and pedestrian movement, grandstand view seats, landscaping, and restroom improvements. Populous, a company experienced in fairground re-design was retained in 2011 and reviewed current operations/facilities along with providing the interior concept slides that were shared. A quick overview of the 23 slides was shared.

Public meetings were held about potential changes to the Fairgrounds in May and July of 2012. Comments were aligned very closely with general concepts. A summary listing of those comments was shared with each member.

Cal Scott identified that the first priority of any development to the Fairgrounds is to design the infrastructure. This includes utilities, storm water, and general distribution of services. Taking into account the plan and public desires, a general design could be accomplished now preventing future fixes. He also has sensitivity to the race track and concerned that long-track racing isn't coming back to

the level it was previously. Mark stated his appreciation for the short-term support of the infrastructure plan. The decision of race-track changes is 5-7 years in the future. The discussion about its future should take place.

Gary agreed with Cal about the infrastructure need but said it would be difficult without knowing more specifics about the changes. The Fair needs to move further along with the master plan. Mark stated he has not had the time nor the expertise to finalize the plan utilizing in-house support.

Michael identified the positive aspect of the west and east fairground halves with development heavy on the west needing the detail while the other can take more time.

Gary asked if there was more work on these details needed and the timeline to finish this. There are items that need more discussion but much has already occurred that could proceed. A three to six month time period was estimated to complete the plan. Many resources and information collection aspects are already completed.

Pam stated she thought the concepts are fairly good but very important to keep it as a fair with its traditional aspects. She is not convinced on the racetrack changes at this time and more conversation should occur. She heard many positive comments on the operations and thinks we're moving the right direction. Parking remains an issue and concurs with moving 7th Ave to the north which makes the fairgrounds whole for safety reasons.

Budget breakdown: Mark shared a budget breakdown by taxes, fair revenues, and non-fair revenues. The fair represents 74% of the total revenue and 68% of expenses. Operating funds are self generated and it will take a few more years to establish and maintain this. Gary recognized that non-fair usage is critical to developing and funding the concept changes and maintaining the facility. Butch stated the non-fair use days have been increasing to support this direction.

Sponsorship review: Mark shared the sponsorship program material and revenues generated by those participating. Potential growth in this area is important to overall fairgrounds improvements. This program must also be kept in balance to not commercialize the annual fair.

Market livestock sale: Mark provided a quick overview of how the Jr. Livestock auction is operated and functions. The Chamber Ag committee is critical and provides the volunteers and budget authority. Wes noted that other fairs charge up to 10% for their auction fund.

Wes asked for any additional questions or public comment. Sharon belongs to a craft club that holds two events each year at the fairgrounds so is trying to do their part. This is much appreciated. Ron asked why the Farmers Market relocated to the FVCC instead of the fairgrounds. Word was passed to them but they chose the college for consistency in access.

Wes asked for input on the next step. Gary would like to have Mark come back to the Commissioners and revisit steps needed to complete the master plan. All were in agreement this was important. Pam would like to make sure it includes a timeframe and costs.

Discussion about the historical significance of the grandstands was held. Pam cautioned about too much involvement of other agencies directing the process.

Gary asked about the condition of the current food concession buildings in respect to food safety. A large effort by the Health Department and groups in the past two years has made for very good ratings this year. The organizations are very important to the fair but changing with time. All stands are inspected prior to and daily during the fair.

No further business was discussed. We thanked everybody for coming. The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Submitted by: mc

Approved as submitted:

W - mc
Chair

10/10/13
Date