

FAIR



VIEWS

THE SHOW PLACE

OF AGRICULTURE

September 2017

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Washington State Fairs Association

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I'm writing this article for the Washington State Fairs Association (WSFA) upcoming newsletter, in just over a month we will be meeting as an association for the 2017 annual convention. The WSFA Board of Directors and the Executive Secretary are working hard in completing the final touches to the program. I'm excited to share that Jeremy Parson CFE, CEO/Manager, Clay County Fair in Spencer, Iowa, will be our featured keynote Speaker with the topic, "Does your community know how important the fair is and why it needs caretakers." Also, we have invited the State Veterinarian, Dr. Joe Baker, DVM, to speak on Animal Health Trends, as well as the Director of Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), Derek Sandison, to speak on topics of interest to the fairs.

The greatest benefits of a convention are circumstantial, often found in the seam of experience. The chance conversation in the coffee line could make all the difference. As such, don't feel pressured by the structure. Of course, as an association, our hope is that you enjoy the full agenda. I read recently, many frequent convention-goers claim that their greatest convention experiences happened during the "downtime."

In addition, business of the association is required to be conducted at every convention. This year is no different. We will have two Board members to elect as well as a By-Law amendment recommendation to consider. If you are a voting delegate, you will need to attend the Annual Business meeting. This is scheduled for Saturday October 21, 2017, from 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

As everyone has heard, the legislators did finally come to an agreement on a state operating budget for the next two years with only hours to spare before the government would shut down. Given the importance of the school funding and a host of other issues, we are fortunate that the Governor's budget did include the Fair Funding of \$4 million for the next two years. This is the same amount that has been allocated since 2002. By all of us working together getting the word to the legislators, made a big difference in the legislative process. We were out there together, visiting and writing Representatives and Senators, educating them on the purpose and value of the Fair Fund and it paid off!

On July 20, after 193 days, the longest legislative session in our state's history ended without the legislature agreeing on a Capital Budget! What does the Capital Budget mean to the Fairs? This means the Washington State Department of Agriculture will be unable to provide capital improvement grants for fairs. Previous years, Washington State Department of Agriculture received funding from the Capital Budget in amount of \$2 million to be distributed to eligible fairs for Health and Safety improvements on fairgrounds. Last year, they received 92 submissions for proposed projects, with the Fairs Commission recommending approval of 52 of those requests. This could mean, for the next two years, no grant program for fairs unless legislators approve a capital budget. It is unknown, at this time, when a capital budget will be approved.

It's never too early to start looking ahead at next year's Legislative day in Olympia. In the meantime, mark your calendar for Thursday, February 22, 2018 for the Legislative day in Olympia. John Morrison, Heather Hanson, and I have been reviewing the legislative process and, at the same time, working with Teresa Norman with the Department of Agriculture. They have decided to take the lead and move forward with updating the Fair Statutes and the request for increased funding. If this makes it through the legislative process and becomes a "Bill", this will be our focus during the legislative day in Olympia. We will provided more information on the subject during the convention.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2017 WSFA Annual Convention.

Terry Atchison

WSFA President, Walla Walla Fair & Rodeo





Jeremy Parsons
WSFA
Convention
Keynote Speaker
 Friday, October 20th at
 approx. 9:30 AM
 Sponsored by IAFE

Take Care

Does your community know how important the fair is and why it needs caretakers?

We all wear many different hats and hold many different titles at our fairs (often it's multiple hats and titles on the same day – more often, It's multiple hats and titles on the same day at the same time). For some, we are the CEO's or managers of our organizations; others are volunteer superintendents. Some of us literally unlock the gates every morning and shut the lights off at night. Others might order ribbons or sell tickets. Some might clean the restrooms or the barns. But despite the varied titles, hats, duties and responsibilities, we all have the same job at our respective fairs – we are the caretakers. Parsons provides the tools to “Take Care” of your fair, specifically how to do simple strategic planning, track your economic impact, promote your local relevance, and turn your Board into positive advocates.

Jeremy Parson, CFE has served as CEO/Manager of the Clay County Fair in Spencer, Iowa, since November 2011. Parsons also served as executive director of the Missouri Ste Fair Foundation, and prior to that, spent 11 years as a high school English Teacher and basketball/track coach so his summers could be free to work at the Iowa State Fair and later the Missouri State Fair. Originally from Leon, Iowa, his three main priorities beside the fair sector are his faith, his family and the Chicago Cubs. He and his wife, Keisi have three sons (Creighton, Silas, and Milo) and are active members of the Spencer First Baptist Church.

Jeremy will take this subject a step further in a session following at 10:30 AM titled . . .

Take Care Continued.

WSFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017

PRESIDENT

Terry Atchison 2011 - 2018

Position #5

Walla Walla Fair & Frontier Days

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Erin Gurtel 2015 - 2019

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Mickey Webb 2015 - 2019

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VICE PRESIDENT

Tom Muchoney 2013 - 2017

Position #2

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John Morrison 2011 - 2018

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Roylene Crawford 2017

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Tom Gwin 2013 - 2017

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Sue McIntire 2016 - 2020

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Updating Fair statutes and the legislative process

The law governing how the Fair Fund is allocated was written in 1961. It is in need of updating.

Washington State laws, also known as RCWs can only be changed by the legislature. Laws set state policy, rules implement that policy. After the legislature passes changes to laws, state agencies write rules (WACs) to implement those laws. Only the Washington Department of Agriculture can change the rules that govern how the Fair Fund is used.

For the 2018 legislative session, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, (WSDA) has submitted a bill request to the Governor's office updating the Fair Funding law. Since WSDA is a cabinet agency, their bill requests must be approved by the Governor's office.

WSDA's proposal is limited to updating the statute, it does not request an increase in funding.

If the Governor's office approves the request, WSDA will ask legislators to sponsor the bill when the legislative session begins in January. If the Governor's office does not approve the request, Washington State Fairs Association can still go forward with asking legislators to sponsor the bill. It will be introduced in both the House and the Senate. It will have a public hearing before the Ag Committee in each house where Fair supporters can testify and legislators can ask questions. Even though the bill does not increase funding, we should be prepared to answer questions about funding. After Ag Committee hearings, the bill may have to go through fiscal committees, then the Rules Committee, pass the House or Senate floor, then move to the other house and repeat the process. If all of that occurs successfully, the law governing the Fair Fund will be updated. We will need volunteers to write to their legislators and ask them to support the bill.

What does the bill do?

It updates the declaration of public interest and definitions by deleting the words, "welfare of farm people and rural living" and adding "educate the public about the production of food and fiber and promoting rural economic development."

It deletes outdated language from past years.

It combines two sections that deal with allocations from the fair fund.

It adds language that allows the director of agriculture to waive the eligibility requirement of holding a fair two consecutive years immediately preceding an application for funding if a fair is not held due to a natural disaster such as a flood or wildfire.

Under duties of the Fairs Commission language is added about evaluating fairs to help determine merit.

Under current law, 85% of the Fair Fund is distributed to fairs. The remaining 15% may be used for special assistance grants. Of that, up to 5% may be used for administration including to cover Fair Commission expenses. The bill would increase the amount distributed to fairs to 95% leaving the remaining 5% for administration. The bill eliminates special assistance grants. Note that these grants have not been awarded since 1998 when the fair fund lost revenue from pari-mutual betting. Since then, fair grants have been coming from the capital budget.

It eliminates the cap on reimbursement for premiums for community fairs. Eliminating this cap will not affect allocations, because community fairs are currently receiving far less than what they pay out and the amount of money available for each category of fair is determined by the fair commission.

Each year, the commissioners take the total amount of money available in the Fair Fund and divide it into three buckets - youth fairs, community fairs, county and area fairs. There is no formula for the amount that goes into each bucket, it is based on past allocations. Once the money is in the bucket, a formula is applied to calculate the exact amount that goes to each fair. The same formula is used for both youth and community fairs. The formula considers premiums paid and merit rating. (The merit rating includes such things as gate receipts.) A more complex formula is used for county and area fairs. It also eliminates the reporting of premiums and prizes because this information is not used by the department during the allocation process.

This language can be modified further before a bill is introduced. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask.

Heather Hansen
WSFA Government Affairs