

Minutes
Washington County Fair Complex Board
Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Convened: 4:30 pm

FAIR BOARD:

Chairman Rich Vial
Vice Chairman Herb Hirst
Board Member W. Rafe Flagg
Board Member Kathy Christy
Board Member Ken Madden
Board Member Dan Logan - Excused
Board Member Mike Steward - Excused

STAFF:

Don Hillman, Executive Director
Lisa DuPre, Marketing/Events Director
Leah Perkins, Fair Coordinator

Chair Vial called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m., and welcomed the audience. Chair Vial opened time for Oral Communication for comments from the public on items not on the regular agenda. With no individuals from the public requesting time to speak, Chair Vial moved on to the Consent Agenda.

1. Consent Agenda

Motion by Board Member Hirst to approve the Consent Agenda. Second by Board Member Flagg. Motion carried 5-0.

2. Special Reports

A. Airshow & Airport Report – Vice Chair Hirst reported that the Airshow will be held on the August 11th & 12th. Not sure which jet team will be present. Members of the Airshow Committee are currently at their Air Show Convention (ICAS).

B. Fair Visioning Committee Report – None.

C. Boosters/Coalition Liaison Report – With Board Members Logan and Steward excused, Boosters President Dave Rohrer reported that following the Fair Complex Board meeting that the Boosters at their meeting tonight will be discussing their options regarding Fair Complex Board appointments and what action they will be taking. President Rohrer also reported that the Boosters would be having a potluck at their meeting tonight.

D. Treasurer Report – Board Member Flagg reported that staff is working with the County Chief Financial Officer to provide additional detail for the Frite Lites program.

E. 4-H Report – Terry Palmer, OSU Extension Agent, reported that they are making plans for the upcoming County Fair and that she has met with Fair Coordinator, Leah Perkins to discuss the 4-H budget. Ms Palmer further noted that they are recruiting for vacant superintendent positions; the Day Camp will not be at the County Fair this year; and that the Horse Fair will be held the second week in July. Ms Palmer thanked the Board for allowing use of the buildings for events and club meetings.

F. Operations Report – Executive Director Hillman reported that the Hmong New Year festival went well; the AKC Dog Show is moving back to the Expo Center and the 4-H Horse Fair will be taking over those dates; and that Terry Amato, Sponsorship Coordinator, has signed new rodeo sponsors.

G. Other, if any – None

3. Old Business

A. Redevelopment Update – Chair Vial stated that there is no update.

Board Member Flagg inquired about the question that was asked last month as to whether the OPUS Letter of Intent needs to formally be closed by the Fair Complex Board.

Executive Director Hillman reported that he had spoken to County Counsel and they said that it is in the hands of the County Commissioners.

B. Other – Board Member Christy gave an update on the 4-H Scholarship for Jeannie Leeson.

4. New Business.

A. Renaissance Festival – Executive Director Hillman referred to page 33 of the Board packet and also noted the additional articles that have been printed, a packet of photos, and information from the Royal Faires website. Hillman reported that representatives from Royal Faires visited the Fair Complex in September looking for a place to locate a new renaissance festival. Staff has done research to find out information about these types of events and Royal Faires.

Executive Director Hillman explained that this part of Oregon is being looked at because of its central location and demographics. Hillman reported that he recently visited the North Carolina Renaissance Festival operated by Royal Faires, to see firsthand the facilities and event.

Executive Director Hillman noted that most Renaissance Festivals are located in rural settings outside of major metropolitan areas, so people have to driving some distance to get to the events. Royal Faires is very interested in our metropolitan area, the adjacent

light rail system and Washington County's progressive demographic. Hillman further noted that Royal Faires would like the proposed Renaissance Festival to be up and running by July 2008. Royal Faires expects to locate a Renaissance Festival somewhere in Oregon, but prefers it to be here at the Fair Complex.

Chair Vial asked Hillman if staff's current thinking is that this event would be compatible with the County Fair.

Executive Director Hillman reported that it was compatible with the County Fair and that many concepts have been discussed so as to allow the County Fair to be protected and stand alone. After staff met with Board Member Logan, he suggested that there was enough acreage at the Fair Complex to accommodate both events and that staff should be able to determine how both events could operate at the same time. Hillman continued by saying that the most important aspect of a County Fair is the livestock facilities and most other things associated with the County Fair, such as the carnival, entertainment, exhibits, etc., are portable in nature.

Chair Vial asked if the organizers from the Renaissance Festival were looking at July and August to hold their event.

Executive Director Hillman reported that it was.

Chair Vial asked about the Rodeo Arena.

Executive Director Hillman explained that the footing for rodeo was that same for jousting and that the arena could be shared by both events with the arena hosting rodeo in the evenings during the County Fair.

Chair Vial asked if the showrings would be on the County Fair portion of the layout.

Executive Director Hillman reported that they were. Hillman also talked briefly about cross promoting and marketing.

Board Member Madden asked how this process would work.

Executive Director Hillman explained that this is an interim event requesting a 20-year agreement with the organizers from Royal Faires making certain improvements to the facilities to support their activities.

Chair Vial asked what would happen to other events that are held at the Fair Complex.

Executive Director Hillman reported that the Main Exhibit Hall will still be available for others to use throughout the remainder of year.

Chair Vial asked representatives from Royal Faires to address the Board.

Bob Levine, CFO of Royal Faires, introduced himself and other members of his team, Jeff Siegel and David Bank. Mr. Levine explained that renaissance festivals operate around the country with his company having started the one in Arizona, 19 years ago, and one in North Carolina, 13 years ago. Their company decided they wanted to start another festival and their research brought them to Oregon, and eventually the Washington County Fair Complex.

Mr. Levine noted that there is another site in Oregon who has expressed an interest, but they are putting them on hold for now because they feel that the Fair Complex is more suited to their needs.

Mr. Levine noted that there are 19 other major renaissance festivals being held nationwide stating that they are individually owned and not a franchise. He further explained that these festivals are about food, entertainment and crafts, and is an audience participation event. There are 12 entertainment stages and over 100 street entertainers, hundreds of artisans selling handmade items, and a 5000 seat jousting arena.

Mr. Levine explained that they feel the annual Washington County Fair is a good fit with the Renaissance Festival and they would like to have the County Fair be with them for all 14 days instead of its current four-day format. Mr. Levine explained that they would be investing \$2-3 million in upgrades to the existing infrastructure.

Board Member Flagg asked how long it took to get to the attendance numbers that they are currently seeing at their other locations.

Mr. Levine reported that they started with around 5000 people per day and every year thereafter, the average increased around 1000 people per day.

Board Member Flagg asked how many local individuals could be involved.

Mr. Levine reported that in the beginning it would be mostly national touring individuals, but as the event progresses it would do a turn around to be primarily local vendors and actors. Levine also noted that most of the major shows run in August and September. The only major show in July and early August is the one outside of Chicago and some of those vendors are looking for other options. Mr. Levine indicated that he needs to be able to sign these people in February and March at the Arizona show in order to get them for the proposed 2008 Renaissance Festival.

Board Member Flagg also asked if they had done an economic impact study to see what impact these festivals have on a community.

Mr. Levine stated that they have not had a reason to have such a study commissioned, but the artisans and entertainers stay in hotel rooms, buy groceries, gasoline and other services.

Board Member Christy asked how flexible the facades and the festival locations would be should a new exposition building be built and would need some of the property where the festival maybe located.

Mr. Levine stated that he would not say no to anything at this time. The contract would have to have flexibility on both sides, but they just need to know if the Fair Complex Board would even want them here, if not, they will move on.

Chair Vial asked about noise conflicts in relation to livestock rings.

Mr. Levine said that their entertainment is not loud rock music or anything like that, but it's more like chamber music. They do mic their entertainers, but it's not loud. Mr. Levine noted that they are more concerned about the noise from the County Fair with the carnival rides, concerts and the noise from the Airport.

Chair Vial asked how they keep things secure.

Mr. Levine reported that they would build a stucco wall around the site; it would not be chain link. The entrance would be a castle with gates and after they close each day, the grounds would be locked. They also hire security.

Executive Director Hillman asked about how the finances would be handled.

Mr. Levine stated that this was still being discussed; everything is still on the table. It's currently proposed that Royal Faires pay a minimum fee for use of the facility with a charge for parking being kept by the Fair Complex. \$500,000 is currently being asked and it's not out of the question. Currently their investors for the Arizona festival are getting a \$150,000 return, and the investors of the North Carolina festival are getting a \$50,000 return. Mr. Levine states that they never go in under funded. They will need \$2-3 million to put in to the facility with those improvements staying with the Fair Complex when they leave.

Board Member Madden asked if they owned or leased the property at their current festivals.

Mr. Levine noted that they lease both properties at a much lower level, but unlike the other two sites, the Fair Complex already has the infrastructure. Mr. Levine also noted that there is a small renaissance festival in Corvallis on one weekend in September, they are a dedicated group and they do include members of the SCA.

Chair Vial asked others to come forward from the audience that wished to make comments on this agenda item.

Judy Willard – Thinks this is a great opportunity. She has seen and been associated with an event like this in Southern California, and in the day where families are spread apart, this type of event helps bring families together. It also has a great economic impact from

the tourists it would bring in, from hotel rooms to gas stations. It would have a trickle down effect.

Merle Eakin - Thanked Bob Levine for the presentation, it was exciting to hear. Mr. Eakin noted that he personally doesn't know if this is a really good deal or a really bad deal. He also noted that there is a committee that is supposed to be set-up and needs to have the committee organized first. The time frame is too quick and feels too skeptical. Also they were told that the Main Exhibit Hall is about to fall down, so they needed to beware. Also, there is not enough parking and the Airshow was not mentioned.

Board Member Christy asked Executive Director to address parking during the County Fair.

Executive Director Hillman noted that we have plenty of parking and that even on our busiest night, when cars are being parked on the Quadrant property, there was still parking spaces available on the west side of 34th Avenue. Hillman stated that there would be approximately 50 acres of parking available to support the County Fair and Renaissance Festival if they were to operate at the same time. There is ten acres of parking on the west side of 34th Avenue, 20 acres of parking on the east side of 34th Avenue, and there is 20 acres of parking at the Sports Complex.

Board Member Madden noted that we have to make a decision as to whether this is something worth pursuing and define our relationship with Royal Faires. Then we can present this to the Committee mentioned by Mr. Eakin.

Chair Vial indicated that he would be asking for a motion to either instruct staff to continue discussions with Royal Faires or to instruct staff to discontinue their discussions at this time.

Dillon Willey – Concerned about the SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism). Her recommendation is that the Fair Complex checkouts the SCA, read their bylaws, check their websites, and see what their beliefs are. Certain aspects could be enjoyable, but there are risks. There are about 125 members in Washington County and they are very strong in Ashland and Albany.

Linda Moekler – Indicates that she represent the Middle Aged Housewives and believes that given the contentious relationships that exist between the various groups in the audience, the recent redevelopment efforts over the last two years, and the County Commissioners' commitment to form a work group to look at the uses for the Fair Complex, it would be imprudent to move forward with a 20-year lease before the committee finishes it work in early Spring. Also noted that some people view this is an attempt to short circuit the public process.

Board Member Madden noted that the Fair Complex did not approach this group, but that this group came to us with this proposal. Board Member Madden acknowledged that certain individuals and groups look at the Board with criticism and animosity, but both sides need to open their minds and move forward.

Board Member Christy noted that the Board has a responsibility to look in to matters such as this and bring it forward for discussion.

Judy Marsh – Thanked Executive Director Hillman for meeting with members of the Boosters. Wanted to report that she talked to Board Member Logan and he said he did not draw the line on the map that is currently being shown, but that the line that he would draw would include Friendship Square.

Kathy Wnorowski – Asked if this has to be taken to the County Commissioners. Also noted that she has been to these festivals and the traffic is incredible, this needs to be investigated. Asked Board Member Christy why the Fair Complex has to look in to new business venture.

Chair Vial clarified that due to the long term nature of this event, the agreement would have to go before the County Commissioners.

Board Member Christy noted that the Fair Complex has to be fiscally responsible and to make sure that the Complex operates in the black. Looking in to proposals such as this is prudent.

Inez Griffels – Hasn't heard anybody mention the Horse Fair. She is a horse leader and knows that 4H uses the arena for a week in July.

Chair Vial indicated that Horse Fair would be considered carefully as to compatibility.

Ed Kristovich – Stated that the name of this facility should be the Washington County Fair & Culture Complex. This festival would be adding culture. Asked about financing of the event and if this event needed stockholders. Seems like a pretty good idea. Also thanked Don Hillman for doing a good job of explaining this at the meeting.

Debbie VanRoekle – Asked that her questions be answered either at the next Board meeting or in writing. (1) Does the Fair Board plan on honoring the County Commissioners comprehensive plan? (2) What are the plans for Horse Fair and the arena on a 12-month basis? (3) Has any research been done on the renaissance festivals being held in Lane and Clackamas Counties? (4) Has the land on the east side of 34th Avenue been considered? (5) What is the plan for parking? Ms VanRoekle stated that she has been e-mailing people in North Carolina and she said that traffic is a nightmare because of this event and it already takes from an hour to an hour-and-a-half to park at our County Fair.

Board Member Madden commented on the question regarding honoring the Commissioners' comprehensive plans about the Fair Complex and noted that there is no reason to oppose the County Commissioners' efforts.

Mark Leiberg – Lives on the other side of the MAX light rail. Has been walking his dog on this property for years and the property is never used except for the fair. It just sits

there. This is a prime piece of real estate. This is the perfect opportunity and it doesn't interfere with other things that go on here. Should not be passed up. Also noted that the County Fair in Veneta Oregon is very successful, much like a Renaissance Festival, and has a lot of national and local artisans.

Barbara Johnson – Wondering about drinking at the event and how would the liquor license be handled? Would this compete with the Farmers Market or the County Fair? How would it impact the sports fields? Would this compete with Robin Hood Days in Sherwood? Will this event need a zoning change? What about parking? Why can't this event be held in August and September?

Chair Vial noted that this event would not require a zone change.

Ron VanRoeckle – Asked what the estimated income would be from this event and if the Fair Complex has signed a lease with the City regarding the ball fields.

Chair Vial stated it is unknown, but the goal could be \$500,000. There is a lot of details to be work out. Also noted that the Fair Complex has not signed a lease with the City regarding the ball fields.

Billy Scudder – Before moving to Oregon, he learned to be a performer by working at Renaissance Faires in California. Has lived in Oregon for two years and now teaches theater and mime to school children. This festival will bring education to children. Mr. Scudder also noted that he is an ordained minister.

Chair Vial provided the organizers an opportunity to provide additional comments.

Bob Levine – Wanted to let people know that he feels that the MAX light rail will go a long way to mitigating parking problems.

Jeff Siegel – Clarified that Royal Faires has no participation with the SCA as an organization. Some members of the SCA might take part in their event, but they are not affiliated with Royal Faires. Mr. Siegel explained that their event is to entertainment everyone. Mr. Siegel also addressed the concerns about traffic congestion in North Carolina and stated that their traffic is bad Monday through Friday as well, as it is throughout the country.

Bob Levine – Wants to let the Board know that February 1st is not a deadline, but a timetable. He can not let it drag out to July, but if he could know by the beginning of April that would be OK. Would like to spend the next 30 to 90 days to see if they can work out the details with the Fair Complex.

Motion by Board Member Hirst to direct staff to move ahead with discussions with Royal Faires. Second by Board Member Madden.

Board Member Christy stated that she feels whatever comes out of the Commissioners' committee regarding the future uses of the Fair Complex that they can work with this and adjustments can be made. Does not see it as a conflict with that committee.

Chair Vial stated that the maximum amount of flexibility would need to be built in to any agreement so that a buy-out or a move could take place, and that there is still along way away from a decision.

Board Member Madden stated that he supports pursuing this proposal and the Commissioners' proposed committee to look at future uses of the Fair Complex. Encourages public support of both as we move forward.

Board Member Flagg stated that it's not often that an interim event comes along that has the potential to generate this kind of revenue that also includes improvements. Stated that he is not compelling Executive Director Hillman to enter into negotiations, but would see it prudent to move forward with more investigation.

Chair Vial called for the vote. Motion Carried 5-0.

B. 2007-08 Budget Discussions – Executive Director Hillman informed that Board that a draft budget for Fiscal Year 2007-08 will be brought before them in January 2007. Hillman explained that the current model is running smoothly. Will be bringing back all of the same arena events including the NPRA Rodeo, Dock Dogs and this year the Tuality stage will feature more cover and tribute bands.

Executive Director Hillman also noted that staff will recommend transferring a specific budget amount to 4H for them to administer themselves. This would be more efficient for both parties.

Interim rental activities will continue as it does currently and will have another 10% rate increase.

Staff will look at re-structuring Frite Lites to capture full-time employee time dedicated to the event and/or use temporary employees. Securing a title sponsor is important for this event to move forward in 2007.

Staff will continue working on additional upgrades if recommended by the Fire Marshal.

Staff is very interested in purchasing an electronic message board.

Staff will look at replacing the Dodge Truck and the Ford Tractor.

Chair Vial clarified that the draft would be reviewed by the Board in January, with a public hearing and adoption of the proposed budget in February with it then being sent to the County for inclusion in the County-wide budget.

C. Other, if any –

5. **Announcements** – None other than what was in the Board packet.
6. **Correspondence** - None other than what was in the Board packet.
7. **Board Oral Communications** – None.
8. **Other Matters of Information** – None other than what was in the Board packet.
9. **Oral Communications – Second Session**

Tom Black – Asked if any decisions or movement had been made on the ball fields. Also told the Board that a committee is being formed, the master plan from 1994 still exists, and that the committee will be addressing a future master plan.

Chair Vial noted that no decision has been made regarding the ball fields.

At 6:30 pm, with no further business before the Board during its regular session, Chair Vial recessed the Board meeting to move in to Executive Session to discuss the Executive Director’s Annual Evaluation.

Motion by Board Member Hirst to move in to Executive Session. Second by Board Member Christy. Motion carried 5 - 0.

Motion by Board Member Hirst to adjourn the Executive Session and to return to regular session. Second by Board Member Christy. Motion carried 5 – 0.

Chair Vial reported that no action was taken in Executive Session.

With no further business before the Board, Chair Vial adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Don G. Hillman
Recording Secretary

Rich Vial
Board Chair