

Deschutes County Board of Commissioners & Fair Board joint meeting

October 28, 2024

In attendance

Board of County Commissioners: Patti Adair, Tony DeBone, Phil Chang.
Deschutes County Administrator Nick Lelack; Deschutes County Chief Financial Officer Robert Tintle.

Fair Board: David Bishop, Steve Curley, Arron Curtis, Wendie Every, Bill Kuhn, Carrie Novick, Libby Richie.

Fair & Expo: Geoff Hinds, Director; Brandi Ebner, Sales & Marketing Coordinator; Carla Altamirano, Administrative Support Assistant; Elyse Ballinger, Management Analyst.

Also in attendance: members of the Fair Association: Mike Biondo, Rachel McIntosh, Anne Maloney, and Carol Shull.

The meeting was available via Zoom.

Commissioner Patti Adair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

OPENING REMARKS

David Bishop expressed his appreciation for joining the Commissioners for the annual joint meeting.

Commissioner Adair shared her enthusiasm and appreciation for her experience at the 2024 Fair & Rodeo.

BUSINESS & FINANCE REPORTS

Geoff Hinds shared the provided presentation and an overview of the Deschutes County Fair & Expo. He expressed his appreciation for the Fair & Expo team.

He shared the financial highlights of Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), calendar years 2023-2024:

Fund 615-Fair & Expo

An overview of the annual operating fund was provided. Geoff noted the fund's revenues trended over budget at the end of FY24. Food & Beverage revenue matched growth in revenue as well as the program's supporting expenses. Transient Lodging Tax continues to provide support to the fund. Expenses continued to be managed conservatively.

Fund 616-Annual Fair & Rodeo

Both fiscal and calendar year reports were provided for the fund, to reflect accurate profit and loss activity for the annual Fair & Rodeo event.

Commissioner DeBone asked about the funds investment from 4-H/FFA Camping fees during Fair.

Geoff replied that camping fees support the ability to provide the on-grounds camping opportunity during Fair; including equipment rentals, season passes and security. He noted the

camping fees are one of two fees that support the exhibitor portion of Fair. Efforts continue to improve the program with feedback from partners.

Fund 617-Fair & Expo Capital Reserve

The reserve fund continues to be a focus of growth, tasked with the replacement and improvement of the facility. This newer fund balance is near \$2.2 million dollars and is utilized in efforts to invest in the facility. Grant funding continues to support these projects, including Energy Trust dollars supporting recent LED lighting upgrades across the facility. As a competitive event facility, modern upgrades are necessary to grow and maintain business.

Commissioner Adair asked about improvements to the First Interstate Event Center scoreboards and screens.

Geoff noted the cost of competitive equipment and installation is significant, however other options are more affordable.

Wendie Every inquired what the reserve fund balance should stand at to support Fair & Expo. Arron Curtis noted that a healthy reserve fund for the age and size of the facility is approximately \$50 million.

Fund 618-RV Park

The RV Park business continues to be profitable, with revenue being added to the RV Park's reserve fund. Occupancy includes travelers through the area as well as event visitors.

Fund 619-RV Park Reserve

This reserve fund began with the establishment of the RV Park and continues to grow. Arron noted that current infrastructure failure is reflective of potential continual repair and replacement throughout the RV Park.

Geoff noted that the Fair & Expo Operations team is now fully staffed, offering support to both event production and facility maintenance. Partnerships with County departments and community partners continue to provide benefit to Fair & Expo facility care.

Steve Curley shared that the Budget & Finance Committee reviews the monthly financial reports in depth and advises the Fair Board on fluctuating items. Fiscal Year 24 is on track with budgets.

Bill Kuhn noted the Committee's alignment with the County budgeting process in providing advisory review in budget creation.

Libby Richie noted the Committee's focus on the future and preparation for growth.

2024 FAIR & RODEO

Geoff reviewed the success of the recent 2024 Fair & Rodeo event. Successes include historical increases in admissions, Food & Beverage and Carnival revenue amounts; as well as the highest recorded Sunday attendance. The creation of a Demolition Derby was well-received and attended by the community. The Rodeo continued the new youth rodeo competition Duel in the Desert on Sunday and was also awarded the NPRA Rodeo of the Year. Efforts continue to

create new revenue opportunities that improve Fair experience. Expenses supporting the production were increased over prior years. He shared initiatives for the 2025 Fair that the team is working on.

Geoff noted the shared traffic control efforts with Deschutes County Road Department have led to reduced wait times and improved parking strategies. Efforts continue to improve ingress and egress.

He noted the Buckaroo Breakfast has seen recent leadership turnover and efforts continue in partnership with the Fair Association to build a MOU with the non-profit. MOU's are also being pursued with OSU Extension, Deschutes County 4-H and FFA programs, and Youth Livestock Auction Committee to ensure the organizations' success.

Geoff reviewed the provided revenue comparison of Fairs between 2018 and 2024. Growth continues to be seen in all areas.

Commissioner Adair offered reminder that Fair & Expo hosted the Cascade Chute Out rodeo in 2020, bringing together the community and rodeo partners.

Rachel McIntosh presented the Fair Association's 2025 Operational Plan to the Fair Board. She noted the Fair Association's collaboration with the Fair & Expo team and the Fair Board in continual improvement of Fair partnerships.

Geoff shared his appreciation for the Fair Association's partnership, and noted the Fair Board will review the Operational Plan for approval. He shared that the 2025 Fair & Rodeo will host additional industry partners.

Geoff shared the 2023 calendar year statistics of 922,200 total visitors and \$104,208,600 of economic impact. The Fair & Expo team collaborates with tourism partners to define and calculate economic impact. He noted that a custom multiplier will be developed within the Master Planning effort. Fair & Expo continues to be a leader in tourism within Central Oregon.

Geoff shared annual returning events Overland Expo, Fairwell Festival, and Cascade Equinox that attract a national attendance and bring significant economic impact to Central Oregon. Newly contracted annual events reach into the future; and facility date availability continues to be limited with the busy event calendar.

He noted that the current Fiscal Year 25 budget will see increased expenses due to operating expenses and inflation. Additionally, many multi-year event contracts remain with little or no fee increases. Contributions to the Fair & Expo Reserve Fund will be utilized to balance Fund 615.

Bill echoed the reality of having limited facility availability to grow rentals.

BUILDING & GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Arron shared the ongoing efforts of the Building & Grounds Committee to improve and protect the facility. As facility demand grows, the repair and improvement of the facility also grows in significance and frequency. The Committee focuses on single point of failure items and

earmarks Reserve Fund dollars in anticipation of replacement. Energy-efficiency is a focus in all projects. He noted the Master Planning effort will have a robust vision of the current facility and needs, as well as future growth.

Geoff reviewed ongoing and future projects, including the well/water system repair and replacement.

Steve noted the Redmond City Council's recent potential collaboration of a waste water treatment partnership with Fair & Expo.

MASTER PLANNING PROJECT UPDATE

Geoff described the Master Planning timeline and recommendation delivery by Populous, with a market assessment planned as the initial step after the recent kickoff interviews. Strategies for funding will continue in conversation with partners.

Arron shared his excitement participating in the planning effort. He noted the importance of incorporating capital improvements within the future plans.

Carrie Novick offered her support in selecting Populous as the firm to complete the project.

Commissioner Chang recognized the partnership between the County and the City in efforts to complete the DSL Land Trade.

The Boards discussed the topic of a managed camp project.

Geoff noted the current focuses of the City of Redmond's planning department are influential in future growth of the Fair & Expo facility.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Commissioner Adair expressed her appreciation for the Boards joining together for the meeting.

Commissioner Adair adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elyse Ballinger