

Deschutes County Board of Commissioners & Fair Board joint meeting

September 9, 2025

In attendance

Board of County Commissioners: Tony DeBone, Phil Chang.

Deschutes County Administrator Nick Lelack; Deschutes County Deputy County Administrator Erik Kropp.

Fair Board: Arron Curtis, David Bishop, Steve Curley, Bill Kuhn (until 7:47pm), Libby Richie (until 7:20pm).

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

Fair Association: Cary Penhollow, Shannon Reynolds, Roxia Thornton, Becky Curtis.
City of Redmond Mayor Ed Fitch (for public comment), City of Redmond Councilor Tobias Colvin, Phyllis Hinton, and Scott Brees.

Populous: Jeff Hannon and (via conference call) Bill Bourne, Joel Feldman, Chris Oxley
Helen Baker.

The meeting was available via Zoom.

Commissioner Tony DeBone called the meeting to order at 5:46 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Ed Fitch provided comment on several items related to City of Redmond and Deschutes County Fair & Expo, expressing hope for continued partnership and involvement in the master planning effort.

OPENING REMARKS

Commissioner Tony DeBone shared his enthusiasm about the variety of event offerings at the Fair & Expo.

Arron Curtis expressed his appreciation for the annual joint meeting with the Commissioners. He noted the valued partnership with the Fair Association.

Geoff Hinds noted his resignation and made remarks on his tenure at Fair & Expo and his appreciation of the support from Deschutes County.

Nick Lelack welcomed the group and noted the efforts of Geoff in his time at Fair & Expo. He shared County Administration's efforts for a smooth transition.

Erik Kropp expressed his appreciation to Geoff for his efforts. He noted his upcoming role as interim Fair & Expo director, and his experience in performing the interim role in several departments in his 18-year tenure. He spoke about the Director position's recruitment and upcoming application review. The interview process will include Board representatives and community partners.

Commissioner DeBone spoke of the history of the organization and excitement for the future.

BUSINESS & FINANCE REPORTS

Geoff shared the provided presentation and an overview of the Deschutes County Fair & Expo. He noted the strong economic impact reaching nearly \$60 million from hosted events.

He shared the financial highlights of Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25), calendar years 2024-2025:

Fund 615-Fair & Expo

An overview of the annual operating fund was provided, noting a good end to FY25. Geoff noted the fund's revenues did not meet the budget. Self-promoted events were added to the budget as a potential revenue-earning effort, but they did not reach intended success which contributed to the shortfall. Food & Beverage revenue also did not meet budget.

Expenses were under budget, which also saw effect from the reduced scale of self-produced events.

He recognized the Fair Board's Budget & Finance Committee who meet monthly to review detailed financial reports.

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. The 2024 Fair saw a shortfall in revenue after final transfers out.

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. The facility has reached 24 years of age, and most equipment is nearing end of life.

This fund balance is utilized in efforts to invest in the facility, and efforts are made to focus on projects with significant impact.

Grant funding continues to support these projects, including Energy Trust dollars supporting recent LED lighting upgrades across the facility. Hard surface replacements and temporary repair for the well have been recent focuses. FY25 saw a slight growth of the fund to \$3.2 million.

Bill Kuhn noted the reserve fund was the result of a previous budget committee member's proposal.

Fund 618-RV Park

The RV Park business saw slight growth over FY24. The fund continues to be profitable, with revenue being added to the RV Park's reserve fund. New statues regarding long-term stays may allow for increased revenue opportunity. Staffing adjustments led to increased expenses.

Fund 619-RV Park Reserve

This reserve fund is nearly fully funded and has seen minimal usage due to its age. Water service has arisen as a concern, with emerging underground leakage.

Commissioner Phil Chang asked if Fair & Expo is on the City's water.

Geoff and Steve Curley confirmed there is both a well and City water access.

Commissioner Chang asked if there has been conversation of selling water rights instead of repairing the well.

Aaron and Steve noted the conversation has not yet been reached.

Geoff shared concern with backflow devices and capacity if City water was solely used. He shared the possibility of reclaimed water with the City.

Commissioner Chang encouraged the collaboration of the City of Redmond, Redmond Airport, and Fair & Expo – also in respect to the future of the power grid.

Steve noted the success of the Budget & Finance Committee in maintaining detailed oversight on the financials of Fair Expo.

2025 FAIR & RODEO

Geoff reviewed the success of the recent 2025 Fair & Rodeo event. Successes include a daily attendance record on Saturday of Fair. The Youth Livestock Auction saw revenue increase, as did Food & Beverage with focus on increasing diversity of options. Carnival revenue amounts saw limited growth due to cost stability. The second year of the Demolition Derby was well-received and attended by the community. The Rodeo continued building success each night of Fair, including the youth rodeo competition Duel in the Desert on Sunday.

Geoff noted efforts continue to address traffic ingress and egress, with some improvements seen. Adjustments to daily programming may lead to improved management and guest experience and safety. Hours of Fair may also see adjustment based on guest review. He noted the impact of inclement weather at the last two Fair events. He noted the return of VIP ticket sales, with a decline this year over last – likely impacted by the increase in comp VIP tickets distributed.

Cary Penhollow, President of the Deschutes County Fair Association, shared that they conducted an in-depth review of the 2025 Fair and are working on their 2026 Operational Plan. He expressed appreciation and pride in recent years' efforts to improve the Fair.

Phyllis Hinton recognized the importance of growth and of tradition, with focus on youth livestock. She expressed desire to maintain awareness and support of the agriculture community.

Commissioner Chang shared that Fair Board recruitment produces community members passionate about the Fair event. Several members of the Board expressed their support for the youth livestock community and their involvement at Fair.

Cary noted the Fair's Livestock Auction is coordinated by a separate committee and efforts to meet with the committee and youth livestock program coordinators will occur to improve the Fair's programming.

Geoff reviewed the provided revenue comparison of Fairs between 2018 and 2025. Growth continues to be seen in all areas.

Geoff shared the 2025 calendar year statistics through August: 601,700 total visitors and \$67,992,100 of economic impact. He shared comparison of 2023, 2024, and 2025 visitor statistics; with growth seen in many aspects.

In current fiscal year 26: returning events are strong including Overland Expo, Fairwell Festival, and Cascade Equinox Festival. New events include the Reggae Rise Up Festival and Pacific International Livestock Show.

Increased facility usage includes challenge to accommodate needed utilization by the community, as well as increased repair needs.

Steve noted the start of FY26 has begun well financially and a strong year is anticipated.

BUILDING & GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Arron Curtis shared the ongoing efforts of the Fair Board's Building & Grounds Committee to improve and protect the facility. Focus remains to stretch dollars with chosen projects. Grants are helpful in supporting these projects. He noted a recent review on the facility HVAC equipment, which carries a \$6.5 million replacement cost. The facility asphalt repair reaches an estimated \$2 million. A \$10 million outlay for significant facility replacements is expected.

MASTER PLANNING PROJECT UPDATE

Geoff noted the profitability of various event industries, a focus of the Master Planning effort. He shared the Fair Board's upcoming Mission and Vision review, to support growth. Populus was brought aboard to aid in these efforts.

Jeff Hannon, Populous, expressed his appreciation to Geoff and the Fair Board, and noted their attendance at the recent Fair. The Populous team provided the included presentation. They approach the facility from a zoning perspective, and potential public/private partnerships are explored as an option. He highlighted community partnerships in future developments. The Populous team noted the fluidity of master planning, providing framework during growth and change.

Commissioner DeBone shared his excitement participating in the master planning effort and the unique opportunities outlined in the plan thus far.

Commissioner Chang expressed his interest in the cost of expansion options.

Aaron expressed satisfaction with the choice to bring aboard Populous to provide strategies for growth.

Commissioner DeBone noted the community's desire to invest in Fair & Expo.

Commissioner Chang hoped to open discussion of how Fair and Expo could support the City and County in the upcoming managed camp construction.

Aaron noted the discussion could be initiated.

Commissioner DeBone adjourned the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elyse Ballinger