

Deschutes County Board of Commissioners & Fair Board joint meeting
October 24, 2023

In attendance

Board of County Commissioners: Tony DeBone (via conference call), Patti Adair (via conference call), Phil Chang (via conference call starting at 6:36 p.m.).
Deschutes County Administrator Nick Lelack; and Deputy County Administrator Whitney Hale.

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

Fair & Expo: Geoff Hinds, Director; Elyse Ballinger, Administrative Analyst.

Also in attendance: Cary Penhollow, Deschutes County Fair Association President; members of the Fair Association: Roxia Hinman Thornton, Rachel McIntosh, Lori Sturza, Becky Curtis, Justy Haney, Patty Breitbach, Anne Maloney, Shannon Reynolds.

The meeting was available via Zoom.

David Bishop called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

OPENING REMARKS

Commissioner DeBone shared his enthusiasm for the great facility usage and activity at Deschutes County Fair & Expo.

BUSINESS & FINANCE REPORTS

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

He shared the financial highlights of Fiscal Year 2023, calendar year 2022- 2023.

Fund 615-Fair & Expo

Geoff provided an overview of the annual operating fund. He noted the fund has experienced a significant increase in revenue earned, primarily in the Events Revenue. Food & Beverage revenue has also seen growth, due to the recent adjustment to contracting the alcohol management to Oregon Beverage Services. This fund balance continues to transfer into the capital reserve fund. Expenses continued to be managed conservatively.

Fund 616-Annual Fair & Rodeo

Both fiscal and calendar year reports were provided, to reflect accurate activity for the annual Fair. The fund ended the FY23 budget with a net profit revenue earned from the 2022 Deschutes County Fair & Rodeo. The volatility of the fund leads efforts for maintaining a healthy fund balance. A portion of that revenue continues to be transferred into the capital reserve fund.

Fund 617-Fair & Expo Capital Reserve

This reserve fund continues to grow, tasked with the replacement and improvement of the facility. This newer fund grew nearly \$1,000,000 in FY23 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. This fund remains under-funded in relation to addressing the age and needs of the facility.

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. This fund balance also exceeds the County's recommended amounts.

Fund 619-RV Park Reserve

This reserve fund began with the establishment of the RV Park and continues to grow. The park currently sees minimal need for capital expense.

Geoff reviewed the success of the recent 2023 Fair & Rodeo. He shared new entertainment features. Admission was slightly reduced over the 2022 Fair; however, the Saturday of Fair saw the highest recorded attendance. Sunday offered additional programming and saw increased attendance. The Youth Livestock Auction had its highest recorded revenue. Food & Beverage and Carnival had increase in sales. The Rodeo added youth rodeo competition on Sunday and was also awarded the NPRA Rodeo of the Year.

Geoff noted the shared traffic control efforts with Deschutes County Road Department that have led to reduced wait times and improved parking strategies. Efforts continue to improve ingress and egress. Demand for electrical needs are growing, and efforts to make creative layouts continue. Communication between fair production partners continue to be a focused effort to increase cohesion.

Geoff reviewed the provided revenue comparison of fairs between 2019 and 2023. Growth continues to be seen in all areas.

(Commissioner Chang joined the meeting)

Cary Penhollow agreed that the 2023 Fair was exceptional and shared his appreciation for working with the DCFE team. He noted the Fair Association's collaboration with the DCFE team and the Fair Board on understanding and improving fair partnerships. He shared the Fair Association's 2024 Operational Plan, and mentioned the Fair Association Board continues to work on policies and bylaws.

Geoff shared his appreciation for the Fair Association's partnership in improving the Fair and strengthening the relationships with fair partners.

Geoff shared the 2023 calendar year statistics of 840,700 total visitors and \$94,999,100 of economic impact. The DCFE team collaborates with tourism partners to define and calculate

economic impact. With the addition of national and international events at DCFE, this number of traveling visitors has increased. Additional visitor metrics are compiled through demographic tracking software. These metrics show DCFE as the most visited area in Central Oregon.

Geoff shared highlighted events Overland Expo and Gambler 500 that both attracted a national attendance and bring significant economic impact to Central Oregon. These events also bring a unique and broad exposure to DCFE.

Geoff shared upcoming events through the rest of 2023, including the returning EnduroCross and Jurassic Quest. Fiscal Year 24 and 25 both see strong booking interest with many multi-year contracts complete. Demand on the facility have limited its availability, so efforts continue to align events to allow for user and community benefits. Additional focus on facility repair continues.

Commissioner Adair asked about the vacant FTE positions and their impact on the increased event schedule. She asked if off-site parking areas could be a helpful addition. She offered recommendation of an improved screen for events in the First Interstate Event center.

Geoff noted that two positions are new additions to the current budget, to assist in preparing for the 2024 event calendar. A recent retirement is hoped to be filled by current open recruitment. Other open positions are under review in team structure analysis. He agreed the parking option can be explored. Temporary screens are currently being brought in for events and he agreed that an improved screen would benefit several events.

Steve Curley noted that the Budget & Finance Committee reviews the monthly reports in depth and advises the Fair Board on items. He reviewed the current financial reports, at 25% through FY23. All funds are in good order. He noted the need for a new well, with hope for funding to help cover the expense.

Arron Curtis 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. He noted the capitalization on the rebates available for facility improvements. He echoed the need for a sustainable well. Another focus of these projects is to increase the competitiveness within the event industry; as well as improving user experience. The committee and Fair Board are committed to creating strategies for accomplishing these capital expenses.

Geoff noted the well is used primarily as irrigation for the facility. In its current configuration, it is not possible to be used as a primary water source to support the facility. He confirmed the current system is functioning for short-term needs. Grant funding has been received for scoping the project of replacing the well and expanding its functionality. Additional grant funding is being explored.

Bill and Steve confirmed the Fair Board recognizes the need for a sustainable source to support the facility. The need also exists to act as a resource for the community in the event of an emergency or other needs.

Geoff shared the DCFE team and Fair Board's efforts to continue servicing existing events while maximizing utilization of the facility. He shared future hope for expansion and designing the additional space to serve the needs of the facility and community. Master planning efforts are ongoing, with a market assessment being planned as an initial step. Strategies for funding will continue in conversation with partners.

Commissioner DeBone noted the County's efforts with the City of Redmond for the planned land swap affecting DCFE.

Bill noted the important prospects facing DCFE, including the need for market study to identify the path of growth to address facility capacity.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Commissioner DeBone expressed his appreciation for the meeting.,

Commissioner DeBone adjourned the meeting at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elyse Ballinger