

## **Deschutes County Fair Board Meeting**

July 10, 2025

In attendance: Fair Board members David Bishop, Arron Curtis (via conference call), Wendie Every, Bill Kuhn, and Carrie Novick.

Fair & Expo team members in attendance: Geoff Hinds, Director; Brandi Ebner, Sales & Marketing Coordinator; and Elyse Ballinger, Management Analyst.

The meeting was available via Zoom.

Bill Kuhn called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m at Arron's request.

Carrie Novick moved to approve the June 12, 2025, Fair Board meeting minutes. Arron Curtis seconded the approval. All present were in favor. Minutes approved.

### **Directors Report/ Facility & Events Update/Fair Update**

Geoff noted the event successes of June, with 27 unique events held over the month. The local economic impact generated by DCFE in June was \$6,960,800. Economic impact for the calendar year is approximately \$33,594,900. He shared that Overland Expo returned in June and saw a slight decrease in attendance and vendors, which could be addressed with date realignment in the region. Bill noted the broadness and variety of the event. Geoff noted Fairwell Festival is returning next week, followed by the Annual Fair & Rodeo event, both high in attendance. New June events were Cascade Reptile Show and Open Air Garage and Antique Sale, which were both successful.

Brandi shared the upcoming new events including an outdoor ArenaCross event in the Wilco Arena and the Reggae Rise Up Music Festival in August. Returning September events include Cascade Futurity and Cascade Equinox Festival.

Bill asked Geoff for an update on the relocation of the 4-H Horse Fair from Fair & Expo. Geoff noted the decision was made in conjunction with Deschutes County 4-H leadership, and the move was made in light of safety concerns surrounding another event moving on grounds. He confirmed the Horse Fair event move was only for 2025 and future alternate dates will be explored if event conflicts continue. He shared the effort to support the community but still recognize financial return.

Bill mentioned the ongoing conversation about grounds capacity. Geoff noted the Saturday of Fair as an example of this reached capacity which has led to the topic of adjusting Fair dates. He shared options that would accommodate a 2-weekend Fair event. Bill recommended the dialogue be started and perhaps be a future agenda item. Arron noted the need for the Fair Association's leadership in the conversation. Carrie noted the higher risk of fire season in August which could affect later Fair dates.

Geoff shared updates regarding the upcoming Fair & Rodeo event. The Saturday concert act was successfully replaced and VIP tickets are selling well again this year.

Carrie asked if online ticketing will be replacing all ticketing soon.

Geoff noted last year's online ticket sales were less than 70%, which was a decrease from years

previous. He noted the effort to accommodate all audiences.

Wendie asked for an update on the marketing efforts resulting from the recent RFP.

Geoff confirmed the Fair marketing campaign is in progress and overall marketing projects are ongoing.

### **Business & Finance Reports/Legislative Report/Building & Grounds**

Geoff shared that he and Steve met to review the reports together. The reports reflect 100% of the Fiscal Year 25 complete, with remaining revenue and expenses to be finalized through July. Fund 615: projected to be under budget and above prior year actuals. Food & Beverage saw growth, and opportunities for additional sponsorships are being pursued. He confirmed First Interstate Bank is reviewing another multi-year contract. He noted the Winter Storage program has potential to be restored and efforts to do so will resume after Fair. BasX storage rent reflected in Event Revenue account has partially offset the Winter Storage loss.

Fund 617: the largest expense was the Master Planning effort, which will continue into Fiscal Year 26.

Fund 618: revenues are above prior year actuals. Long-term seasonal rentals saw a decrease and will have new marketing focus.

Fund 619 saw no expenses in FY25.

Concern continues about expenses outweighing revenues, in light of legislative updates including Transient Lodging Tax allocation changes.

Bill recommended having an in-depth financial discussion within the Board, focusing both on Fair & Expo and Deschutes County financial challenges.

Geoff noted the fairgrounds across Oregon saw an increase in funding from recent legislative activity, with all initiatives supported by Oregon Fairs Association passing.

Geoff shared that the steering committee discussed the recent presentation by Populous, and identified concepts to pursue.

Arron noted the efforts to refocus on master planning the facility, and recognizing impactful regional issues including transportation planning. He confirmed the committee was focused on investigating issues and providing added engagement to support the planning effort.

Carrie offered agreement and hoped to see the committee's recommendations being included in the ongoing study.

Geoff noted the possibility of scheduling a work meeting with Populous during fairtime, which the Board supported. Elyse will connect with the Board on scheduling availability.

Geoff mentioned County Administration's request to schedule the joint meeting with the Board of County Commissioners in late August or September.

Arron offered his support of the Mission/Vision planning.

Geoff noted the parallel to the master planning effort, in addition to providing guidance to the Fair & Expo team's focuses and budget planning.

Bill supported the effort including creation of a mission statement. He recommended a facilitator.

Wendie offered support for a facilitator with clear goals set.

Arron noted the importance of identifying and aligning with the County Commissioners' vision for the Fair & Expo and Fair Board.

Bill recommended the Fair Board maintain autonomy and oversight over Fair & Expo operations.

The Board supported Geoff to compile a list of recommended facilitators with proposed summaries to offer to the Board.

Carrie recommended maintaining outreach to the City of Bend and other Bend tourism partners.

Geoff shared with the Board an invitation to the Featured Fairs Tour reception on Friday night of Fair.

Bill Kuhn adjourned the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

Next board meeting will be held on August 14, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elyse Ballinger