

Deschutes County Fair Board Meeting

October 9, 2025

In attendance: Fair Board members Steve Curley, Arron Curtis, Wendie Every, Bill Kuhn, Carrie Novick, and Libby Richie (until 4:51pm).

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

Guests: Scott Brees (starting at 4:25 pm)

The meeting was available via Zoom.

Arron Curtis called the meeting to order at 3:31p.m

The Board welcomed Erik Kropp, Deschutes County Fair & Expo Interim Director. He noted his close collaboration with Fair & Expo staff. Efforts to align events with contractual terms are being made by the team. He expressed appreciation for the positive atmosphere surrounding the transition.

Erik proposed confirming the next month's meeting date during each meeting.

The Board agreed to maintain consistency with meeting the second Thursday of each month and a member will note if they are unavailable.

Director's Report

Erik shared an update about the Director recruitment. The recruitment remains open to include industry advertisements, and will close soon. The current applications received were reviewed for minimum qualifications and then scored by Erik and members of the Fair Board. The scoring was normalized and averaged – with inclusion of Veteran's preference points - producing a top candidates pool. These candidates will be interviewed virtually by Deschutes County Administration and Bill and Wendie. This interview's goal is to determine candidates to invite to the final in-person interview day in late October. Further applications received before closing will go through the same process.

Libby asked about the County's financial assistance with a candidate's relocation.

Erik confirmed travel reimbursement is available to be offered.

Bill noted the applications reflected a diversity of skills and opportunity exists to select a candidate with a varied background.

Wendie expressed hope to see more varied applications by recruitment close, and noted the complexity of the Director position.

Carrie agreed the position's facility and business management is of a significant level.

Erik confirmed information about the interviews and will follow up for Fair Board panel members. He noted the plan to include Fair & Expo staff in the candidate review process.

Carrie expressed desire to invite representatives from the surrounding towns. She recommended providing a tour for interviewees.

Libby asked about next steps after the interviews.

Erik noted a potential third interview of top candidates. He confirmed the recruitment could be re-opened if no candidates are desirable.

Erik noted the recent Reggae Rise Up Festival and Cascade Equinox Festival, with both events seeing success. He noted the challenges around Cascade Equinox Festival; including noise complaints surrounding the music scheduled until 3:00 am. Consideration of their return is underway with staff.

Brandi confirmed the complaints have been consistent in the event's 3-year duration. Concerns include determining an event's alignment with Fair & Expo, and the event's ability to maintain a safe environment. She recommended enacting contract terms that address areas of concern.

Bill suggested a post-event review with documented incidences, to address in contract re-negotiations. He expressed desire to see standard contracts instead of custom deals.

Steve noted the importance of communicating with the Cascade Equinox event, since they have already begun advertising the 2026 event.

Erik agreed clear communication about expectations from events is necessary.

Erik noted the upcoming return of Columbia River Circuit Finals.

Brandi shared an upcoming event Wild Wild West Bully Show, which has a history of damage and alcohol abuse at other facilities. Extra security is planned for the event.

Business & Finance Reports/Legislative Report/Building & Grounds

Steve shared that he, Bill, Libby, Elyse, and Erik Kropp met and reviewed the financial reports together.

Fund 615: revenue is trending ahead of last fiscal year. Fairwell Festival revenue impacted several accounts, including Food & Beverage and RV Park.

Fund 616: around \$175,00 direct Fair expenses will continue to be recorded, with the 2025 Fair netting positive at this time.

Fund 618: revenue is trending up, with festival blocks adding significant revenue.

Reserve funds continue to grow.

Brandi noted the fiscal year impact of festival dates changing in 2026. She confirmed conversation is ongoing with the Oregon Youth Authority to relocate their 2026 event.

Bill Kuhn moved to approve the September 9, 2025, Fair Board meeting minutes and the September 9, 2025, joint Fair Board and Board of Commissioners meeting.

Libby Richie seconded the approval. All present were in favor. Minutes approved.

Libby noted no significant legislative updates. Brandi will bring back updates from the upcoming International Association of Fair & Expositions convention.

Arron referred to the Mayor of Redmond's recent public comment at the September 9 joint meeting with the Fair Board and Commissioners. The mayor referenced the July 4, 2026, holiday celebration planned by the City of Redmond, in which they are looking to have access to Fair & Expo. (*Scott Brees joined the meeting at 4:25*)

Arron noted the closure of the facility on the holiday in recent years due to safety concerns.

Brandi agreed that previous discussion with Redmond emergency services advised Fair & Expo they did not have the bandwidth to support Fair & Expo safety that night.

Erik agreed the communication about facility clean-up costs after the event should be shared by the County and the City.

Steve noted the importance of identifying the usage of the property, for an event or firework viewing or another purpose.

Arron noted the Mayor's mention of the Oasis managed camp for funding and partnership. He reminded the Board of the ORS that dictate how to spend public funds and use of public property. Other topics raised by the Mayor included the nearby roundabout on Airport Way and the DSL land exchange.

The Board discussed the impact of the roundabout's impact to Fair & Expo, including the expansion of 19th street.

Erik confirmed Chris Doty, County Road Department, is heavily involved in the planning process of the roundabout.

Arron shared an update on the winter storage program. Buildings previously utilized for the program do not meet fire code, and BasX has since rented the buildings which supplies revenue. The buildings cannot store fuel, and the upgrade cost would be significant.

Communication to previous storage customers is needed.

Brandi confirmed BasX's annual storage needs are not permanent, and winter storage could remain a steady income after the updates.

The Board agreed the program should be included in the Master Planning effort.

Erik expressed optimism about the insurance aspect of winter storage.

Arron reviewed the three proposed draft Board policies:

Event Camping

Livestock & Equine Stalling

Event Rental Policy

Brandi agreed she would make edits based on Board recommendations.

Arron confirmed the Board should provide their comments to Brandi in the next three weeks.

Erik confirmed the policies are internal and County policy review requirements do not apply.

Correspondence

Arron referenced the recent communication from Mt. Bachelor Kennel Club.

Erik confirmed he responded to gain more information and has not received a return response from the club.

Wendie asked if communication has been received from the Lance Hill donation effort, which aims to house a structure at Fair & Expo.

Arron said there has not been, and noted the Fair Association is awaiting information from Deschutes County 4-H and the Auction Committee.

Bill expressed concern that the community is moving forward with the donation process, and the Fair Board should know the expectations of the effort.

The Board discussed the topic and the importance of establishing an MOU with the Livestock Auction Committee.

(Libby left the meeting at 4:51 pm)

Bill asked for an update on the ground lease with Deschutes County 4-H.

Erik confirmed County Property and Facilities are reviewing the plan.

Steve asked for an update on the Master Planning effort.

Arron noted there has been no new information from Populous. He will reach out for an update and next steps.

Erik noted County Administration and the Commissioners expressed excitement about the presentation at the joint meeting, and desire to be involved in the detailed discussion. He confirmed the final plan must reach both Commissioners' and City of Redmond approvals. Carrie offered the idea of a virtual meeting between the Fair Board's committee and Populous, to review the progress and deliverables.

Bill asked if the Master Planning effort has been communicated to the Fair & Expo Director candidates.

Erik noted it has not yet, but it could be included in the upcoming interviews.

Arron Curtis adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Next board meeting will be held on November 13, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Elyse Ballinger