



Fairgrounds Advisory Board Minutes

Monday, June 16, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 5:00pm with the following Fairgrounds Board members in attendance:

Board Members Present: Monique Brigham, Gery Cardenas, Hank Davis, Robert Desmarais, Dorothy Elsner, Kristen Keltz, Gin Learned

Staff Members and Representatives: Aric Gaither, Frances Negranza

A motion was made to approve the May 2025 minutes and seconded. The motion to approve the minutes was approved and passed unanimously.

Board Discussion:

Fair Poster and Promo

Aric covered the background and history of the Fair poster design which was done by a county staff member from the IS department who has created the Fair poster for the past 15+ years.

Fair Overview

Frances shared the free activities at the Fair that is included in the price of admission; Butterfly Encounter, Puzzlemania, Mini Golf, Circus, Draft Horse Experience, SARDIS Raptor exhibit, daily pie eating contests. Shared new partnership with libraries as part of their summer reading programs, "Book a Ticket to the Fair". Kiddie Corral is returning and the Community Stage will be moved to face west.

The board asked about Sunday night logistics and changes the Fair will make.

Local Events

Aric reviewed past and upcoming events; Puget Sound Junior Livestock Show in June was a big success, Dorothy shared that the show had high attendance. Mount Vernon Mayors coffee hour hosted at the Fairgrounds on Tuesday, June 17. Garden and Art Fair is this upcoming weekend, an outdoor event that is new to the fairgrounds. Next weekend a Metaphysical Fair and Dog Show in the south lot. Returning to the Fairgrounds in mid-July, Celtic Arts Highland Games and Cirque Ma'Ceo.

Capital Projects

Aric gave an update on new restroom, expected to be functioning by June 27. Planned ground restoration the week after.

WSDA Capital Grant Cycle is coming up this year. WSDA Operational Fund has been cut by 55% for reimbursement of the 2025 Fair season, although the Capital Grant budget has grown by \$1 million. Staff is working on the grant application for this next cycle which requires matching funds by either cash or donated/in-kind. Ideas would be paving for puddling around the grounds, and/or electrical in horse barns and Pavilion.

Capital Grant is due in September. Gin mentioned to work with the Foundation on a capital project goal for fundraising.

**Budget**

Staff is currently working on 2026 budget which is due in July. Considerations of WSDA Operational budget reduction (55% cut from previous year). Staff has made efforts to cut expenses where possible, including reduction of employee work stations, tents, and selectively on number of entertainment acts on stage daily. Garage Sales, removed a set up day to save on security and staff hours. Some paid marketing efforts had to be cut back, a couple salvaged through partner/sponsorship trades. The board highlighted that operating with only 3 employees is efficient and cost saving if compared to additional employees we could have, comparing to other Fair organizations.

Admission costs – the Fair has done their best to keep admission costs low, although facing the necessity that increases may be needed again in 2026 due to increased expected expenses.

Board Chair

A motion was made for Gery Cardenas to be the Chair of the Fairgrounds Advisory Board, there was a second and the motion passed unanimously.

Bylaws

The board would like to review the bylaws and recommendations for changes, including the addition of a vice-chair and ability to create sub-committees.

A motion was made to amend the bylaws to add a Vice-Chair and subcommittees, there was a second and the motion passed unanimously.

The board will send bylaw amendments to Fair Staff to present to the commissioners for approvals.

Joint Meetings

Discussion about planning a joint meeting between the Advisory Board and the Foundation board tentatively in October. It was agreed by the board to change the January and February meeting to the 4th Monday in the month, due to the original dates landing on a holiday. July meeting will take place on the 21, No meeting in August.

Adjourn 6:30pm