



Minutes
New Mexico State Fair Commission
Regular Meeting
November 26, 2024
African American Performing Arts Center
300 San Pedro NE – NM State Fairgrounds
Albuquerque, NM

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Serna at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call: Michele Clement called the roll.

The following Commissioners were present:

Chairman Eric Serna
Commissioner Benny Roybal
Commissioner Carol Cloer (Via Teams Meeting)
Commissioner Tony Casados
Commissioner Walter Adams
Commissioner Larry Chavez

The following Staff were present:

Dan Mourning, General Manager
Joseph Holloway, Deputy Manager
Chris Machin, General Counsel
Cara Smouse, CFO

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge of allegiance was led by Commissioner Casados.

- a. New Mexico State Flag Pledge: The New Mexico State Flag pledge was led by Commissioner Roybal.

Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved on a motion from Commissioner Adams, seconded by Commissioner Casados, all voted in the affirmative.

Approval of Minutes of January 8, 2024 Regular Meeting: The minutes from the June 28, 2024 regular meeting were approved on a motion from Commissioner Roybal, seconded by Commissioner Adams, all voted in the affirmative.

Introduction of Guests:

Commissioner Roybal stated that he had asked that the Managers of the different State Fair departments be present at this meeting so that the Commission could meet them in person and

say thank you for the great job they do to get ready for the Annual event and for all of the hard work they do during the State Fair.

Commissioner Roybal asked all staff to introduce themselves to the Commission.

The following Managers were present:

Issac Trujillo- Safety and Security

Karen Giles- Human Resources and Risk Management

Sabrina Garza- Events

Erin Thompson- PIO

Raina Bailey- Booking/Spectaculars

Cindy Cravens/Luis Perches- Operations

Ty Stevers- Media/Marketing

Gary Zink- Capital Projects

Ben Lucero- Concessions

Antoinette Kulinna- Procurement Officer

Commissioner Adams stated that through his years at the Highway department and on all of the Boards and Commission he has served on, he has learned that the main reason an organization is successful is because of the hard-working staff and he has seen how hard all of the staff of the State Fair work and how dedicated they all are and wanted to thank the staff.

Public Comment: Laura Riley, New Mexico State Fair Livestock Superintendent

Laura Riley thanked the Commission for allowing her to speak to the Commission about the Livestock Shows and Sale during the Annual Event. Ms. Riley stated that she is a livestock superintendent and has worked at the fair for 13 years and has seen a lot of improvement under the guidance of General Manager Mourning and Livestock Manager Erin Dorsey. Ms. Riley added that she had seen an increase of 40% in the Livestock Sale, as well as the numbers of animals and exhibitors each year. Ms. Riley added that there have been new competitions such as an Ag Speaking contest, added to the Livestock Show which has provided 4-H and FFA kids with additional opportunities to showcase their hard work and interests. Ms. Riley stated that she is very proud of all of the hard work and improvements that have happened on the North end of the fairgrounds with the support of General Manager Mourning and Livestock Manager Erin Dorsey which have increase of the visibility and productivity of the New Mexico State Fair Livestock Show.

Commissioner Cloer stated that she had spent a lot of time at the North end during the Annual Event and had seen how smoothly everything had run and how inclusive it was for the audience and participants as well.

State Fair Management Report:

A. Financial Report: Cara Smouse presented the financial report to the commission and asked if there were any questions or comments at this time.

General Manage Mourning stated that the Commissioners had been provided with the financials from July, 2024. General Manager Mourning added that Expo NM/NM State Fair

had gone through the Audit and had the Exit meeting regarding the Audit which Commissioner Chavez attended.

General Manager Mourning stated that the books have not been closed out from the Fair as of today and added that this process usually took until December of each year.

General Manager Mourning asked if there were any questions regarding the financials.

Commissioner Chavez stated that he had been in the exit report for the Audit and the meeting went well, he had been able to ask questions and got good answers.

- i. Contracts- no discussion at this time.

B. Manager's Report:

General Manager Dan Mourning stated that he would like to present his management report at this time to include what was happening year-round at Expo NM and a re-cap of the 2024 New Mexico State Fair. General Manager Mourning began his report with the following information about Expo NM:

Expo New Mexico- year-round

Flea Market:

Although the temperatures are cooling, attendance at the Flea Market has been very strong. Promotions include live radio broadcasts to bring more attention to the great shopping opportunities offered at the flea market.

Events: Current and Upcoming

- Local movie & television productions – local productions for major networks including Netflix and Fox
- Aki Matsuri Japanese Fall Festival
- Albuquerque Fall Gem, Mineral and Jewelry Show
- ABQ Bruja Fest
- Fall 2024 Albuquerque Home Show
- Albuquerque Roller Derby Fall Bout
- Hot Wheels Monster Truck Shows
- Bridal & Wedding Show
- New Mexico Ski Swap
- Discovery Festival
- Winter Wonderland (ongoing through the Dec. 29)
- Rio Grande Arts & Crafts Festival

General Manager Mourning added that in addition to these revenue generating events, EXPO NM continues to support programs that serve the community including:

- Roadrunner Food Bank Holiday Distribution & other food distribution events
- Christmas Angel Tree
- Providing facilities to shelter dogs to assist Bernalillo County
- Various law enforcement trainings

Special projects:

- Route 66 Centennial Grant – in commemoration of the upcoming 100th anniversary of Route 66, the state Tourism Department recently made grant funding available to entities along the route. We applied for funding and were pleased to receive word that based on our proposal, we are receiving **\$250,000** to improve the tower on Central Avenue with modern neon signage as well as related infrastructure improvements. The project begins immediately in order to meet completion deadlines of June 2025.
- National Guard Youth Challenge – We are nearing completion of the dorm renovation project and will be meeting with NMNG soon to finalize an MOU for a year-round agreement.
- Smithsonian Project – We were thrilled to learn that the Smithsonian National Art Museum has selected a piece from the state fair permanent collection to feature in Washington DC as part of their exhibition relating to state fairs. The piece *Procession de Navidad* by Martha Varoz Ewing will be on display for a year beginning in August.
- “La Chicanita” Historic Marker – the marker was placed in time for fair and is a wonderful addition to the space at Villa Hispana in honor of entertainer Debbie Martinez. We look forward to celebrating with her family and friends when the commission dedicates the marker in the Spring, date TBD.
- Tingley Seating – by way of a status report, demo is underway on the old seats and we have new seats on campus ready to be installed. We are targeting the end of January or beginning of February for completion. The project also includes lighting enhancements.
- Other capital projects – infrastructure projects including water, sewer, paving, concrete are ongoing.

General Manager Mourning continued his management report with the following 2024 State Fair re-cap:

State Fair – September 5-15, 2024

General Manager Mourning stated that we had record numbers of attendees at the 2024 New Mexico State Fair. General Manager Mourning added that there were challenges and successes as there are each year. One of the challenges was the pressure on all the entrance Gates and he felt that the Park and Ride program had been helpful in alleviating some of that pressure and was working with staff to figure out how to expand that program. General Manager Mourning added that another challenge had been the retirement of personnel that had worked at Gate 6 for many years and that created a big learning curve for the new staff that were working in the area for perhaps the first time. General Manager Mourning added that Susan Rebman who is in charge of parking, ticketing and the bank year-round and during the Annual Event is working on strategies for next years’ Annual Event.

General Manager Mourning stated that although some of these numbers had been shared in previous reports, he felt they are important to reiterate as evidence of a very successful 2024 New Mexico State Fair:

State Fair by the Numbers:

Record Attendance: 518,000 attendees at the 2024 New Mexico State Fair.

Mega Pass Tickets Sold—26,399- Our proactive efforts to sell fair tickets and mega passes well in advance of the state fair proved extremely successful. It created the sense of FOMO “fear of missing out” which was the momentum needed to motivate customers to buy sooner than later.

3 Sold out Concerts, Becky G, Brad Paisley and Josh Turner – Our concert lineup for 2024 was among the best we’ve had in many years. Early enthusiasm was driven by announcing our lineup sooner than ever. Becky G was the first to sell out and created a buzz on social media that was unmatched and drove folks to our website in extraordinary numbers.

3 successful flash sales leading up to the fair- Cinco De Mayo, 4th of July and Labor Day promotions - over **28,000** gate admission tickets sold during these promotions. Once again, early promotions and affordable options created a sense of urgency to buy tickets well before the fair event. People were motivated to make the purchase so as not to miss out on the deals.

Over \$1 million in In-kind promotions with our valued media partners-

- KOB Meteorologist Eddie Garcia and the team from the Air Force Research Lab brought out an amazing exhibit and provided fun and interactive science experiments.
- KOAT operated a “news desk” inside Lujan B that allowed patrons to put themselves in the shoes of Shelly Ribando or Doug Fernandez.
- KRQE provided on-air talent for various food contests including the Unique Foods contest and the Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge, as well as our highly successful “Best Seat in the House” contest.

Record high livestock sale proceeds of \$743,945 – One of the best things about the fair is our support of 4H and FFA youth in the animal sciences, which rewards them for their hard work in raising animals throughout the year. We celebrate alongside these young people when their livestock proceeds reach such impressive numbers and are grateful to the individuals and businesses who participate in the auction.

General Manger Mourning added that along with a record high Livestock sale, the New Mexico State Fair Horse show numbers were up which is attributable to the new Horse Show Manager, Mariah Wilson, who did a great job. General Manager Mourning added that Ms. Wilson had a big learning curve to understand how the North end works during the Fair, and with the assistance of Deputy Manager Holloway and Chris Machin, communication between the Horse Show staff and management and the Rodeo contestants and Livestock exhibitors was productive which allowed for a positive environment for the 2024 New Mexico State Horse Show.

Commissioner Roybal asked if Ms. Wilson was planning on returning as the New Mexico State Fair Horse Show manager for the 2025 Annual Event.

General Manager Mourning stated that Ms. Wilson is planning on returning for next year's fair.

Entry numbers robust across all categories- Entry Office processed over **7,000 entries** across **nine departments and events** including Agriculture, Arts, Creative Arts, Home Arts, Floriculture, School Arts, County Booths, and the popular Green Chile Cheeseburger Contest.

The Fair's volunteer program continues to build- Nearly **800** volunteers from local schools and clubs assisted the Fair with roles such as manning information booths and assisting the grounds crew with litter clean up. These student groups utilize the funds for travel to competitions, purchasing gear, registration fees and more.

Despite the vast number of people who attended the Fair, we had **only 14 misdemeanor incidents** and the fair continues to maintain a stellar safety record.

Thanks to all of these critical factors, **overall attendance numbers were up 11%** from the prior year. Total attendance for this year's fair was **517,926**.

General Manager Mourning stated that all of these numbers are indicative of a successful fair of historic proportions. General Manager Mourning added that tremendous credit is owed to our hard-working state fair staff, both year-round and seasonal, who are the heart of the fair event.

General Manager added our new advertising agency, AdPro, did an exceptional job creating a campaign that appealed to New Mexicans. Along the way they provided analytics so that we were able to identify what was working and what we could improve in real time. They are already off to a great start working on the concept for our 2025 state fair campaign as well.

General Manager Mourning stated that we have set the bar high for future Fairs, and as such are hard at work to make sure the 2025 Annual Event is even better. General Manager Mourning added that staff has already reached out to our partners within the industry and are well on our way to another outstanding concert lineup.

General Manager Mourning stated that the 2024 NM State Fair had won several awards from IAFE (International Association of Fairs and Expositions) and wanted to share them with the Commission.

Please see the list of awards below:

Awards- IAFE

1st Place – Best Marketing Campaign

1st Place – Souvenirs & Commemorative items (Barrel Racer Blonde Ale Can)

1st Place – Digital Advertising Video

1st Place – Single-Sided, Flat Promotional Piece (New Mexico Magazine AD)

2nd Place – Social Media Campaign

2nd Place – Online Advertisement

3rd Place – Souvenirs & Commemorative Items (Drifter Lounge Coaster)

3rd Place – Capital Improvement Plan and Execution (Swine Barn)

3rd Place – Special Contest (High School Culinary Competition)

General Manager Mourning opened up the floor to the Commission for questions and comments.

Commissioner Casados asked what the one biggest reason for the 11% increase in attendance was, was it the concerts? General Manager Mourning stated that he thought the concerts had a lot to do with the increase in attendance. General Manager Mourning added that the higher attendance at concerts translates to higher sales in food, alcohol and other areas.

Commissioner Roybal asked what does the Fair give/pay the Sheriff's Posse for the work they do during the Fair. General Manager Mourning stated that we pay them for their services.

Commissioner Chavez asked what the amount of the Chevron Sponsorship was. General Manager Mourning stated that their sponsorship was for a total of \$310,000.00 annually. General Manager Mourning added that they had agreed to continue their sponsorship for an additional three years.

Commissioner Chavez then asked about how much more could be done with the Park and Ride program. General Manager Mourning stated that he and staff were looking into expanding that program and exploring additional options for parking near the Fairgrounds during the Annual Event.

Commissioner Casados stated that as changes are contemplated for the future, and the state fair will evolve into something different than what it is today, parking needs to be considered in future plans. Commissioner Casados added that even though his tenure on the State Fair Commission is going to be short, he felt compelled to say he has to give General Manager Mourning credit for the success of the Fair, and has seen that his staff are very involved in his leadership, and he would like to commend General Manager Mourning for it.

General Manager Mourning stated that he would like to thank Commissioner Casados for his kind words and added that it does take a team and the success of the Fair involves everyone in the room.

General Manager Mourning stated that this is the time to be looking at the future and that a Master Plan would provide a look at what the Fair could be or should be in the next 10-20 years. General Manager Mourning stated that Expo NM/the State Fair may not look like it does today in that time frame and added that the city of Albuquerque was growing around the fairgrounds and the Master Plan will have to take that into account. General Manager Mourning stated that this is the time for getting good insight into the future and wanted to thank the Legislature and the Governor for seeing the need for a Master Plan and providing the funds to do so.

Commissioner Adams stated that he also thought it was time to look at the future and how to address the challenges the State Fair faces. Commissioner Adams added that during recent discussions the question had been asked- does the state fair as it is now meet needs?

Commissioner Adams stated that this is the time for a Master Plan, it is a time to address the challenges and to ask the question- Is this the place where we want the Fair to grow?

Commissioner Adams stated that to that end, he would like to have a Special Commission meeting to discuss the future of the Fair and added that he felt that timing is everything.

General Manager Mourning stated that Expo NM management has been conducting research for about one year now, looking at the different options/plans for the future of the fairgrounds

Chairman Serna stated that he would like to propose a Special Meeting of the New Mexico State Fair Commission be called for Tuesday, December 3, 2024 at 9:00 am to discuss the future of the Fair and the Master Plan. Chris Machin stated that there were requirements that had to be met regarding giving notice for a Special Meeting and he will work with Chairman Serna to meet those requirements.

Discussion Items: None at this time.

Discussion of Meeting Calendar: None at this time.

Discussion of Agenda Items for Next Meeting: Chairman Serna asked the commissioners to submit any agenda items to him prior to the next commission meeting.

Commissioner Casados stated that before the Commission meeting was adjourned he would like to make an announcement. Commissioner Casados stated that he had spoken with Governor Lujan Grisham a couple of days ago regarding his service on the New Mexico Livestock Board and the New Mexico State Fair Commission. Commissioner Casados stated that he felt he could contribute most to the Livestock Board because of his family history in livestock/ranching going back six generations and therefore decided to stay on the Livestock Board and will no longer be a member of the State Fair Commission. Commissioner Casados added that it had been his pleasure to serve on the State Fair Commission and thanked everyone who had been so welcoming and helpful during his time on the State Fair Commission.

Commissioner Roybal stated that it had been a pleasure serving with Commissioner Casados and getting to know him.

Commissioner Adams stated that it had been an honor and a privilege to serve with Commissioner Casados and added that he had great respect for him and valued his friendship.

Chairman Serna stated that he had enjoyed serving with Commissioner Casados and will miss his wit.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:22 am on a motion from Commissioner Casados, seconded by Commissioner Adams, all voted in the affirmative.