



Minutes
New Mexico State Fair Commission
Regular Meeting January 8, 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 10:02 a.m.

Roll Call: Erin Thompson called the roll.

The following Commissioners were present:

Chairman Eric Serna

Commissioner Benny Roybal

Commissioner Carol Cloer

Commissioner Tony Casados – PARTICIPATED BY PHONE

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

Erin Thompson (communications contractor)

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge of allegiance was led by Commissioner Cloer New Mexico State Flag Pledge: The New Mexico State Flag pledge was led by Commissioner Cloer.

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

Approval of Minutes of November 9, 2023 Regular Meeting: The minutes from the November 9, 2023 regular meeting were approved on a motion from Commissioner Adams, seconded by Commissioner Roybal, all voted in the affirmative.

Introduction of Guests: None at this time

Public Comment: None at this time

Open Meetings Resolution:

Commissioner Casados raised the question of whether the caveat that accommodations should be provided with a week's notice or "as soon as possible" was a reasonable expectation given the demands on staff time, etc.

Commissioner Adams provided clarification as to what the provision required. The question was posed to General Counsel Machin who conveyed that a week's notice was the expectation but staff will try to accommodate with less notice, including finding an interpreter or device as necessary.

Commissioner Casados clarified that his question was with regard to whether or not "as soon as possible" was a reasonable expectation and that there is some responsibility for the person requiring accommodations to provide ample notice.

After some discussion among commissioners, it was determined that the resolution required a vote as part of the current meeting, and that the topic of "ASAP" could be researched by General Counsel Machin who will provide language for future consideration.

Commissioner Adams made a motion to approve the 2024 Open Meetings Resolution, which was seconded by Commissioner Roybal. By a vote of 6 to 0 the Commissioners passed the 2024 Open Meetings Resolution.

Election of Officers: Chair, Secretary-Treasurer

Chairman Serna asked for nominations for Chairman of the State Fair Commission.

Commissioner Adams moved that the current commission officers (Commissioner Serna as Chairman and Commissioner Roybal as Secretary-Treasurer) remain the same for 2024.

Commissioner Cloer seconded the motion.

Chairman Serna called for a vote on the nomination for Eric Serna for Chairman and Benny Roybal for Secretary-Treasurer. all commissioners voted in favor.

No other nominations were made at this time. Commissioner Serna was elected Chairman of the State Fair Commission and Commissioner Roybal was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the State Fair Commission

State Fair Management Report:

A. Financial Report: CFO Smouse

Commissioner Chavez stated that the balance sheet was as of November 30, 2023 but the income statement was only for the previous five months. Commissioner Chavez also expressed concern about significant things reflected in the audit that weren't in the report such as depreciation. CFO Smouse stated that she would look at the Commissioners concerns further.

i. Audit Report:

Commissioner Adams asked when management expected to hear back with regard to the audit. General Manager Mourning responded that he expected to hear back any day.

Chairman Serna requested that when the audit is final, fair management brief and consult with Commissioner Chavez and Commissioner Roybal. General Manager Mourning agreed to do so.

Commissioner Roybal asked when the audit report would be available.

CFO Smouse said it is available to share five days after the agency receives the “OK” to print from the State Auditor’s office.

Commissioner Roybal suggested it should be added as an item on the next agenda. Commissioner Adams asked if auditors would attend that meeting. General Manager Mourning indicated that they would.

Commissioner Roybal stated that last year’s presentation by the auditors wasn’t good and Chairman Serna reinforced that the previous zoom presentation wasn’t good. CFO Smouse indicated that because our auditors this year are local they will present in person.

ii. Contract:

Chairman Serna asked about contracts that were outstanding.

General Manager Mourning indicated that only the marketing RFP is currently in process and we hope to have a determination soon.

Chairman Serna asked who currently has the marketing contract.

General Manager Mourning stated that Esparza Advertising currently has the contract.

Chairman Serna asked if they applied again and General Manager Mourning explained that we cannot share any information about applicants during the review process.

Commissioner Chavez asked who was on the review committee. General Manager Mourning stated that we cannot share any information about the review committee during the review process as well.

Commissioner Roybal asked what the marketing contract entails and what the marketing contractor does. General Manager Mourning answered that they are responsible for the fair campaign including print, digital, television etc.

Commissioner Cloer referenced the 1,044 contracts that the fair has and how it is important that we are careful about outside influences.

Commissioner Chavez asked about threatened litigation and General Manager Mourning reported that there was no new litigation.

Commissioner Casados asked about the potential contract with Mariah Wilson to manage the horse shows and General Manager Mourning indicated that the fair has moved forward with the contract with Ms. Wilson.

Commissioner Roybal stated that after reviewing the list of contracts provided by the Fair, he indicated that he had also requested dollar amounts for each contract. CFO Smouse indicated that if they could discuss specifics further, she would work on meeting the request.

Commissioner Roybal also asked about when contracts are expired and renewed.

Commissioner Chavez suggested that given the number of contracts, it might be useful to limit reporting to over a certain dollar amount.

Commissioner Roybal raised the issue of contracts in SHARE. CFO Smouse explained that the fair is unique in that as an enterprise agency, we only have a very limited number of contracts in SHARE, at the state's request. CFO Smouse stated that she will give this request additional thought in terms of the best way to provide the information to the Commission.

B. Manager's The General Manager provided his fair and expo report.

General Manager Mourning began his report by stating that October and November were incredibly busy months with good community outreach events including 3,000 families receiving food from Roadrunner Food Bank.

General Manager Mourning added that January is busy with lots of events including horse and dog shows. General Manager Mourning stated that Expo NM is excited about the upcoming Brick Convention which is a huge Lego event being held in the Manuel Lujan Building.

General Manager Mourning added that additional bareknuckle fights would return to Expo NM in March. Commissioner Cloer indicated that the event made her sad. Chairman Serna said he was not personally opposed but asked if the event received public opposition to which General Manager Mourning indicated it has not. General Manager Mourning went on to say that it is a reputable event that is overseen by the Athletic Commission. Commissioner Chavez asked if women participate and General Manager Mourning indicated that they do and in fact there are some great female athletes who compete. Commissioner Roybal asked if previous events sold out and General Manager Mourning indicated that both events had sold out.

General Manager Mourning continued his report by stating that that we have some one-day holds for concerts on the schedule. General Manager Mourning added that unfortunately Adam Sandler's team passed on a Tingley event due to the obstructed seats due to posts in Tingley. Commissioner Roybal asked if we bring in state police for Tingley events and the General Manager Mourning indicated that we do bring in the State Police for events held in Tingley, as well as our private security company.

General Manager Mourning added that BCSO recently conducted training exercises on the fairgrounds and likes to use our facilities as Expo NM, they consider the grounds a premier site for training.

General Manager Mourning then reviewed some of the capital project improvements including the Agriculture (Bolack) building with a new permanent shade structure (metal roof with steel beams) and upgrades to electrical. General Manager Mourning also shared with the Commission that Expo NM is requesting \$2.7 million for a new public safety building.

Commissioner Roybal asked what would happen with the old Med Bow space and General Manager Mourning explained that the use of that space is still being considered but added that it would be a good space for storage.

General Manager Mourning also mentioned that there will be new livestock offices that are currently in the works. General Manager Mourning added that projects for a Gate 8 redesign is also underway to establish permanent ticketing booths with fiber upgrades for smoother ticketing and a comprehensive camera project for safety purposes is also part of our plan.

Chairman Serna asked if the fair has a command center for the new cameras and General Manager Mourning answered yes, as part of the public safety office. General Manager Mourning added that the cameras will be very useful as we will have real-time access.

General Manager Mourning also indicated that we are going to replace the seating in Tingley. Chairman Serna asked about the timeline for the replacement project and General Manager Mourning responded that it would likely be in October or November of this year.

Commissioner Adams asked how the new seating would change capacity and General Manager Mourning shared that it would reduce capacity by 800 seats but that it is a worthy trade for a more comfortable experience.

Chairman Serna mentioned that this might require raising ticket prices and General Manager Mourning responded that in this industry that is already happening. Commissioner Adams emphasized that it is important to make sure the seats are comfortable and Chairman Serna agreed that we must do it right.

Commissioner Cloer asked what the vision for the location of a new arena was. General Manager Mourning indicated that a previous study suggested five possible locations, with a space along Central being a good option.

General Manager Mourning stated that Expo NM should revisit a request for capital funds for a current study with regard to redevelopment.

Commissioner Roybal indicated that Expo NM should consider building a parking structure as well.

General Manager Mourning shared that Fair management are still working on a possible park and ride for the 2024 fair.

Commissioner Chavez asked about how the Balloon Fiesta is able to bus folks in and General Manager Mourning responded that they worked with Rio Rancho busses, not City of Albuquerque busses.

General Manager Mourning added to his report by sharing that the Fair won over 28 awards at the recent WFA event including for the Lujan C Red Carpet Theater project.

Chairman Serna asked where the WFA convention was held and General Manager Mourning responded that it was held in Anaheim, California.

Chairman Serna suggested that some of the commissioners should consider attending in the future with advance notice and General Manager Mourning indicated that Fair staff will continue to invite the commissioners.

General Manager Mourning shared that Expo NM has a new blog with a great first story about a dog from Anthony, Texas that after he was missing for four months was rescued by Expo NM staff and reunited with his family. Commissioner Chavez indicated that it would be nice to publicize the story.

Discussion Items:

Shriners Circus:

Commissioner Casados stated that during the last Commission meeting, Ms. Danielle Wilson shared her opposition to Expo NM's relationship with the Shriners Circus, and asked whether there should have been an answer by the commission as to whether Expo NM would continue to be the location of the circus.

Commissioner Adams explained that the topic was discussed as part of public comment and never a consideration for a vote.

Chairman Serna indicated that it was his understanding that there was already a legally sufficient agreement in place with Shriners Circus. General Manager Mourning indicated that there is a good relationship with Shriners and there is nothing illegal about the circus. General Manager Mourning added that we have never witnessed any abuse of animals by the circus.

Commissioner Roybal stated that the actions of the circus are outside of the purview of the commission.

Commissioner Casados said that it was never stated if we would have the circus back.

Chairman Serna said that Ms. Wilson is welcome to share her comments and Commissioner Adams indicated that her expressed concerns were simply part of public comment.

Annual Event Attendance:

Commissioner Chavez indicated that we should consider hiring a survey team such as Sanderoff to do a more extensive survey about why people don't come to the fair. General Manager Mourning indicated that we could include that as part of the master plan, but may also be something that can be done in the short term.

Commissioner Cloer stated that kids have always come to the fair, and we should continue to stress our safety record. She likes the message that we must make it easy to do business and find ways to accommodate folks who don't use technology as well.

Commissioner Casados said he is sensitive to the number of people who can't afford to come to the fair and Expo NM should consider ways to accommodate them.

Chairman Serna mentioned that dollar days are one way of attempting to address this issue but we should also consider other options.

Commissioner Cloer asked that we produce more of the wooden coins that are shared during the parade for free entry. General Manager Mourning indicated that we would get more coins.

Role of Commission:

Commissioner Cloer indicated that the issue raised by Commissioner Casados and Commissioner Roybal in the past about clarification of the role of the commission and the director was still outstanding.

Counsel Machin shared that he had done thorough research which he had begun to present at the last meeting but it is very difficult to summarize the various roles given the layers of government involved and therefore impossible to include as a single page summary.

Chairman Serna indicated that they were asking for more broad research and he felt they simply set policy to be implemented by the General Manager.

Commissioner Cloer indicated it doesn't have to be an issue but it has been brought up before.

Commissioner Roybal said that it doesn't have to be reviewed too in-depth, and that it's laid out in statute with regard to the definition of their role.

General Manager Mourning indicated that though not all encompassing the commission has a role with regard to the annual event.

Commissioner Roybal indicated that they just need a broad explanation.

General Manager Mourning shared that we need to communicate with one another and we can work through any issues.

Commissioner Cloer shared that a lot of these issues work themselves out with time and effort.

Commissioner Casados expressed that he still doesn't feel they have answers with regard to the role of the commission.

Chairman Serna asked if there were any additional items for discussion. There were none.

Discussion of Meeting Calendar: Commissioner Roybal stated that the next commission meeting should be in March and the Chairman will coordinate the date with the other Commissioners.

Discussion of Agenda Items of Next Meeting: No discussion at this time.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 11:34 a.m. on a motion from Commissioner Adams, seconded by Commissioner Roybal, all voted in the affirmative.