

Benton County Agriculture Society
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Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 18th, 2025; 7:00pm
Benton County Fairgrounds

The February meeting of the Benton County Agricultural Society was held on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, and was called to order at 7:00pm by Ted Prom, President.

Present: Ted Prom, President; Ken Bemboom, Vice President; Jill Zanardi, Executive Secretary; Erich Rothstein, Vince Thiel, Jimmy Zanardi, Jen Dingmann, Jody Prom, Nancy Zupan, James Trantina, and Sam Morris

Absent: Mary Ostby, Treasurer, Scott Morris, Rod Bemboom, Karen Sakry and Adam Scapanski

Guests: Cheryl Scapanski, Zachary Busch, Cedric Busch, Mike Schlough, Becky Bastien, Cheryl Pflipsen, Rhoda Fagerland, Ashley Willenbring

Guest: Zachary Busch, Boy Scouts Troop 10, was present to discuss his Eagle Project for wheelchair accessible picnic tables. He presented three designs to the Board, and wants to build 10 of them. He has been a part of the Benton County Fair through the Boy Scouts, and sees the need for these at the fair. He will do all of the fundraising and only needs the approval of the Board and a contact person to work with. Board directors agreed that this is a fantastic idea, and Ken agreed to serve as the contact person. Jimmy made a motion, seconded by Sam, to approve the project as presented, with Ken as the contact person. Motion passed.

Guests: Becky Bastien and Mike Schlough from the Central MN Llama Club were present to discuss their hopes in getting the llamas out and about more during the fair. The idea is that the animals are socialized more and get more exposure with the fairgoers. There was discussion regarding what areas would be appropriate as well as which day or days would work better. There was also discussion regarding the behavior of the animals and that adult supervision would be required. Sam indicated that he has a few ideas on how to implement this, and he would be willing to work with the Llama Club.

Guest: Rhoda Fagerland was present to share what she learned at the MFCF Convention. This is the third year she has attended and she always gets a lot of great ideas. She really enjoyed the convention and the idea of the quilt hangers had come from a previous convention. She attended a total of eight (8) sessions and was able to do a lot of networking. One of the best ideas learned is that she needs to reach out to our area teachers to promote open class and the fair. This is increasingly important as the current exhibitors are getting older and we need more young people to get involved. There was discussion regarding how to promote this in the schools. One idea is to get the premium books out for them to look at. There was also discussion regarding staffing in the Ag Craft Building. Rhoda was told that at least two adults need to be there at all times. The possibility of young adults doing volunteer hours. Ken indicated that Ann Olson in 4-H looks for jobs for the kids, so that they earn their scholarships for the State Fair. We are in the process of updating the Premium Book, and Rhoda indicated that they are looking at decreasing the number of entry options, which will increase entries and have better competition. Rhoda was thanked for her time.

Approval of Agenda and Meeting Minutes: Ted asked for any additions or changes to the agenda. Jen asked for 'T-Shirts and Name Tags' under New Business. Ted asked for 'Director Resignation' and 'Complaint' under New Business. Erich made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Jen. Motion passed. Ted asked for any changes or corrections to the minutes from the January 21st meeting. Ken asked for a change

on page 4, Ken and Vince's name should be switched. Jen made a motion to approve the minutes as updated, seconded by Ken. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Report: Cheryl Scapanski shared the report for January, 2025. A large check was made out to MCIT for insurance. Expenses to the Debit Account were also reviewed. Nancy made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Ken. Motion passed.

Secretary's Report: Jill stated that she is currently reviewing the February list.

Groundskeeper Report: Nothing to report.

Committee Reports:

4-H: Sam stated that the group is still looking at the transition of animals on Thursday and making the process go smoother.

Activity Area: There was continued discussion regarding the llamas and what could work. There are concerns with having them near the food and beer areas. Sam indicated there could be space in the poultry barn early in the week. Jimmy stated there must be some regulations, if they are allowed to move around at the State Fair. Sam will look into this and discuss options with Nancy.

Ag Craft Exhibits: Nothing to report.

Beer Garden: Nothing to report.

Beer Garden Stage: Nothing to report.

Buildings and Grounds (includes Off-Season Rentals):

Request to use of Barn 5 for Poultry Swap. A request was received to utilize space for a poultry swap on May 17th. Ken stated that he heard recently about outbreaks of bird flu and that it is still prevalent. It was suggested that a small group look at this. Jody will head up a group; Jimmy, Sam, and Ken agreed to help. This request is tabled until the group meets.

4-H – State Llama Judge Training: May 3 or 17. A request was received from 4-H to use space for training of State Llama judges. Since the 17th of May may be taken by the Poultry Swap, May 5th will have to do. Jill will let Ann Olson know that May 3rd is available.

Jen stated there is a recliner sitting by the south side of the fence that needs to be removed. There was discussion regarding procuring a golf cart to be used by the fair board staff. James indicated that there is an auction the 1st Thursday of the month in Shakopee, that you need to be a dealer to attend. He asked what we are looking for in the golf cart, i.e. utility, etc. There was discussion regarding possible donations and how to proceed. Ted indicated that he could pull the executive committee together to see what we can do,

Discovery Building. Nothing to report.

FFA: Nothing to report.

Finance: Nothing to report.

Food Vendors: Jimmy made a motion to increase the price for 110v electricity from \$35 to \$50; food booth rental from \$850 to \$950, and to have a charge of \$10/day for plugging in early, or staying plugged in after the fair ends. This was seconded by James. There was discussion regarding how the prices compare to

other fairs, and Jimmy indicated that our prices are below others. Jody also indicated that if a food vendor leaves early, they will not be asked to return. The application for food vendors is on-line. Until all the required information is uploaded, a vendor will not be considered for review by the committee. Jen did a brief demonstration. It was recommended that verbiage be added to tell applicants to have everything available when they begin the application process. The question was raised as to when the last rate increase was, as well as charges for permanent stands between the fair and the car show. Motion passed; Nancy opposed.

Grants: Nancy stated that if anyone has anything that can be used for Grants to let Mary know by the 25th of the month. Jody questioned if there is any grant money out there for draft horses, etc. Nancy stated to email questions to Mary.

Grandstand: Jen stated that they met to discuss what events could be held on Tuesday and Sunday. For Sunday, they are looking at a Rodeo that would be \$17,000, which is within budget. For Tuesday, nothing is determined yet. James has sold the Monster Trucks, but still thinks it's a good idea. There was discussion regarding other possible events, sponsorships, and ticket sellers. The Knights of Columbus no longer want to sell tickets for any grandstand events. James may have a group that is interested. There was also discussion regarding an autocross event on Tuesday, and James stated he has a transformer that he would bring, and that they can get a sponsorship. Jody made a motion to hold a Rodeo on Sunday, seconded by Jen, for \$17,500. Motion passed. Nancy made a motion for an autocross, with 4 trucks and possible robots for \$21,000, seconded by Ken. Motion passed.

James asked for a 20-foot container to have on site for all of the stuff they need. He stated that Tom Kramer would donate half of the \$2600 for the fee. Erich made a motion to approve \$1300 for a container for Grandstand use, seconded by Ken. Motion passed. Vince stated that he did confirm the demolition derby dates with Jason Flemming. Jen stated that she will send a breakdown for ticket sellers. James would like to see a new sound system for year-round use in the grandstands. The space is not rentable without a sound system. He will obtain a price quote from AVX for a sound system. There was discussion regarding dirt work that needs to be done before the fair. More clay is needed on the pulling track; James is not sure of the price. He has a cultivator he had purchased and he will get it down to the fairgrounds. There was discussion regarding where the clay would come from; it previously came from Pecks, and there was not a rock in it. James will work on getting a quote; could be around \$10,000. Jody asked if there was any grant money for this, and Ted asked about a timeframe. This will not be done until May. It was stated that we could possibly use Sales Tax monies, which can go towards improvements. James indicated he will also work on a water truck. James made a motion to use some of the sales tax money to buy \$10,000 for the dirt and hauling, seconded by Jody. Motion passed.

Guest/Host Relations: Nothing to report.

Heritage Square: Nancy stated that Mary is waiting to hear back from Kern and Oman. She is sending out contracts and W-9's for the Cottonwood stage.

Insurance: Nothing to report.

Livestock/Poultry: Sam stated he has an idea for a pig show; this is in the early stages.

Marketing/Advertising: Jen stated there was an IAFE Webinar that the committee jumped on. The focus was on where to spend your money and put your focus. They are working on getting pamphlets and schedules together. Everyone should let Jen know when contracts are signed.

Social Media/Website: Nothing to report.

Midway: Nothing to report.

Military: The next meet raffle at Rollies will be held on February 28th.

Parking: Nothing to report.

Policies and Procedures. Nothing to report.

Premium Book: Jen initiated discussion regarding printing of the premium book and the number that we have sent out previously. Nancy stated that she believes we mailed about 70 of them out last year. Erich volunteered to look at prices to print; he will start with 500 as a number.

Sanitation: Nothing to report. Ken indicated that the Foley Volleyball Team is interested in working for a donation. He will get the information to Jimmy.

Security: Jody initiated discussion regarding making a donation for a canine vest for the new puppy for the Benton County Sherrif Office. There was also discussion regarding the Sauk Rapids Fire Department; they are looking for a donation for 40 new highway safety vests, which is \$2,119.60. The donation of the canine vest is tabled for now.

Sponsorship: Nancy reviewed the changes for the perks that sponsorship donors will receive. Last year, sponsorships brought in \$17,200. The specifics were reviewed, which reflects a 20% decrease for sponsors. Sam made a motion to approve the 2025 sponsorship program, seconded by Jody. Motion passed. Jody discussed the new Bloody Mary bar in the Beer Gardens and what she is asking for in sponsors. She would like a total of five (5) donors to donate a total of \$750 to cover the costs. Jimmy reviewed all of what will be included. The Bloody Mary Bar will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon to 3:00pm. The bar will hand out the glass with vodka for \$10, and then it can be finished at the bar. Jody will have separate tickets so she can keep track of how many are sold. Jen made a motion to approve the sponsorship program for the Bloody Mary Bar as requested by Jody. This was seconded by Erich. Motion passed.

Sports Arena East: Vince stated he contacted Jason Ellering and the rest of the group, and there was no response. He reached out again and is waiting for confirmation on a date to meet.

Vendors: Nancy reviewed the contracts and the recommended updated charges. There was discussion regarding standardizing electrical charges for all vendors; the food vendors are now at \$50 for 110v. Jen made a motion that all vendors be charged \$50 for 110v so that we are consistent across the board, seconded by James. Motion passed.

Winter Storage: Jody stated that she would like to raise the rate for winter storage from \$11/foot to \$13/foot, with a \$200 minimum. She did research and found that most storage is anywhere from \$14 to \$17 per foot. James made a motion to approve the new rate of \$13/foot with a \$200 minimum. This was seconded by Jen. Motion passed. The date for removing items is April 12, as long as the weather cooperates. The dates for drop-off in the fall will be October 11 and October 25.

Old Business:

Code of Professional Ethics and Conduct: Jill handed out copies of the policy that was approved at the last meeting. All Directors were asked to review the policy and sign the last page. This will be an annual requirement.

New Business:

T-shirts and name tags. Jen stated that she will order t-shirts and name tags for new directors. New directors are asked to meet with her for specific needs.

Director Resignation. Ted stated that an email was received from Rod Bemboom that he has resigned from the Bord of Directors. Erich made a motion to accept the resignation, seconded by Ken. Motion passed.

Complaint. Ted stated that a complaint was received and has been reviewed by the Executive Committee. He stated that we need a fully-convened board, so the complaint is tabled for now. Ken stated that it is difficult to get everyone together, and holding special meetings is difficult. Jimmy asked if we can make a meeting mandatory, and try to get these things behind us. There was discussion regarding confidentiality and how difficult it is to move forward without the transparency. It was agreed that this is tabled to the March Regular meeting on the 18th.

Fire Department. Ted continued discussion regarding donations and the request from the Fire Department for new highway safety vests. With their insignia, 40 vests will be \$2,119.60. Jody made a motion to approve a donation to the Sauk Rapids Fire Department for \$2,119.60 for 40 new highway safety vests, seconded by Jimmy. Motion passed.

Other:

IAFE Meeting. Jen initiated discussion regarding the IAFE meeting next week, and she would like to put together a silent auction item. Jody made a motion to spend up to \$100 for a silent auction item for the IAFE meeting, seconded by Jimmy. Motion passed. Ken brought the centerpiece for the meeting and showed directors how it worked. It is amazing; great job to Ken and Jen.!

Next Meeting: The next regular meeting of the Benton County Ag Society Board of Directors will be held on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 7:00pm the Fair board Office.

Adjournment: Sam made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Jen. The meeting adjourned at 10:06pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Zanardi
Executive Secretary