

Benton County Agricultural Society
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Benton County Agricultural Society
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: August 19, 2025 - 7:00 PM

Location: Benton County Fairgrounds

The regular meeting of the Benton County Agricultural Society was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Ted Prom. He then turned the meeting over to Vice President Ken Bemboom, as Ted would be taking notes in the absence of a secretary.

Directors present included: Ted Prom (President), Ken Bemboom (Vice President), Erich Rothstein, Jen Dingmann, Jody Prom, Karen Sakry, Vince Thiel, and Scott Morris. Absent members were Jimmy Zanardi, James Trantina, Adam Scapanski, and Sam Morris.

Guests in attendance included: Cheryl Scapanski, Andy Hanson, Deb Hanson, Gracie Blank, Kara Barry, Rhoda Fagerland, Ann Olson, George Vadies, and Matt Domingi, Ashley Willenbring

Guest: Matt Domingi introduced himself as the new Ice Arena Manager and stated that he will also serve as the representative for Youth Hockey.

Guest: George Vadies shared his history with the Ice Arena, noting that he was one of the original members of Sauk Rapids Youth Hockey and requested a meeting with the Executive Board to discuss his involvement further.

Guest: Gracie Blank and Kara Barry reported that additional t-shirts, including smaller sizes, will need to be ordered for next year. They emphasized the need for clear signage to direct attendees on where to drop off open class items and recommended a better tracking system for parking passes, including noting the number distributed and the recipients. Vendors appreciated the ability to purchase ice during the fair, and these improvements were noted for planning purposes next year.

Guest: Rhoda Fagerland thanked the board for allowing adjustments to the open class process, including early drop-off times, which required more staff. A total of 2,170 items were judged during the fair. She requested full staff coverage on Tuesday (judging day) and

Sunday (pickup day) and suggested extending judging hours from noon until 3:00 PM to ensure completion. The Discovery Building was identified as great place to have “Made in the Shade” this year. Rhoda also announced that the 2026 Fair theme will be "My Own Back Yard."

Guest: Andy Hanson and Deb Hanson reviewed the successes and challenges of the Demo Derby events. This year, there were 33 entries, with a goal of reaching 50 next year.

They emphasized that advertising, rather than prize money, was the primary driver of participation and noted the importance of social media in promoting the events. Andy Hanson requested assistance with social media posts due to limited computer skills. Jody Prom suggested creating a dedicated Benton County Fair Demo Derby Facebook page. The board was also updated on the participant injured during the event.

Approval of Agenda: Scott made motion to approve the agenda, Jody second motion. motion passed.

Approval of Minutes: The regular July meeting minutes were reviewed. One change to be made as Scott Morris was marked absent from July meeting but was present. Scott Morris made a motion to approve, with Erich Rothstein seconding the motion. Motion passed.

Approval of Special Meeting Minutes: No corrections. Scott Morris motioned to approve with Karen Sakry seconding. Motion passed.

Treasure Report: Cheryl Scapanski presented the Treasurer's Report, reviewing the debits and credits from the fair. Several questions were raised by board members and subsequently clarified. Following the review, a motion to accept the report was made by Jody Prom, seconded by Jen Dingmann, and carried unanimously.

Secretary's Report: Ted Prom reported that he is currently collecting and sorting the Society's mail. The Secretary position remains vacant, and the board will discuss filling this role during a workshop scheduled for August 26, 2025, at 6:00 PM at the fairgrounds. In the interim, Jen Dingmann and Jody Prom are reviewing and responding to incoming emails to ensure timely communication.

Ted Prom, Scott Morris, and Kevin Basol completed cleanup duties in preparation for the Pantowner Car Show. Additional cleanup after the event was efficiently handled by the Car Club. Overall, the grounds were reported to be in excellent condition following both the fair and subsequent events.

Jody Prom distributed the updated Policies and Procedures to all board members, requesting that completed forms be returned either during the current meeting or at the

upcoming workshop on August 26. Board members were reminded that timely submission would allow for any necessary revisions before implementation.

Discussion was held regarding the rental house impacted by the roundabout project at the nearby intersection. Ted Prom reported that an appraiser had contacted the board to discuss compensation, which would be calculated per square foot. Removal of the cement pad and the anticipated loss of parking during the fair were highlighted as key considerations. Additionally, the blue house across the street will soon be available for sale, and board members were asked to begin deliberation on whether to pursue its purchase. The rental house contract currently in effect requires updating by October 1, 2025, and this will be addressed in upcoming meetings.

4-H: Ann Olson reported that 4-H had a very successful year, with total participation of approximately 2,200 individuals. Horse shows were a major draw, with 17 horses shown, and discussions were held regarding longer stays and housing options. The Rocket Launch will be held prior to the fair at a separate location. Barn arrangements worked well to accommodate the larger number of livestock. Ann noted that a new state- approved safety evaluation policy for horses has been implemented. The Rooster Crowing Contest, including human participants, was a highlight, and the Cloverbud Corner in the lunch stand was well received. Scheduling concerns were raised, such as the overlap of poultry and rabbit shows. Setup and takedown responsibilities were reviewed, and a primary Fair Board contact was recommended for 4-H coordination. A discussion by Cheryl Scapanski regarding the open class llama obstacle course bill indicated that Cheryl Pflipsen has historically paid the expense; Jody Prom will follow up with Cheryl Pflipsen for clarification.

Activity Area: The Jurassic Kingdom exhibit was extremely popular, drawing multiple repeat visits from children and families throughout the fair. The Mechanical Bull horns were stolen, valued at \$1,500; the owner intends to file an insurance claim and expressed interest in returning for the 2026 fair. Kids Day, supported by Home Depot, was successful, and the bike giveaway was well received. FFA tractor driving had low participation. Both the Bubbles and Pedal Pull attractions were highly popular and received positive feedback.

The reptile show occurred without a formal contract; after discussion, the board decided to pay the \$695 fee this year, with the requirement that a contract be secured for future appearances. The motion to pay was made by Scott Morris, seconded by Karen Sakry, and passed.

AG Craft Building: A total of 461 hours were worked for the AG Craft Building, including 72 hours worked by Rhoda Fagerland prior to the fair. Extra days worked before the fair were

not approved. Jen Dingmann noted concerns about the number of parking passes being handed out freely and suggested a more structured approach. The Executive Board, along with Rhoda Fagerland and Karen Sakry, will meet when issuing Rhoda's check to ensure understanding and agreement of budget for 2026.

Beer Garden / Beer Garden Stage: Jody Prom reported that several bands have already reached out to perform in the Beer Garden next year. The Bloody Mary Bar was successful. A wrench for the drum risers was reported missing; members were asked to notify Ted Prom if found.

Buildings & Grounds: All cleanup has been completed. Eric Rothstein and Jimmy Zanardi will put away the food court lights. Jody Prom requested that FFA tree branches be trimmed because they obstruct security cameras; Scott Morris agreed to handle the trimming.

Discovery Building: The Discovery Building remained empty this year as participants lined up by Sam Morris ultimately backed out. Jody Prom and Cheryl Scapanski made suggestions for potential participants and exhibits for next year, with further discussion planned for a future meeting.

Fall Festival: Ted Prom contacted Randy regarding the Fall Festival, who confirmed he would like to proceed with the event. Jen Dingmann reported that the liquor license has been approved. Ted Prom will communicate to Randy that security must be purchased by the city, with costs estimated between \$4,000 and \$5,000.

FFA: There was nothing new to report.

Finance: Ted Prom reviewed the gross numbers for the fair, comparing this year's results with previous years. He reported that revenues were up considerably compared to past fairs. Ted Prom also utilized the credit card machine on the Midway in the main booth, noting that it worked smoothly and did not negatively impact ATM withdrawals from customers. He discussed potential upgrades for the beer gardens ticket booths, including the possibility of accepting credit card payments in the beer gardens for 2026. Ted Prom will be reviewing credit card and digital sales data to assess the feasibility of this plan.

Food Vendors: Erich Rothstein reported that the ice was well received by vendors and appreciated.

Grants: Applications are in progress, and Ted Prom plans to have them ready for review at the September meeting.

Grandstand: Jen Dingmann noted that car counts were down; however, hooks were up for the pulls, and Saturday nights' demo event sold out. Ticket sales for the pulls were also higher for both nights, indicating overall strong revenue.

Heritage Square: Jody Prom read an email from Brady Roberts, who oversees the Talent Show. Brady provided several suggestions for future improvements and expressed his appreciation to the board for the changes implemented this past year.

Jody Prom also submitted the paperwork for the State Fair, listing the contestants who will be competing in this year's Talent Show. Karen Sakry inquired about the chainsaw demonstration, and it was noted that the performer plans to return next year. Cheryl Scapanski is still awaiting a bill from him for payment, and Jody Prom will continue to coordinate with Cheryl regarding this matter. Ken Bemboom reported that overall, the Heritage Square events ran very smoothly. Ernie Wollack commented positively, stating that the fair went well and was well-organized. Ted Prom and Ken Bemboom noted that a formal procedure or policy will need to be developed regarding the distribution of parking passes for acts and groups performing in the Heritage Building, to ensure clarity and consistency in the future. It was also discussed that the Heritage Building should adhere to the standard fair schedule and not vacate until 5:00 PM. In previous years, performers were instructed to finish by 4:30 PM, and this practice will be reinforced moving forward to ensure consistency with the overall fair timeline.

Insurance: There was nothing new to report.

Livestock/Poultry: Discussion focused on 4-H responsibilities for the cleanup of the tie-out areas.

Marketing / Advertising: Erich Rothstein reported that wristband sales were slow for most of the fair but eventually sold out by the end. He suggested developing new marketing and advertising strategies for the upcoming year to help improve early sales and overall attendance. These initiatives will be considered and included in the 2025-2026 budget planning.

Social Media/Website: Erich Rothstein and Jody Prom reported that they will be conducting cross-training on Saffire to ensure continuity and improve management of the fair's social media platforms and website.

Military: Karen Sakry reported that the parade was conducted differently this year, with changes made unexpectedly and without prior notice to her or Scott Morris. Jody Prom inquired about the condition of the flags on the fairgrounds, noting that several appear tethered or worn.

The board will review the flags and replace any as necessary to maintain proper presentation.

Parking: Parking operations were challenging on the first day of the fair, but adjustments were made that improved the flow for the remainder of the event. Jody Prom was notified to contact or radio the police regarding vehicles parked in handicapped spots or in areas where parking was not permitted. Notably, this was the first year, to Jody's recollection, that any vehicles were towed due to parking violations.

Policy and Procedures: Jody Prom reminded everyone to read and sign the policy and procedures.

Premium Book: There was nothing new to report.

Sanitation: The morning cleanup operations were reported to have gone well. Jody Prom noted that the port-a-potties were in good condition following her coordination with Wruck Sanitation to address any concerns.

Winter Storage: Jody Prom reported that a mass email is being sent to previous winter storage customers from past years to notify them of upcoming opportunities. The designated drop-off dates are October 11, 2025, and October 25, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Additionally, two banners have been placed on the gates to advertise winter storage sign-ups, which have already generated several calls for scheduling.

Other Business: The board noted that the next meat raffle is scheduled for September 26th at Rollies. Jen Dingmann made a motion to pay Donna & Bill Landwehr and Kevin Basol for their assistance leading up to and during the fair, which was seconded by Jody Prom. Ted Prom indicated that Kevin Basol would more than likely want to trade his check for winter storage spots, and the board agreed to this arrangement. The motion was passed.

Ted Prom and Ken Bemboom discussed the idea of the board attending events such as the State Fair and the Renaissance Festival for research purposes, with the goal of bringing new ideas and opportunities back to enhance future fairs. They emphasized that this would be a great way to discover innovative concepts and network with other organizations. Scott Morris made a motion to cover mileage, gate fees, and parking for directors attending these fair-related events in 2025, if interested. Directors wishing to participate will need to complete a reimbursement form, which will include a section to document key takeaways and provide receipts whenever possible. The motion was seconded by Jen Dingmann and passed.

Jen Dingmann brought up that Kara Barry and Gracie Blank stepped into a big role and did a great job before and during the fair and would like to do something extra for them. Scott Morris made the motion to spend \$150.00 for a visa gift card for each of them. Seconded by Jen Dingmann.

Ted Prom also indicated that Jody Prom had prepared an updated list of directors and their term limits. Board members were asked to review the list and note whose terms are approaching completion.

Adjournment

Scott Morris made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Erich Rothstein.

Sincerely,

Jody Prom

Director