NEW MEXICO STATE FAIR COMMISSION <u>MINUTES</u> OF THE REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2016 DONA ANA COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER 845 N. MOTEL BOULEVARD LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO 88007 11:00 A.M.

Call to Order by Chairman Kennedy at approximately 11:01 a.m.

<u>Commission Roll Call</u> – Commissioners present: Chairman, Larry Kennedy Secretary-Treasurer, David "Hossie" Sanchez Commissioner Charles "Chuck" Brown Commissioner William "Bill" Lee Commissioner Xavier Jurado

Pledge of Allegiance: led by Commissioner Brown

Staff present:

Dan Mourning, General Manager Erin Thompson, Deputy Manager Lisa Liegeot, General Counsel Bill Nordin, Chief Financial Officer Ken Salazar, Operations Director Chris Goblet, Special Events

Guests present:

Rebecca Latham, Secretary of New Mexico Tourism Department Aimee Barabe, New Mexico Tourism Department Barbara Hubbard Laura Warden Pat Sanchez

Chairman Kennedy started the meeting with the introduction of guests. He introduced new contractor for EXPO, Chris Goblet. Mr. Mourning advised that Chris helped us put together the state fair beer and it is imperative to get this caliber of folks to our team with such enormous experience and lots of energy. Chris is also working with winegrowers which will be another important partnership. He is a great addition.

Chairman Kennedy went on to acknowledge other staff present including Lisa Liegeot, Bill Nordin, Ken Salazar and Mr. Mourning.

ACTION ITEM: Approval of Agenda

Chairman Kennedy made a motion for approval of the agenda, recommending that item #9 be moved below item #13. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lee, with all members voting in the affirmative.

ACTION ITEM: Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Brown made a motion for approval of the minutes from the January 13, 2016 fair commission meeting, which was seconded by Commissioner Sanchez, with all members voting in the affirmative.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

PRESENTATION: Secretary Rebecca Latham

Rebecca Latham, Secretary of the New Mexico Department of Tourism gave a presentation to the commission, highlights of which included the following:

We should be working together – they are proud of the relationships we have developed with the management at EXPO New Mexico and we have been collaborating well.

Direct visitor spending is up in New Mexico - great news as this generates tax revenues.

Hospitality jobs are 1 for every 12 in our state.

Secretary Latham provided a "crash course" in New Mexico True

They have an open door to figure out how we can further promote the fair.

Tourism is focused on "Venturesome travelers."

Secretary Latham shared a video of out-of-state focus groups demonstrating people's previous perceptions of New Mexico.

The campaign is working with 2.3 million new trips since 2010. Their ad budget increased 274% based on the fact it's working. True is making an emotional connection with consumers in certain markets, targeting print and digital. They budget 33% into digital advertising which has high recall and is more targeted. Video utilization is an important component.

New Mexico True promises adventure that feeds the soul – the sweet spot is adventure steeped in culture. Working together, we can identify parts of the state fair that identify adventure steeped in culture.

Tourism opened the True campaign to local governments to leverage what the state is already providing. Many are putting their own money into NM True. Private businesses have come on board as well. They choose to put True on their delivery trucks, etc. as a brand for the state, not just Tourism. 50 communities utilize the templates which might not otherwise have the resources to hire an agency.

County governments are coming on board as well. It is a celebration of all the things that make NM unique, different and special.

What they've done with the fair so far -- Spread in New Mexico Magazine as well as participating in the sweepstakes that Erin put together; Listicle – list style article on their webpage; NM True Day

What more we can do – New Mexico True television - have host come out and do some fun stuff around fair. The limitation is that it would have to be in preparation for the following year's fair.

Pending FAA approval – New Mexico True overviews. The FAA has downed commercial drones but they are asking for waiver to continue 30 second aerial views of New Mexico.

Keep NM True is an in state campaign to instill pride in New Mexicans in order to better preserve our state. It asks folks to take a pledge and is much broader than clean ups. Tourism is working with youth to stay engaged in NM.

NM True certified program - just launched for products and businesses which are creating, making, growing products in our state to leverage NM True, such as livestock, textiles, jewelry, art. Clearly with the fair's roots in agriculture and ranching, there is major potential to work with the fair.

Idea – trail at state fair. Trails highlight things to do while in NM, such as breakfast burrito cheeseburger, film trail etc. It features an actual road map. We could consider an NM True Trail within the state fair, identifying those things uniquely New Mexican within map of fairgrounds, encouraging consumers to take the trail at the state fair.

We look forward to working together. (played video)

In closing, Secretary Latham said that New Mexico True is what unites us. There are opportunities to find all the things that make New Mexico amazing – that's what a state fair already is.

Commissioner Sanchez talked about growing up in Santa Rosa and the Blue Hole and the other recreational water activities going on. Secretary Latham acknowledged the enormous trampoline obstacle course there which was a great investment by the community. Commissioner Sanchez said they added a climbing wall. He was a lifeguard for years and it was so neat. Commissioner Sanchez talked about how we are a prime location for food and how we have to promote our food as New Mexicans. More than anything else, his clients want to eat here -- the beans, the chile, etc. The Luna Mansion, for example, is amazing – where else can you get bisque with green chile. We have to promote food at the state fair. People will go where the good food is. Indian Village and other spots have the best food in the world. If we really promote fair food with pictures, people will come. Secretary Latham agreed that food is a strong motivator for travel to New Mexico. She stated that 51% of Americans make vacation plans based on food, and that the state fair has the opportunity to be the premier destination in New Mexico for food. Cuisine is a "point of distinction" and this is a great opportunity for collaboration with the fair.

Commissioner Sanchez indicated that New Mexico also has the best quarter horses in the US and this is an opportunity which he will tell the horsemen about and ask them to go see the folks at Tourism. We are missing the boat here as we have New Mexico bred horses and the best stallions. We need to promote the industry and brand it. Commissioner Jurado stated that he was familiar with the video and found it interesting. He said that his family transplants chile and there is a process called "juning." He indicated that he has worked with June (the woman featured in the the video).

Commissioner Lee thanked Secretary Latham for participating in the meeting. He stated that partnering with True provides great opportunities to promote the fair and New Mexico and he loves the idea of a trail throughout the fair to experience those things truly unique to New Mexico. The fair is the one place you can see more of New Mexico in a single day as opposed to traveling place to place and this is something we can highlight. Commissioner Lee said he loves the contest and we can make it bigger and better. To brand ourselves as NM True is something we need to capitalize on. He was an early believer in True and has seen the results. Some of the markets are prime targets based on real data, if we can interject that into fair it helps draw people from those areas as well. He stated they did a great job thanks to Aimee (Barabe) too. He conveyed that if he can do anything as a commissioner to further True, we stand ready to do so. Even bigger things are on the horizon and we look forward to a continued strong relationship.

Chairman Kennedy thanked Secretary Latham and echoed what Commissioner Lee said. We know she's busy so to take time to be part of the fair means a lot to us. He stated that we've seen their success and her passion is catchy. The chairman stated that whatever we can do, we are here and we are in.

Commissioner Lee commented on the story on fair in New Mexico Magazine and that we should develop a True ad that shows rodeo with a bronc rider with the message that "behind every good king is a remarkable queen."

Secretary Latham thanked the fair for bringing New Mexicans together and expressed that we can find a way to get them to feel even more proud of their state after traveling to fair, which is mutually beneficial.

CHAIRMAN'S AGENDA – Committee Reports

Commissioner Sanchez said things were looking good in the racing world and that they are doing a great purse structure at \$150,000 a day. He stated that the grandstand will hopefully be ready for opening day in June. He said it looks good. Commissioner Sanchez acknowledged they've had some problems back there but are working on it. He reiterated that racing is going along well. Commissioner Sanchez said that Mr. Mourning and the crew have done a great job on the back side fixing drainage etc. Continuing with those projects will make the backside even better.

Chairman Kennedy indicated that the members will discuss Commissioner Lee's committee during the manager's report.

State Fair Management Report

Mr. Mourning indicated that Secretary Latham was a hard act to follow and said what makes her special is her passion. You can't help but be moved by what you saw. He said we were approached by Secretary Jacobson in the beginning and we did a great job with a Billy the Kid promotion which was very successful and it has just gotten better. There are really exciting things happening and to be able to tag onto the brand is incredible. Mr. Mourning thanked the commission for the suggestion to go to other areas of New Mexico. We went to Sparky's in Hatch on the way to Las Cruces and it is the coolest

place on earth and the food is spectacular. Sparky's was the people's choice winner of last year's green chile cheeseburger competition.

We are so far ahead in planning and have never been this far ahead including a concert lineup which we are ready to talk about. We have a special guest who is a legend and is going to give a quick presentation. The winner of the governor's reading challenge, a young lady named Emi, was from a Las Cruces elementary school. Emi's mom said they had an incredible time.

Mr. Mourning introduced Barbara Hubbard who made a presentation about the concert lineup. Ms. Hubbard said that she does the fun part and enjoys it. You have to in order to do it for this many years. They are providing scholarships to kids. She said the fun part is trying to outdo the big boys by staying on top of acts so we can provide the customers what they enjoy and can afford – the price tag is important and we try to stay in budget. Ms. Hubbard acknowledged they may have a little override and still had a little more work to do in negotiating with 38 Special. We are trying to get something on the other side to bring them in. In the future, she said we can try to put in a statement with a new perimeter and a new five week essence to protect us so that when we negotiate a contract they know up front what to expect.

Played video showing 2016 State Fair concert lineup

Ms. Hubbard provided insight for next year, saying we are competing with every festival in America and so we have to be sharp when we go in December (to the International Association of Fairs and Expositions conference). We must pick the anchor dates and set fair around it. She recommended to immediately pick your top performer and go in December and let everyone book around us. If that's the draw to fair do the rest with other acts, like the youngster coming who is number 5 on billboards, as they rise in the country market. You have to keep your ear to the gossip in Nashville and she goes 3 times a year to keep up. She said she is also going to Los Angeles in May to knock on doors of agents so they realize who Mother Hubbard is. She loves what she does and loves her students. No one can fire her and she's not on anyone's payroll. Everything goes back into budget but she takes expenses for her sons to buy burgers.

Commissioner Lee stated that he had the pleasure of meeting her several years ago when he worked for the El Paso County Coliseum. He was in awe of all the shows she got for the Pan Am center. He said she is a New Mexico True story. What she has done at NMSU is truly impressive and this is one of best lineups he has seen in a long time. Ms. Hubbard stated that she is from Arkansas but moved here in 1954 and would never move back. She loves Sabrina (Garza) and Ken (Salazar) and has met several other staff. She said she is honest with Dan (Mourning) and vice versa and they have great communication with each other. We can't let it slide - stay on top of social media, etc. There are over 400 students on the payroll at NMSU and some of them do have passion for business. She has set up 16 endowments with the support of big artists.

Chairman Kennedy asked Ms. Hubbard's advice about up and coming bands such as those who currently open for the big guys. Ms. Hubbard responded that you have to watch them and read the politics of Nashville. She said it is a rough job but you learn what the key/secret is after 40 years.

Commissioner Lee stated that Chase (Bryant) will be big show.

Chairman Kennedy said it was cool to see and learn how they come out of our fair and how it helps us as well.

Commissioner Brown asked who performs right before 38 Special on September 15. Ms. Hubbard indicated it was Lo Cash. Commissioner Brown said it was a great lineup and asked if there are others, to which Ms. Hubbard answered no. She said Erin (Thompson) can start marketing. She said we need to chase that dollar and it's tough, acknowledging that you don't want to lose money. She said what the family will spend their leisure time and dollar on is getting widdled down by the minute.

Commissioner Sanchez asked what Ms. Hubbard thought about building a new auditorium. She said one of the things she fights most in bringing acts to the fair is some guys say it's an old building and she tells them about improvements. One concept is an agent party before the fair in summer and emphasized it is a constant battle of staying in front of them with new pictures and new ideas. Commissioner Sanchez clarified that he was asking specifically about an arena. Ms. Hubbard stated that it was a good idea if you can and she always wants to go for top for her market. You can do a lot more with a facility designed for 21,000 seats. The Journal Pavilion took the idea about adding more lawn space. We've got to be competitive and if you build it, build it so you can cut down or build up seating capacity. Yes if you could revamp that whole complex, or do it extra and keep the other one there. But you have to make it competitive and top what you have now and learn to divide it. Do things for community to raise awareness.

Commissioner Brown joked that he wants to go to her 40th birthday party when it comes up.

Mr. Mourning said that once again, this was another act that is hard to follow. Again the fair is the place you want to start your New Mexico adventure. Fall is the best place in New Mexico, so start at the state fair and then go to balloons. He acknowledged that Commissioner Lee has an awesome new balloon.

Mr. Mourning stated that the concert lineup is well set and we will nail down 38 Special. We are happy to see them coming and they can still bring it. We have great spectaculars such as Cavallo horse show which is an incredible event with trick riding, great entertainment and an unbelievable show. They have their own tent and will be in the creative arts lot which will be prominent within the fair. Aussie Kingdom is also coming. We've discovered people love animals and different types such as the exotic stuff and we've never had Aussie animals. It will be located where the sea lions were last year. Back by popular demand we will have the street drum corps. These guys were even willing to go out at 5:30 am when we did promotions with Ch.13 and they are great. We also will be bringing back the Duck Races. People clamored to have it back. Pig Races are also coming back. We are adding Cowboy Adventure which is dedicated to the cowboy life and educating about ranching etc. We have never had it before. Also bringing something for the thrill seekers with Xpogo. They do things on pogos that defy your eyes. Doc dogs is coming back and we can't wait to bring them back. The general public can bring their dogs as well. Interactive things are important. Getting back to midway- Reithoffer Carnival will be bigger and better and ready to go. We dug trenches to conceal cabling so it looks like a permanent venture. For Commissioner Brown, we have the "parade of champions" in which we are inviting all our local champions to the parade and we have reached out to Brian Urlacher and Holly Holm as well as a national champion dance team. We have had an overwhelmingly positive response. The state fair parade is fantastic with 40 thousand plus people lining the streets. Some of our spectaculars such as Cavallo will be the in parade.

The fair has turned around with a great atmosphere and a great feeling - people love their fair again. The fair business is reviving, thanks to great people like Barbara Hubbard. We are forging new partnerships for getting people to the fair. We are close to solidifying a true, dedicated "park and ride" from the west and east sides of towns. We have also partnered with Uber starting recently with the Chocolate and Coffee Fest. Uber creates an "uber lounge" for while you wait for your ride including seating, beverages, and a nice place to relax. For new uber riders, the fair gets 5 dollars per rider who uses the code for fair. Uber is the future. Bike valet will also be back. We are working with Tourism and it will be bigger and better than ever. We included their staff in our advertising Request for Proposal as an evaluator. Relationships are important and incredible things are happening. We are fortunate to hire Chris Goblet who is here to tease our Labor Day event.

Mr. Goblet talked about how he had planned to travel to Las Cruces the following week to meet with winegrowers but when he heard about the opportunity to attend the commission meeting he decided to come this week instead. He provided some information about his background. He moved to New Mexico with his family but lived in New York City for a brief time. He came back and stayed and has worked in marketing and advertising, including jobs with the downtown action team, and New Mexico Brewers Guild. He was tasked to create brand and identity for the local craft brew industry. He has overseen 40 beer festivals, Ski Santa Fe events, wine festivals golf tournaments, etc. Chris said that he has gotten to know the state and has received over 300,000 dollars in grants for various organizations, including from Tourism for beer. He said he has gotten to know Dan and his team and the stars aligned. He was able to help see Dan's vision for the beer and bring it into fruition as "an experience worth sharing." This is a new chapter, working with winegrowers part time and Dan, with a great platform at the fair to build and grow. Over the next few weeks he will be talking to staff and learning the mission and what he can bring to the table. It is about relationship development and building bridges and connecting the dots. We can leverage Labor day with our midway operator. He was asked to come up with creative concepts and ideas to showcase new elements to Expo and not just state fair in order to make it a destination. Mr. Goblet said that yesterday we presented to Secretary Latham about embracing the True campaign with the agriculture interests and brewers, musicians etc. to showcase the food and culture of New Mexico, taking elements and transitioning into fair. He said Dan will give more information at the right time but Secretary Latham was enthusiastic. We will be adding and building upon successive events. He started out working on a tiny beer festival at Villa Hispana 7 years ago and recognizes that we have the best facilities in the state. This is what he knows best and he looks forward to the opportunity considering the assets he has with which to work.

Mr. Mourning stated that we are entering into new realms. We currently offer our facilities for shows including horse, livestock, roping, coffee and chocolate, guns etc. We are the most unique events center in New Mexico and offer outstanding facilities. We've had infrastructure issues but we are addressing them. We are really excited about the fiber loop. That communication link is critical. We expect to complete the entire campus in 45 to 60 days. For the UFC event, this was the only issue and they indicated they would love to see fiber in Tingley because of the extensive wi fi use. We won't have that problem any longer. New signs are on track and present good aesthetics. We will have the ability to instantaneously know what's going on and will have monument signs as well. Talking about security, it is a different world than it once was and we take that very seriously so we will have year round increased camera capability, more systems, security at Gate 3 with full time ambassadors to welcome folks into the fairgrounds and understand their purpose for being on grounds. We are implementing electrical upgrades in conjunction with what the Downs is doing at the grandstand. He pointed out there are photos in commissioners' notebooks. Mr. Mourning said that raising the apron to the track level is a big undertaking and getting rid of the "door to nowhere" makes it look better. They are

spending over \$3 million in renovations and capitalizing on views of the Sandias. We expect it will be substantially completed by the meet in June. It will have new roof, hvac and fiber, new seating and a new Turf Club. The forethought that went into the design and execution is spectacular. It is a great partnership. The new lease delivers \$12 million to the state general fund. Commissioner Sanchez pointed out how much it also improves horse racing and Mr. Mourning agreed.

With regard to our issue with EPA, Mr. Mourning stated that EXPO went from being perceived as the largest polluter because we have horses. We are now included in national publications for EPA on how to address problems for every racetrack in the country and we are now considered the poster child for compliance. This is a huge step. It is good for the neighborhoods, eliminating calls about dust and flies. We are in the heart of the largest area and want to be a good neighbor. At Villa Hispana we did a sound audit and completely upgraded sound level for neighbors. We have had no recent complaints. Mr. Mourning stated that he is very proud of the team and staff. As it relates to rodeo, the Elite Rodeo Athletes (ERA) are the top in the business. Mr. Mourning asked Ken (Salazar) to come up. Mr. Salazar advised that ERA approached us specifically because we are up and coming in rodeo. They are looking at us because we are ranked 21 in the business for top rodeos and are probably going to be in the top 10 this year. We are doing things right including having Xtreme bulls again, and bringing in the right folks, stock, etc. The rodeo business is good. ERA is stand alone event taking place on May 20 and 21 including the top 130 cowboys. Tickets are on sale now our own Taos Muncy will be here the week before to do a media push, meet and greets etc. We will set up autographs at the casino. It wasn't easy to secure but we got the job done.

Mr. Mourning added that ERA is going to be a good deal with good sales. We want to bring big events to our facility. We had great meeting with the Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau and we agreed that we want an even stronger partnership. Tania Armenta is outstanding and it is that same passion that is needed in recognizing the asset that EXPO is. Getting ERA is a coup for us. He thanked Ken and staff for their hard work.

Chairman Kennedy advised that the gentleman who manages his 401 k called him and said he grew up doing rough stock and asked to help with rodeo. He has reported back that he is flabbergasted at the enthusiasm of the organization and is seeing a professional attitude toward rodeo. This is coming from someone who just wants to volunteer because he wants to be a part of it. Mr. Salazar thanked Chairman Kennedy for sending our volunteer and advised that he has him working on some projects. Everett Dossey has also been outstanding working with 4 H etc.

Chairman Kennedy touched on legislative items, and stated that what Commissioner Lee and Commissioner Sanchez alluded to with regard to redevelopment could mean we are going to be in a much better place. He said our surveys tell us folks are having an excellent or good experience but there is still room for improvement. We've talked to promoters and asked about Albuquerque with regard to routing between Dallas and Phoenix. Barbara Hubbard stated that you have a gold mine if you can pick up shows during the off months with Live Nation and you could still work with other promoters. If we have 50 extra acres, she suggests to build it as fast as we could build it. Mr. Mourning thanked her, stating that she knows this business backward, forward and upside down. He said we are the only city without at least a 17,000 seat arena. Mr. Mourning said that legislatively, there was a bill that was thrown out for which Representative (Nate) Gentry tested the waters. It was a roundabout form of a tax increment development district, which got to the floor but wasn't heard. None of the committee members thought it was a bad idea. We visited with Commissioner Lee in Gallup about how we go forward. We are contracting with a consultant for information and hard data to determine the needs and wants.

Ms. Hubbard expressed that she wants to approve load in and load out. She reiterated the need for retractable seating. Mr. Mourning agreed that Ms. Hubbard is right and we've had conversations. We love Tingley but it's time to bring in something new which would be advantageous to the whole state. We will have a bigger report at the next commission meeting. He stated that we are limited only by our own enthusiasm and he is fully committed with every ounce of energy so that kids can be proud of New Mexico and what we have to offer.

Mr. Mourning provided an update on the ART (Albuquerque Rapid Transit) project stating that he knew this was the mayor's priority project and he is not going to back off as he thinks it is important to city of Albuquerque. We met with the Transit folks to ensure we aren't harmed by the project. The exciting news is the plan includes a traffic signal and pedestrian cross walks which are important to the flea market at the Tower gate. There will be 100 new parking spots on our site secured by transit. Lisa (Liegeot) is working on the MOU and we've gotten guarantees they won't do construction during the race season or fair. It is a win-win partnership which is critical to our success.

Commissioner Lee said it was clear that Dan is really taking the bull by the horns and we will have a more complete update on what consultants say at the next meeting. He said he wants to highlight that we not only want a state of the art facility that is multifunctional, but not only state of art by today's standards, but also which extends beyond what we need now. We need to talk to experts in the field about what's coming and how to we prepare the facility to be ahead of the game. We have the right people working in that direction.

Chairman Kennedy asked if there were questions to which there were none.

ACTION ITEM: Closed Session

Chairman Kennedy moved to item 9 on the agenda, with Commissioner Lee making the motion to go into closed session to discuss a limited personnel matter, performance approval of agency director, which was seconded by Commissioner Brown, with all members present voting in the affirmative. *Everyone other than commission members and AG Counsel Susan Sullivan exited the meeting room.*

After a short time, state fair staff and commission meeting guests were called back into the meeting room. Chairman Kennedy affirmed that the closed session discussion included only matters in accordance with (NMSA 1987) Section 10-15-1.

ACTION ITEM: Approval of Director Salary Increase

Commissioner Lee made a motion to approve a salary increase to \$104,000 for Agency Director Dan Mourning for his exemplary work as the leader at EXPO New Mexico. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown, with all present voting in favor.

Mr. Mourning expressed his gratitude.

Next on the agenda was discussion of the meeting calendar. Chairman Kennedy expressed thanks to everyone for participating in the Las Cruces meeting, including our Attorney General counsel, to Erin (Thompson) for work that went in ahead of time in order to travel to Las Cruces for the meeting. He stated that the next meeting will be in Gallup some time during the first part of August. There was

discussion about actually looking at July and the 8th and 15th were proposed as options. Commissioner Lee stated that he was good with either date though it was determined that Commissioner Brown was unavailable on July 8. There was consensus that July 15, 2016 worked for all. Chairman Kennedy asked Erin to send a reminder to all to firm it up. Commissioner Lee stated that he will help with any of the arrangements.

Chairman Kennedy said to let him know if commissioners had agenda items for the next meeting and asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Lee stated that before they adjourn, he wanted to acknowledge Mr. Mourning and stated that excellent doesn't come close to defining his work. He said he recognizes that an incredible team of people won't work with you unless you are an excellent leader and that Mr. Mourning is just that. Commissioner Lee said he couldn't begin to fill his shoes and stated his thanks for the work of the agency director and his entire crew.

Mr. Mourning responded that the commission was incredibly generous, and that when he started with Commissioner Sanchez and Chairman Kennedy, wild eyed and without a clue, to where we are now, does take a team effort. Mr. Mourning said it starts with you guys (commissioners) and expressed his gratitude for giving him the opportunity to make the fair great. Commissioner Sanchez stated that Mr. Mourning's staff at the state fair is reflective of him as a leader. He said we have made great strides and we wouldn't have anyone else to lead the agency.

Commissioner Lee made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Commissioner Sanchez with all present voting in favor. The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:40 PM.