

Josephine County Fair Board Meeting

March 17, 2026

Josephine County Fairgrounds Floral Building

1451 Fairgrounds Rd., Grants Pass, Or. 97527

Present: Board Chair: Dean Saxon, Vice Chair: Karl Haeckler, Kim Gasperson, Julie Lockman, and Tamra Martin Fairgrounds manager

These are meeting minutes only. Only text enclosed in quotation marks (“) reports speaker’s exact words.

1. Call to order

Pursuant to notice through the media and in conformance with the Public Meeting Law, Dean Saxon called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Agenda

Julie Lockman made a motion to approve the Agenda for March 17, 2026, and Karl Haeckler 2nd the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Minutes

Karl made a motion to approve the minutes from February 24, and Julie 2nd the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. General Public Input: Guest in attendance, Sierra Falk, Trent Tocher, Rod Lowe, Steve Hartler

Deb Burg- speaking as a professional educator, wants the Code of Conduct to include the superintendents. She doesn’t want drinking alcohol around the youth events including the auction.

Reports

- a. Auction Committee -Jen McGowan-** Kim reported for Jen, 43 stees weighed in on Sunday. Pre-fair went well for all kids and there were no issues.
- b. Facilities Committee- Dean Saxon -** added gables on front of Dance Center. Looking at redoing doors and the slab in front of them hoping to have done before Fair. Tamra added that she would also like to get 2 nice benches to place one under each gable and install the rest of the exterior lights.
- c. Friends of the Fairgrounds Report- Dean Saxon-** Bingo is going well and in effort to grow their fund-raising opportunities, they’ve added 1 Friday a month for Last Friday Bingo.
- d. Director’s Report**
 - 1. Grounds Report-** An RFP was sent out for the refinishing of the floors in the commercial building with a pre-bid meeting scheduled March 18th. Tamra is also working on getting bids for a paint job for the exterior of commercial building and interior after the floors are finished. The windows had been previously painted over and

to address that, Tamra is looking into getting window coverings that are designed to make it look like real windows. Events are busy!

2. 2026 Legislative Update- Thank You Letter- County

Fairgrounds had the cap removed from their 1% lottery funds in the short session. This could mean anywhere from \$180,000-\$250,000 annually for each Fairgrounds. Tamra suggested writing a thank you letter to the Senator who made it happen from the Fair Board. While this is a victory, we will still need to be cautious because we won't start receiving the money until next fiscal year and so we will have to fight to keep it during the upcoming long session.

3. Fair 2026 Update- still looking for headlining entertainment

5. Business

- a. Horse Racing Facility Update-** Rob Lowe and Steve Hartler came to speak to the Fair Board. Horse Racing representatives for the state have been working through legislature for the last 3 years to receive stable funding for horse racing. They historically received funding from Greyhound wagering in other states, but Oregon has stopped accepting those funds. This wagering has made up about ¼ of their funds. There are 4 remaining racetracks in Oregon located in Union, Tillamook, Grants Pass and Prineville. They will each receive one time funding of 1 million through the Christmas Tree bill from the last session. They are still working out the specifics on how it can be used but the Oregon Racing Commission wants an emergency warning system for our grounds with a cost of about \$15,000. The track itself needs more sand, and this costs about \$80,000. Other projects include moving the Test Barn, drainage issue in the back barns, the grandstand roof, renovating the bathrooms and funding support for purses and insurance. Because we are the only commercial racetrack, Rod started working a year ago on an off-track betting site under the grandstands as it's still legal in the State of Oregon. It would be about 1500 sq ft and located near the restrooms and open year-round. This would provide financial support for horse racing as well as a lease revenue for the Fairgrounds. Rod asked the Fair Board if they would endorse the idea of supporting the building an onsite betting track system. *Kim Gasperson made a motion to support the building of an onsite-track betting facility on the fairgrounds under the grandstands of the Grants Pass Downs. Karl Haeckler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

Steve Hartler also spoke- he is the Vice President of SOHRA. He gave a little history of his life and his connection to horse racing. He handed out a proposal with photos of how they plan to renovate the Grants Pass Downs. They will be launching a capital improvement campaign called Racing Toward a Brighter Future and seeking grants, donations, and community

support. He asks if they can move forward with the support of the Fair Board. *Karl Haeckler made a motion to endorse the Racing Toward a Brighter Future campaign with the understanding that the individual projects will still need Fair Board approval prior to construction. Julie Lockman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

b. Swot Analysis Wrap Up-

1. Set Goals- set short term and long-term goals were set and Tamra will create a document to hand out and next board meeting

c. Community Learning Center- proposed usage- OSU proposal provided a proposal to lease the Community Learning Center with a zero-dollar lease due to the history of the building and County. There was discussion around community use versus exclusive use, the required maintenance and upkeep of the building, the poor condition that the facilities were left in last time they leased without funds available to repair, and history versus ownership of the property. In the end the Board is in favor of OSU exclusively leasing and renovating the Community Learning Center for their specific use, not for zero dollars, but a subsidized rate. They instructed Tamra to prepare a counter proposal after doing research on what Fair Market Value and coming up with a reasonable subsidized lease dollar amount.

6. Other Business

a. Additional Discussion- when Sue Hunt was OSU/4H staff, she came to the Fair Board meetings to provide updates and had a spot on the agenda under reports. We removed that report when previous staff indicated that they wouldn't be attending any longer. Frank Boothby, new OSU/4H staff has indicated that they will be attending the meeting to provide update, Tamra requested approved to add that section back into reports. Board approved without objection.

7. Next Fair Board Meeting: April 21, 2026 @ 6:00 p.m.

Motion was made to adjourn at 8:10 pm by Julie Lockman and 2nd by Karl Haeckler. Motion passed unanimously.