

NEW MEXICO STATE FAIR COMMISSION
MINUTES
OF THE REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2014
AFRICAN AMERICAN PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, ROOM 120
300 SAN PEDRO NE
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
CONVENE AT 10:00 A.M.

Call to Order by Chairman Kennedy at approximately 10:00 a.m.

Commission Roll Call – Commissioners present:

Commissioner, Charles “Chuck” Brown
 Chairman, Larry Kennedy
 Commissioner, William “Bill” Lee
 Secretary-Treasurer, David “Hossie” Sanchez
 Commissioner Xavier Jurado

Absent: Commissioner Kenneth “Twister” Smith

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Commissioner Lee

Staff present:

Dan Mourning, General Manager
 Allison Hedgecock, General Counsel
 Erin Thompson, Media Director
 Bill Nordin, Chief Financial Officer
 Sally Mayer, Senior Manager
 Ken Salazar, Operations Manager
 Sabrina Garza, Events & Sponsorship Manager
 Matt Sena, Information Technology Director
 Rick Word, Attorney General’s Office

Members of the Public present:

Dolly Wallace
 Sharon Eastman
 Valerie Cole
 Charles Brunt (Albuquerque Journal)
 Ron Morris
 Rusty Cook
 Shelley Bachicha
 Sierra Shan
 Jason Turner

Caren Cowan
Shacey Sullivan
Bon Bagley

Chairman Kennedy went through introductions and acknowledgement of guests.

Action Item: Chairman Kennedy asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2014 meeting. Commissioner Brown made a motion to approve with Commissioner Lee seconding. There were no comments from the commission and the motion passed unanimously.

Action Item: Chairman Kennedy made reference to the proposed resolution on Public Meetings. Allison Hedgecock, general counsel for State Fair/Expo New Mexico offered to provide further explanation. The resolution includes a change in the word "and" to "or" on page 5, and the notice for meetings, including the ability to allow either posting to the webpage or the newspaper, as opposed to both. Additionally, it inserts the name of the new communications director.

Chairman Kennedy thanked Allison, acknowledged the change to the public information contact person, and asked if there were any questions about paragraph number 5, 3rd line with regard to publishing notice in the newspaper and/or the website.

Commissioner Brown asked Attorney General's Office Mr. Word if his office had input and approval with regard to the change.

Mr. Word asked for clarification and was advised that the question related to the changing of the word "and" to "or." Mr. Word said he thinks it is permissible, and up to the body to decide, though most of his clients do not go that route. Most of his agencies put notice in the paper of general circulation and on their webpage but he doesn't think it's required. The board decides what is reasonable, though it is somewhat in contrast with what other clients have put out in their open meetings resolutions.

There were no other questions/comments and Chairman Kennedy asked if there was a motion to approve.

ACTION ITEM: Commissioner Sanchez moved to approve resolution number 02-2-14 with Commissioner Jurado seconding. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Chairman Kennedy advised the next item on the agenda was the state fair/expo manager position. It is on the agenda to address an audit finding and we need to consider the affirmation of Mr. Mourning as general manager. He asked if there was a motion.

ACTION ITEM: Commissioner Brown moved to affirm manager Dan Mourning's hiring as the general manager of the fair and read from a document including language that as a matter of record, the commission does hereby reaffirm the hiring of Dan Mourning as general manager of Expo and the State Fair. Chairman Kennedy asked if there was a second and Commissioner Sanchez seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Kennedy announced that the next item on the agenda is the committee report. Dan Mourning was asked to provide a report about fair planning, but first Expo CFO Bill Nordin was asked to provide a financial report.

Mr. Nordin provided a financial report to the commission, including an update on Expo's movement to the state SHARE system. He said that while there have been challenges, that is the direction we have decided to go. Expo is one year into a two year transition. While it isn't an exact fit, the state understands that and has allowed for some exceptions for those more unique instances. He talked about the importance of the ongoing internal review of the budget and operating revenues. As for revenues, we were down a half a million dollars due to four days of rain during last year's fair. He discussed the three primary categories that Santa Fe reviews. Operating expenses are pretty consistent as compared to the previous year.

Mr. Nordin introduced J.J. Griego who performed the audit. We haven't yet closed the books from last year, so these are not final numbers (provided in the hard copy financial report). The next audit process will start in about a month.

Chairman Kennedy asked if there were any questions. Commissioner Lee asked if it would be possible to get numbers once they are final and Mr. Nordin answered in the affirmative.

Chairman Kennedy requested Mr. Mourning provide the state fair planning report. Mr. Mourning acknowledged that the Fair/Expo has had some significant personal losses including the retirement of Peggy Durkin due to health issues as well as the passing of Michael Henningsen, who he said had so much passion and heart for the Fair, and who was so helpful to him when he arrived at the Fair office. Mr. Mourning acknowledged the efforts of those who have come on board and stepped up to take on the tasks. Mr. Mourning advised the commission that for this year we will acknowledge Michael by calling the pavilion stage the "Henny Pavilion" to remember him and thank him for everything he did.

Mr. Mourning advised the commission of recent events including the very successful UFC event, which was internationally televised. The president of UFC, Dana White was very impressed with the event and said that evening that they would return. Tingley looked great and the state police did a great job, as well as our private company Securitas. Mr. Mourning also thanked state Regulation and Licensing liquor control director Mary Kay Root for working with us in setting up expanded bars and an outdoor bar, which provided us some ideas for the Fair. Overall, we are moving forward, getting more and more events, working on our capital projects. The entrance has been redone. Most of the items that we have money for are not going to be obvious, such as replacing the sewer line, IT upgrades, electrical systems, and roofs being replaced. We're reducing slips, trips and falls and helping to ensure pedestrians are safe. We had a great safety record this last year with around 100 calls to paramedics as opposed to three to four hundred in previous years. We will get a report on the capital projects we have ongoing, which we will send out soon.

Mr. Mourning reported that hiring is going well. He thanked Caren Cowan and Commissioner Smith for their efforts on livestock. We appreciate their efforts on the sale, which will be bigger and better and we appreciate their commitment to the Fair. We will continue to do some things to bring people onto the north end. We are doing a lot of repairs on the buildings and upgrades.

Chairman Kennedy asked about Erin Dorsey being brought in to work on the Livestock Show. Mr. Mourning confirmed that was the case and she will be a great resource and asset to the Fair.

Mr. Mourning moved onto horse shows and acknowledged some hiccups at last year's show and the arduous undertaking it has been to try to correct the issues. We are working hard on these issues so that it won't happen again. We have hired Excel Show Management and Dauane Elkins will be taking on the task. Judges have been secured. He will make it better and more user friendly. We will make sure all exhibitors know they are welcome here. We will also have some special programs such as Horses Helping People.

Mr. Mourning talked about a Walgreens promotion/partnership to pre-sale discounted admission to the Fair. This is the first time we've ever done it. We've partnered with ABQ Ride and Railrunner to provide transportation as part of the deal. It helps with admission sales despite rain and eases parking issues. We will have a shuttle to take folks to Gate 9. It is a win/win. Mr. Mourning thanked Ken for working on the initiative. We want to emphasize that the fair is affordable to the average family and a great entertainment value.

Mr. Mourning went on to say that we are working hard on rodeo to return it to being one of the top rodeos in the country. We've taken a hard look at it based on survey information we gathered. We are focused on the entertainment and ramping things up. We've gone from 6 rodeos to 9, as well as a traditional Mexican rodeo with a Latino concert. Mr. Mourning turned it over to Ken Salazar for a rodeo update.

Mr. Salazar talked about the assistance of Jimmie Nugent and others from PRCA who are volunteering to help get the rodeo back to where it needs to be. He has visited other rodeos to see how they do it compared to NM and we will have determined there should be changes to the grand entry and have fireworks, more queen contestants, etc. We need to do a better job welcoming our cowboys. We need to do more photo shoots and meetings with the commission.

Mr. Nordin spoke about ticket sales, indicating rodeo/concert ticket sales are already well above where we were last year at this time. We are still working with UNM ticketing and tickets are on sale now.

Mr. Salazar also talked about the Mexican extravaganza which sold out in Denver two nights in a row. He also talked about Cinch rodeo and how it is a big player out there, with a purse worth about \$80,000 and the top 40 cowboys in the country.

Chairman Kennedy and Mr. Mourning thanked Mr. Salazar. Mr. Mourning talked about the importance of sending staff to different fairs. He has also visited fairs and brought back a wealth of information. We need to gather ideas in order to always move forward. This year for the first time, with the help of PRCA and Everett Dossey, we will have a free rodeo school for kids. Wayne Epstein has been traveling to other fairs. Mr. Mourning discussed the concerts and said it was a great lineup, including the Mexican extravaganza. We are looking to upgrade the beer gardens. We tried this a bit last year with the African American pavilion and created a lounge area and it was well received. The Bud Light Bar is coming back with a country western bar right across from Tingley. It will have a mechanical bull, dancing and you'll be able to meet the cowboys after the shows.

Mr. Mourning talked about some of the spectaculars such as Pirates of the Caribbean, the zipline, and lots of things for kids including a magic show. We plan to build a themed entertainment place on the north end. He talked about the parade and that we would have either Dick Knipfing or Smokey Bear as the grand marshal. There will be theme days again and this year we will have game shows. We will have a series of karaoke contests bringing in people from all over Albuquerque.

Mr. Mourning talked about media with the loss of Michael and that we brought in Oona Gonzales, who worked for the state fair years ago, and has experience with marketing and advertising. He said the new ad campaign is better than ever and working well. Mr. Mourning introduced the new media director Erin Thompson. He asked Ms. Thompson to give a run down of the media and advertising efforts.

Ms. Thompson thanked Oona and acknowledged the efforts of the media team including the work Michael did before he passed away. The new campaign is focused on those things that people love about the Fair and what makes it uniquely New Mexico. Ms. Thompson indicated that though we aren't still using Lynette, we are still using Cheech which is a fun element of the previous campaign. We've also reached out through a number of mediums to help spread the word statewide via earned media, promotions and trades in addition to paid advertising.

Mr. Mourning thanked the media department and said they are doing a good job getting the word out. He talked about the competitions and the carnival and some of the new rides this year. He discussed school days and teacher appreciation day at this year's fair, as a great way to honor our hard working teachers. He talked about the efforts of our new Indian Village coordinator as well as the good work of our Villa Hispana coordinator and the fantastic entertainment in the works in those two villages under Sabrina Garza's guidance.

Commissioner Sanchez pointed out that there will be horse racing as well. Mr. Mourning acknowledged the new casino, with 600 slots and agreed that the races are spectacular.

Chairman Kennedy asked if there were other questions, then talked about the UFC event. He said Tingley was packed and state police looked great, and told Mr. Mourning that it was a home run. Mr. Mourning responded that we are eager to bring them back and they plan to return. Commissioner Lee stated that it looked like it was a great event.

Commissioner Lee asked about capital money for planning and Mr. Mourning advised that Expo/Fair is also looking at redevelopment plan as well. He said we are considering an economic study and will continue to look for ways to do a facility condition assessment. We have to figure out what our impact is in order to make decisions going forward. We have a beautiful property and we want to retain our culture as well. We need a multipurpose facility arena and we are perfectly located for that. He said we need to look at the options.

Chairman Kennedy asked if there were other questions. Commissioner Brown asked for an update on the Bob Gerding Natural Resources Building Dedication. Mr. Mourning indicated that Mr. Gerding was someone very close to the Fair, and his show was one of the biggest and longest running. He went on to say that the Lieutenant Governor will also be in attendance. Chairman Kennedy asked whether it was on August 15 and Ms. Thompson confirmed that was correct.

The chairman moved on to discussion of the meeting calendar. October dates were discussed and Chairman Lee asked if the meetings could be a bit later, and suggested 11 AM. Chairman Kennedy agreed that would be possible. He advised commissioners to get agenda item suggestions to him and we would consider them. He indicated that Ms. Thompson would put together a calendar for the commissioners during the Fair. Chairman Kennedy then moved to public comment.

The first speaker for public comment was Sharon Eastman. Ms. Eastman expressed concerns about the 2013 horse shows and the time it has taken to get all exhibitors paid.

Valerie Cole -- Ms. Cole expressed concerns about the fact that premium books had not yet been posted for the horse shows.

Rusty Cook -- Ms. Cook expressed concern that the state fair used to host the largest horse shows in the state and she'd like to return to that. She expressed that there was not yet a premium book. They have offered their help. She indicated it was distressing that there wasn't yet a contract. Commissioner Brown asked Ms. Cook who has the largest horse breed shows in NM currently, and she advised that there is not a major show anymore.

Ron Morris -- Mr. Morris advised that he is president of the Horse Council. He also stated that people were concerned that they didn't know how to locate information about the fair horse shows. He said they are going after points and knowing that information in advance helps them plan their schedules. He hopes with new management this can be turned around. He believes people don't feel welcome to the horse shows and some of the shows haven't been approved yet.

Shelley Bachicha - Ms. Bachicha talked about her history showing animals at the fair. She is concerned because she shows horses but she doesn't know yet if the fair has a sanctioned show. She feels the education component of the show is more important than a profit. She indicated the show schedule needs to be out earlier. She suggests starting the shows at 10 AM as opposed to earlier because the gates open at 10 AM. She said the fair should consider having evening shows as well. She said there are people interested in the draft show but they didn't know what the date was until last week. She hopes that next year there will be dates set much earlier in the year, as well as judges hired.

Bon Bagley -- Ms. Bagley feels the horse shows are being driven out in favor of the midway. Other cities such as Oklahoma City, Dallas, Denver etc. already have their show schedules up. We are one of the last places in the country with real cowboys. She feels the fair is losing the connection with our farming industries. Please remember the show cattle, and the horses, which are a real crowd pleaser.

Chairman Kennedy thanked the speakers and asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Sanchez moved to adjourn and Commissioner Lee seconded the motion. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:37 AM.