Fairgrounds Advisory Board Minutes

JOINT FAIR ADVISORY AND FAIR FOUNDATION MEETING
Monday, October 19, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 5:10pm with the following Fairgrounds Advisory Board members in attendance:

Board Members Present: Monique Brigham, Gery Cardenas, Hank Davies, Robert Desmarais, Dorothy Elsner, Gin Learned. *Not Present:* Kristen Keltz

Foundation Members Present: Sharrie Nelson, Bekki Cox, Wendy Couch, Ayla Holboy, Rick Donovan, Rogene Hingston, Liz Holtcamp

Staff Present: Aric Gaither, Frances Negranza

A motion was made to approve the September 2026 minutes and seconded. The motion was approved and passed unanimously.

Advisory Board Discussion
Advisory board discussed making it a priority to communicate that the Fair and Fairgrounds are not funded by the county general fund while out in the community. Individual board members shared that they have heard frustration in the community about the general fund deficit, and many believe the Fairgrounds is part of that general fund. Ongoing efforts were suggested to keep educating the general public on association distinction of being part of the county, but not the county general fund.

Gery thanked the board for their input and review of the successes of the 2027 Fair that was sent to the commissioners.

Staff Updates
Staff provided update of Fairgrounds events. Events are scheduled every weekend through Christmas. Coming in the next couple weeks include a Trade School Education event, Cardfest NW and Skagit Farm Circle. The paving project at the north end of the Fairgrounds is currently underway and is expected to be done by next week.

Foundation Discussion
Rick suggested that the Foundation and/or Advisory board members attend chamber events to help with message of being self-funded as well as general promotion of the year-round activities. It was agreed that it would be good to have individuals/board members augmenting staff efforts in advocating for the Fairgrounds. Rogene recently joined the Foundation board and is willing to help with grant writing. Gin (Advisory Board) has a contact who might be interested in joining the Foundation. Foundation will be working on new marketing materials such as a flyer to recruit new board members and an “About Us” video.
Additionally, the Foundation had a successful fundraising year, with brick project, 50/50 raffles and the Stitching-A-Fair event (in partnership with Advisory Board), which is hoping to expand into the C building for Spring event.

Joint Discussion
Joint discussion on how the Advisory board can help and assist the Foundation board. Suggestion for the Foundation to look into: Legacy giving, Thank You mailing campaign. Discussed how to tell the story of the Fairgrounds.

January Goals
Strategic meeting is scheduled for January 4. Group will review goals from past year and create new goals for next. Big topics from last year included awareness, fundraising, sponsorship, and community outreach. Both boards will review past notes prior to attending the meeting.

Misc. Questions
Upcoming capital projects: paving project currently underway, electrical and PA system upgrades coming next year.
Open weekends at Fairgrounds: Most weekends are booked, have some availability at end of June but okay if not filled as precious time for summer projects before Fair season.

Adjourn 6:45 PM