Fairgrounds Advisory Board Minutes

Monday, September 21, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 pm with the following members in attendance:

Board Members Present: Gery Cardenas, Monique Brigham, Hank Davies**,** Dorothy Elsner, Kristen Keltz, Virginia Learned, Robert Desmarais

Staff Present: Aric Gaither, Frances Negranza

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

Board Discussion:

Fairgrounds Events
Gin gave update on Stitching-a-Fair event happening Sept 22-24; Has 38 people registered, looking to expand. May need help with set-up on Sept 21 and take down Sept 24. Event is currently half sold out.

Fall Garage Sale/Car Show this past weekend, over 200 registered for the event. Added 3 new award categories with the help of SVC Automotive Technology Club. Had solid vendor participation and was a big success. Next year will consider an increase for Saturday admission because of value from car show. Foundation did a 50/50 raffle.

Other Fairgrounds Events – moving into a busy fall with only two weekends the D building is not occupied through the end of the year. Upcoming this month is JBF Kids Consignment Sale, Stitching-A Fair and Pathfinder Campout all happening this coming weekend, followed by the Skagit County Clothing Swap, and Fall Veterans Stand Down.
Long term rentals – G Building, F Building and A/B building will be rented through the winter. Also, a 4-H archery club who was having trouble finding a space to practice this winter will utilize an unused space in the Pavilion. Aric reviewed new events not returning in 2026, and new events in 2027.

Staffing Resources
The fairgrounds cut a part-time staff positions to reduce overall personal expenses. The Parks, Recreation, Fair and Facilities Department as a whole had to eliminate one full-time staff position. One of the two positions that were cut/frozen from Parks earlier in the year has now re-opened which is great news for Parks dept.

Budget
Submitted a balanced budget for 2027. Revenues continue to be very solid but expenses are always a challenge as they have risen faster than revenues. New operational expenses expected next year, not incurred in 2026 include advertising fees for public hearings and purchasing new credit card machines. Aric reviewed all of 2026 Fair cost savings and creative revenue potentials for 2027.

2027 Sneak Peaks
Staff has booked a lot of entertainment already for 2027. Will be looking for a couple new exhibits/entertainment at State Fair Conference in October. Reviewed new sponsor leads for next year. Starting to brainstorm new Fair theme.

WSDA Capital Grant and Projects
New seal coat was recently applied in the middle area of the Fairgrounds. Upcoming paving project on the north side of the grounds is happening in October. Coming early in 2027 are Horse Barn electrical upgrades, sound system upgrade in the Pavilion, purchasing new safety barricades and two ADA bleachers, and staff will be refinishing the floor the A Building this winter. Next year we will learn what the '28/'29 State WSDA capital funding situation will be. Potential projects for next cycle are replacing continuing swine pen replacement and flooring improvement in Pavilion.

Letter to Commissioners
Advisory Board will write and send a letter to commissioners about the successes of the 2027 Fair in coming weeks.

Fair Debrief
Lots of thanks to the Advisory board for the help during the Fair: Hank helped with installing of big marketing signs and proofing Fair Guide; Gin with the Hen House break room; Dorothy with banners, vet check and haul out; Kristen with Horse Arena, elected official relations and morning after Fair clean up; Robert with banners/signage, parking help and filling gaps during the Fair; Monique with set up, execution of community stage and attended the commissioner meeting to talk about the Fair; Gery keeping big sponsor potential conversations/leads going. THANK YOU!

Adjourn 6:28 PM