

**MINUTES & NOTICE OF BOARD ACTION**

BOOK **160** PAGE **2243**

APPROVED

1/14/98

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**LANE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

*This document, upon approval in a public meeting by the Board of County Commissioners, serves as official minutes of such meetings as required under Open Meetings Law, ORS 192.650.*

Pursuant to notice made by mailing agendas to news media, a selected list of jurisdictions and individuals in Lane County, a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners was held.

Questions should be directed to The Board Office Specialist 3, Ext. 4203.

December 17, 1997  
11:30 a.m.

JOINT BCC/FAIR BOARD  
MEETING

County Building  
Commissioners Board Room

Chair Cindy Weeldreyer presided with Bobby Green, Ellie Dumdi, Steve Cornacchia and Peter Sorenson. Also present were Bill Van Vactor and Teresa Wilson. County Fair Board members present were Chair Cleve Dumdi, Bob Mattson, Dean Hansen and Jon Jaqua. Also present were Mike Gleason, Board Director, and Jeri Kaufman, Fair Board Secretary.

Chair Cindy Weeldreyer called the meeting of the Commissioners to order and Chair Cleve Dumdi called the Fair Board meeting to order at 11:45 a.m.

The floor was opened up for public comment and there were none.

**BOARD COMMENTS**

Fair Board member Hansen said the Christmas lights look great.

Fair Board President Dumdi wanted to clarify that it was Christmas time and he was looking at the Commissioners as Santa Claus. Dumdi commented that the fairground is finally in a position where people are saying good things about it. He said he gives full credit to the Commissioners and the Fair Board itself, along with the Chief Executive they hired, Mike Gleason. Dumdi wanted to reiterate that he feels it is a partnership between the Commissioners and the Fair

Board, and he thinks it is an excellent partnership. Dumdi reported that under Gleason's direction a lot of things have happened at the fairgrounds. Fair staff is trying to evaluate each event on its own merit, which hasn't been done before. This will give the Fair Board a clear picture of what makes money and what doesn't. Dumdi stated he has appointed a finance committee (consisting of Jaqua and Hansen) to work with staff to get a better idea of where they are at with the financial end of things. Dumdi commented that the Fair Board's main focus is on the youth, they come first. They are working very hard at making the Lane County Fairgrounds a family affair. Dumdi reported that the cost is free to go through the Celebration of Lights this year. However, donations are being accepted and the proceeds will go to help support the youth programs currently at the facilities. He stated that there have been close to \$10,000 in donations collected at this point.

Chair Weeldreyer commented she felt Dumdi's assessment of the relationship between the Commissioners and the Fair Board was right on target. She stated that with the vision that Gleason has, and the Fair Board he has to work with, that the fairground is on the road to having a premier facility. She said that it fits in with the vision and direction the Commissioners have mentioned in the past.

Cornacchia commented he has had an opportunity to talk with many colleagues. He appreciates the changes that he has seen over the last couple of years. He said it is important to communicate with the public and continue to let them know that the fairground is operating as a business with no assistance from the County tax monies.

Green thanked the Fair Board for the report and the opportunity to have the joint meeting. He concurred with the emphasis on focusing on the youth. He commented that there should be a stronger emphasis. Green said he was glad to see the Fair Board taking a leadership role. He thanked Gleason for delivering on a comment he had made on the evaluation during fair regarding the diversity of entertainment on the grounds and commented that he appreciated all of Gleason's efforts. Green said the footprint of the Fairgrounds should talk about or show how a great partnership can work between a county, a city, the public, the U of O, CVALCO, and to begin discussions to that end - "the best is yet to come".

Sorenson commented that the opportunity to get together is part of the reason that the Commissioners and the Fair Board has a good relationship. He said he appreciated the chance to be put on the Fair Board agenda earlier in the year. He feels it is important that city people are able to learn about agriculture and we should never lose site of the fact that the county fair has a distinct place in the county, rural connection. He said it's true the fair is not run with property tax revenue, but it's also not true that there isn't a public responsibility - "Keeping you on your gate money alone may not be enough to run on." He stated he doesn't think it is wrong to use public tax money to help run the fair. He also added that the ingress and egress has been noticeably improved at the fairgrounds.

Commissioner Dumdi congratulated the fairgrounds on the diversity of the facility. There are a lot of fairs that only operate during the summer and the Lane County Fairgrounds have managed to keep running year round. She stated the indoor facilities are definitely a plus. She also commented that all the board members should take the time in the summer to go out during the 4H fair and see the kids that participate in those events. She said it is interesting to note how other counties are taking Lane's lead in expanding the use of their facilities. She stated that everyone was doing a wonderful job and to keep up the good work.

Jaqua thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to participate on the Fair Board and with them. He stated the Fair Board has come a long way but it still has a long way to go and it needs a lot of help from the Commissioners to get there.

Mattson commented on the incredible importance of the fair's capability to help build community, neighborhood involvement, and tie it in with the whole agricultural side. He feels it is connecting up well with the rural side.

Hansen said he is still learning about the fair and the amazing property they have to work with. He complimented Dumdi and Gleason stating that the meetings are very calm and well organized. He said public comment is minimal and at most has been positive. He said he was amazed at the changes in the physical plant in just the last year.

#### MASTER PLAN

Gleason said he appreciated both Boards taking the time to meet. He commented that it has been two of the best Boards he has ever been privileged to work with. Gleason reviewed the contents of the blue binder which contained reports on Lane County Fairgrounds Master Plan; Economic Cost Benefit Study done by Eco NW on the improvements of the fairgrounds; Coopers & Lybrand report for the construction of the new facility; and Traffic Study put together by Access Engineering. Gleason reported that a lot of money and hard work has been put into all the different studies that have been done regarding the fairgrounds, what to do with it, where to go in the future with it, etc. He stated that his ability to proceed begins at the Commissioners' table - the visions need to be parallel. Gleason stated that the fairground is a premier piece of property, in the heart of a metropolitan area. To have fair, ice, sports and convention all in one piece of property is a plus and a challenge. The challenge is to integrate the functions to operate together. Gleason opined he was positive that it creates a tremendous draw. He commented the hoteliers are still committed to a brand new facility. The price tag on that is somewhere between \$30 million and \$40 million dollars. However, that is a major political undertaking and the industry is not ready to move forward with that at this time. Gleason said the square footage at the fairgrounds just needs a little "TLC" to make it work for the community. He reported if the money that is set aside in the Fairground Bond Fund was used each year to improve and upgrade the fairgrounds, then he believes that everyone would profit from it.

Gleason then reviewed the presentation booklets that were passed out to everyone in attendance. One of the sections reviewed at length was the Event Transportation Proposed LTD Shuttle Service. LTD has an interest in it, but it does present some dilemmas. It will be an important discussion to be had with the long range-planning group. Gleason stated that Lane County needs a shuttle system. He said the hospitality industry has to invent the shuttle every time we get a new event. There is a need to be able to tie the venues together and to control the movements between them.

Gleason reviewed the section on Recreational Opportunities. He reported that there are over 250 kids a night at the indoor sports facility going on at the fairgrounds. Commissioner Weeldreyer asked about other venues also in surrounding areas. Gleason responding that the initial document is a starting point that allows people to think about the "what ifs". This allows them to see the potential involved in utilizing all of the Park properties as an opportunity area for major sports events like regional softball, basketball, baseball, etc. Jaqua commented that it brings the fairgrounds into the discussion and makes you start to look at it as a possibility in that venue too.

In reviewing the section "Preparation for the 21st Century", Cornacchia commented that when talking capital, there are some designs that would develop a positive family ambience and that they have to be kept in mind. Gleason stated that he was trying to steer away from stationary buildings. He doesn't want to destroy the historical character of the fair and any design that is done would incorporate maintaining grass areas. He did comment that additional grass areas had been added in front of the Expo Halls. Cornacchia wanted the Fair Board to keep in mind the positive comments that had been made from fairgoers regarding the seating, the layout, etc., and how well it went with them, so we don't want to change what worked and turn the whole grounds into tents.

Mattson commented that lounge areas are important and are greatly needed during events.

Gleason expanded on the concept of turning the courtyard area between the Exhibit Hall and the Performance Hall into a two-story structure. The bottom area would be a ballroom. The second story would be various breakout rooms.

Gleason then reviewed the section on "Connecting the Old with the New". He reported there is a need to be able to link up the existing buildings. He stated it would cost somewhere between \$25 to \$30 a square foot to bring the buildings up to current acceptable standards and make it more marketable. The key to getting the horse shows is getting more stalls. We currently have the stalls but don't have the covering to put them under. Horse shows are big room nights for motels and hotels. Gleason reported that they are losing convention, horse and recreation business to the Albany facilities as well as Boise, Spokane, Bellvue and Tacoma.

Sorenson commented that one thing that would be helpful to him is what does it take, in terms of overnight visitors, to pay back the bonds? In other words, once the convention comes in, what

does that do in terms of dollars into the fund to pay back? Gleason responded that he had not actually done the calculations but will get back to him with them. He said one example is the logging conference - they use up all the rooms available in Lane County, not to mention the spin off on shopping during that time. Gleason commented that 23% of the event attendance is from out of town. There has been no formal tracking method of room nights out at the fairgrounds. Gleason stated he did do some checking at a recent regional ice event - it took up 250 room nights for four nights. That's not insignificant. Green commented that it's not so much the length of the event, as it is the extra room night coming in a day early and possibly not leaving until the day after.

Gleason reviewed the table passed out entitled "Explanation of Expense and Estimated Project Costs". He emphasized that the costs are merely guesses at this point and they are not necessarily in order of priority. Cornacchia asked what is the expected life of the tents? Gleason responded that the structures last forever, however, the canvas' life expectancy depends on what material is used. Cornacchia asked that of the anticipated costs, what's the division? Gleason responded that 75% is the cost of the frame and 25% is the cost of the canvas. A tent on a lease basis costs approximately \$1 per square, and a tent to buy is approximately \$10 per square foot. It takes about ten uses of the tent to break even.

Cornacchia asked Gleason if he was looking at a debt service allocation that would give him a ton of money now or was he looking at an annual authorization? Gleason responded he was looking at an annual, year by year, with no debt service. He said if we did a big-ticket item, it could be done on a two or three year note. Cornacchia commented that if we are going to step to the next level we should do it now, not draw it out over ten years. He asked how long before the pictures become realities, and when does the Fair Board anticipate coming back to the Commissioners with a proposal or something? Gleason responded it would probably be February or March. The Board currently has a work session scheduled for January 27<sup>th</sup>.

Sorenson commented he would like to see more documentation on how the financing would work. He believes that the budget committee and the Commissioners would like to see it broken down. He said it is hard to make a choice unless more data on the impact of increased visitors is provided.

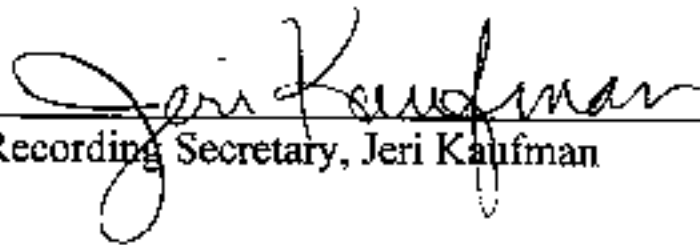
Commissioner Weeldreyer suggested another meeting be scheduled between the Commissioners and the Fair Board to carry on the current discussion. She felt that there was still more that needed to be said and questions that needed to be asked.

Dumdi thanked the Commissioners for meeting with them.

Green said he was in support of another strategy meeting between the Boards. He suggested that the chairman from CVALCO be at the next meeting since the discussion will be concerning the use of their room tax monies.

Commissioner Dumdi suggested setting another date today. A tentative date of Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1998, was set. Dates will be verified with Arlene to insure availability. Gleason stated he would take care of inviting the chairman of CVALCO to the meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

  
Recording Secretary, Jeri Kaufman