

MARSHFIELD FAIRGROUNDS COMMISSION
Tuesday, August 1, 2023 Meeting Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order by Tom Buttke, Chairperson at 12:00p.m. at the Central Wisconsin State Fair Office.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners: Jeff Penzkover, Tom Buttke, Rebecca Spiros, Russ Stauber, Bill Winch; Absent: Natasha Tompkins

Also Present: Justin Casperson, Parks and Recreation Director; Dale Christianson, CWSF Manager; Gary Bymers, CWSF Board Members; Raneef Graf, Wood County Republicans; Mary Jo Wheeler-Schueller; Marty Draxler; Ed Newton, Wood County Finance Director; Adam Fischer, Wood County Board Supervisor #5; Mike O'Reilly, City of Marshfield Alderperson; Lois TeStrake, City of Marshfield Mayor; Steve Katona. Bill Clendenning, Wood County Board Supervisor #15.

- 2. FAIRGROUNDS MANAGEMENT (6.B.) BLUELINE BAR UPGRADE REQUEST:** Chairperson Buttke moved up item 6.B. on the agenda "Fairgrounds Management Blueline Bar Upgrade Request" to accommodate guest Marty Draxler's schedule. Draxler said that the parish pull group is interested in making upgrades to the Blueline Bar, which is located just north of the grandstand. They would like to open up section of the fence that faces the track and stage, install coolers, install concrete steps and make repairs to areas in the bar. The group is willing to donate all their time and materials to make the upgrades and comply with any permits and code requirements. They will accomplish this by asking for in-kind donations, volunteer time or purchase any items if needed. ***Motion by Stauber, second by Spiros to approve the request by Draxler; motion carried 5-0.***

- 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Motion by Spiros, seconded by Penzkover to approve the May 25, 2023 Fairgrounds Commission meeting minutes; motion carried 5-0.

- 4. CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** None.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ed Newton said that Wood County is requesting, specifically his Department, to see the financials of the Central Wisconsin State Fair Board. They are mostly interested in the any agreements, gates receipts, gate controls, books, reports, financial record keeping; cash disbursements, operation costs, etc. They want to see the books by mid-September. They will not provide any more money to the Fair if they are not able to see the financials.

Renaef Graff said they had a booth at the Fair for 2-years and were moved out of the expo building to another building. They are not pleased with the move. They have made several open record requests to the CWSF. They have called 16 county fairs and no movement like this has occurred at their fairs. There is confusing information about if there is or isn't room in the building for them. They feel they are being lied to. They believe they should be put on a priority list to move into the building. Their group has retained a lawyer to sue the Fair, County and City for not getting a booth in the expo building. She is also a vendor at the Fair. She said the map is not well done and should be better for what they pay for. She asked the Commission if they wanted a lawsuit or turn in the man who is responsible for all of this.

Mary Jo Wheeler-Schueller said that she runs a very tight ship at her businesses. Lack of communication or not returning phone calls will get anyone at her business in trouble. There is a lack of communication with regard to the Fair. She is the Chairperson with the City of Marshfield Economic Development Board and a long-time fair supporter. She feels there is a need for a long-term plan for the Fair. She believes Farm Tech Days wants to move the Fairgrounds permanently and it would be a big economic impact if they did. She completed a grant with Wood County for electric repairs at the CWSF campgrounds. She is frustrated that the application was pulled by the CWSF for consideration and frustrated with the management of the Fair.

Tom Buttke said he was frustrated with what happened at the CEED grant meeting and the application was pulled. He wants an audit of the Fair before giving them any more money. He was surprised in which the electrical repairs were done and that they did not go out for public bids.

Gary Bymers said there has been little to no interest in the Fair or the grounds by the City or County or anyone

for years until the Republican Party of Wood County didn't get their way. The previous County Board representative would sleep during the CWSF board meetings. They have to fight with the City on beers sales, the fire department on tents and cooking regulations. No one seemed to care until 3-months ago and no one has invested money in the grounds either.

Tom Buttke said the Fair Commission does care about the Fair and invested a lot of money into the improvements of the expo building, round barn and grandstands.

Bill Clendenning said that he was told by Lance Pliml that his only role on the CWSF board to adjourn the meeting. He wants to know the financials of the Fair. There are no reports and financial information provided. He asked Lance to remove him from the CWSF board because he was so frustrated.

Rebecca Spiros said the City has an interest in the Fair's financial records. They have asked for them repeatedly, but Dale has never provided them. She said it is extremely frustrating to work with the Fair.

Jeff Penzkover said that Fair is going to be different, you can bet your ass on that.

Lois TeStrake said we all need to work together to make the fair blossom. We can all agree on that.

Steve Katona asked if the City has a grant writer on staff.

Rebecca Spiros asked about who all governs the fair and the fairgrounds and which board or committees govern who.

Dale Christianson said that the CWSF is separate from the City and County and a private non-profit organization who operates the fair and has an agreement with the City to manage the property. None of you people were around before all this stuff started with the Republican Party of Wood County. I know people here want me fired.

Gary Brymers said there is no money to get projects done. There are no meetings being conducted.

Tom Buttke said there are meetings often and we spent a lot of money on the round barn, expo and grandstands.

Lois TeStrake asked why people are not asking the CWSF for their financial reporting and why are they asking the Fairgrounds Commission? The Commission doesn't have their records.

Dale Christianson said that the County and City give money to the Fair Commission, not to the CWSF.

Mary Jo Wheeler-Schueller asked Dale Christianson if the CWSF has a contract with the City and that he needs to come to the Commission with his requests.

Tom Buttke asked how do we make this more positive. Let's sit with the CWSF about what improvements are needed.

Gary Brymers said you are not in the fair business, you are in the money supply business. Dale is hired by the CWSF, not the Commission.

Jeff Penzkover said that the Fair needs to be run like a business and not like a charity.

Renae Graff said there are empty booths at the fair. People are leaving the fair all the time. There is no recognition of vendors. It is not run well at all.

Tom Buttke said he would like more information from Dale and his maintenance man on what improvements are needed on the grounds.

Adam Fischer said he thought the Public Comment period was way out of normal protocol and it should conclude and move on with the rest of the meeting.

6. FAIRGROUNDS COMMISSION:

- A. Financial Statement: The bank statement from the Wood County Treasury Department was shared. The balance as of June 30, 2023 was \$17,040.44. ***Motion by Spiros, seconded Stauber to accept the financial statement and place on record; motion carried 5-0.***
- B. Approval of Bills: None.
- C. Onboarding Discussion: Casperson shared that in the meeting packet and it was provided at the meeting, the was information on the governance of the Fairgrounds Commission and the relationship with the various parties. In 1983 the County and City entered into an agreement to create a Fairgrounds Commission. At that time, whereas the City was the owner of buildings and grounds and in serious need of repair, replacement, maintenance and improvement, the expense of which the City was unwilling and unable to bear alone, and which the CWSF was not financially able to bear, either alone or in concert with the City; Both City and County agreed to establish a Commission. The Fairgrounds Commission has been created for the purpose of having full, complete and exclusive jurisdiction of the fairgrounds including the advertising for and awarding of bids for the construction, improvement or maintenance of any building or buildings, or land improvements, the letting of contracts therefore, and the care, custody, maintenance and repair of said lands and buildings during its operation until changed by joint resolutions of the City of Marshfield and the Wood County Board of Supervisors. In creating the Fairgrounds Commission, both governmental entities recognize that the land upon which the Marshfield Fairgrounds is located and all of the improvements to the land are owned by the City of Marshfield. The Fairgrounds Commissions charged with the duty of overseeing the expenditure of funds provided by both governmental entities to the Fairgrounds Commission, to improve and maintain the Marshfield Fairgrounds and its facilities. Further, the City of Marshfield is responsible for daily operations and routine maintenance of said property, which they have a management agreement with CWSF to maintain the property. At that time, in 1983 both City and County agreed to financially support the Fairgrounds by budgeting money for the improvement of the grounds by each contributing \$25,000 for a total of \$50,000. That same amount is budgeted today. The Commission, unable to complete projects with \$50,000/year decided to take out a loan of \$400,000 in 2012. The City and County agreed to pay off the loan, which expired in 2022. Today, there has been discussion between the City and County, if they want to resume making their contributions to the Fairgrounds Commission for buildings and grounds improvements. The City and County do not oversee or operate the CWSF event that occurs in August. That is separate event from those bodies.

Spiros asked that in Article 6 of the by-laws if a budget is presented to the City or County?

Fischer said that the County gives \$32,000 a year to the junior fair and \$25,000 to the Fairgrounds Commission.

Brymers said to come up with a plan to make all the repairs. The campground electrical issues just came about 3 months ago.

Casperson explained the process in which the Fairgrounds Commission monies are spent. Before any work can be done, an approval is required by the Commission with an estimated cost and scope of services. Then an invoice is submitted and approved by the Commission. Then the invoice is submitted to the County for payment along with the meeting minutes of the approval and the chairperson and vice chairperson are included on the request to the County. The County then cuts a check to the vendor. The expense is reflected on their bank statement, recorded in their records and approved at each meeting. There are no cash disbursements.

Brymers explained the animal wash rack was created by the 17th Street road construction and the City requiring changes to the sanitary and storm sewer services. This forced the CWSF to find a new location for wash rack.

Christianson said they did ask for an increase in the amount the County gives the Jr. Fair from \$32,000 to \$38,000.

Penzkover said that the County Board holds Ed Newton in very high regard. What Ed is asking will happen, mark my words.

Stauber said that the Fairgrounds Commission have a historical record of the various capital projects completed and buildings that need attention for the CIP. It is very good information to review.

- D. Expo Feasibility Study: Christianson said that the expo feasibility study committee met in June with MSA for their kickoff meeting. The meeting involved the goals of the building and potentially addressing other need improvements with the project including storm water management, parking, electrical needs, building repairs. The main focus was on the location of the building on the property. It was discussed to place the building at the northwest corner of 17th & Peach, the current office location and the jr. fair, beef barn, 4-h building. There was much discussion on the use of the building and to ensure it was sized correctly. The Committee felt there was a need to spend more time to ensure the building is sized right. A SWOT analysis would be helpful for the process. The Committee would like to work with a consultant that Dale knows who can provide this service. They hope to resume work after the fair.

7. FAIRGROUNDS MANAGEMENT REPORT:

- A. Management Agreement: The management agreement between the City and CWSF is set to expire at the end of year. The proposed agreement was included in the packet and handed out at the meeting. The majority of the items noted in the agreement will not change except payment will be twice a year instead of monthly. This will help the CWSF to pay vendors on a timely basis. ***Motion by Stauber, seconded by Spiros to approve the agreement as presented, contingent on approvals by other parties; motion carried 5-0***
- B. Electric Repairs: Christianson said that he has been working with the City Inspector and Dakota electric on repairs around the property. Specifically, the campground to get it running for the Kennel Club Dog Show and the Fair. Dakota was able to get the electric in the campground working for the dog show and will get it ready for the fair. Areas will be shut down after the fair to complete the rest of the repairs. Lead times on some of the products are 6-8 months out. One of the panels costs \$25,000. The repairs are very expensive and very time consuming. Christianson handed out a map depicting the repair plan. Casperson said the City is conducting electric repairs related to the 17th Street road construction project. The Inspector is working with Marshfield Utilities in repairs. Most of the repairs will be done this year after the fair is over. The City budgeted \$50,000 using ARPA funds to help with the costs. Earlier this year, there was a request to the County to help with those repairs related to the 17th Street road construction, but a response was not provided.
- C. Pats Barn Wash Rack Update: Christianson provided an update on the wash rack. Nikolai Construction started work in July and should be complete before the Fair. The Commission, City nor County are contributing to the cost of the new wash rack.
8. **CWSF REPORT**: Christianson reported that plans for the 2023 Fair are well under way. Ticket sales are going well. VIP tickets are sold out. The book came out yesterday. Weinbrenner and Land O' Lakes agreed to be major sponsors, causing a delay in the book release. Vendor spots are full with 75. ***Motion by Stauber, seconded by Spiros to accept the CWSF report and place on file; motion carried 5-0***
9. **PARKS AND RECREATION**: Casperson mentioned the City operates and manages the softball fields. That area has remained with the City for maintenance because they are main users of the fields. The City works with CWSF on large events and tournaments.
10. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**: Commission asked that there is a joint meeting between the Commission the CWSF following the Fair.
11. **NEXT MEETING**: TBD after the Fair. Late September.
12. **ADJOURNMENT**: Meeting adjourned by Buttke at 1:46pm

Respectfully Submitted: Justin Casperson, Director of Parks & Recreation