

**LINCOLN COUNTY**  
**Fairgrounds Marketing & Usage Meeting**  
**Wednesday, February 6, 2013 6:30 p.m.**  
**Lincoln County Service Center, County Board Room**  
**Merrill, Wisconsin 54452**

**NOTES**

1. Call meeting to order

Art Lersch called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. finding the following people in attendance: Bill Bialecki, Pete Annis, Kortney Pike, Dale Christiansen, Dick Stoeckman, Christine Vorpapel, Samantha Roets, Cameo Roets, Sue Kunkel, Gene Bebel, Dave Buck, Mark Duley, Ken Neff, Greg Hartwig, Cindi Christiansen, Anne Stoeckman, Karissa Gipple, Colin Lueck, Chris Schleif, John Lee, Bruce Lee, Bruce Schaefer, Jimmy Lawson, Ted Ley, Mary Kay Van Der Geest, Bryan Bloch, Renee Alexy, John Jerovee, Tracy Jopek, Michele Rathke, Liz Friedenfels, Pat Hoerstmann, Graham Rankin, David Fox, Ralph Worgen, Randy Scholz, Bill Zeitz, and Tim Gruling. Six others who came in late did not sign the sign – in sheet. Introductions took place.

2. Background; Fairgrounds User Group

Lersch provided a brief history of the Fairgrounds User Group. He reminded those in attendance that the Lincoln County Public Property Committee asked him over two years ago to establish an informal committee consisting of representatives from fairgrounds event planning organizations to discuss how to more effectively market the fairgrounds with the aim of bringing more events to the venue. He stated that the project is now focusing on two primary issues; to develop a volunteer fairgrounds management organization and to explore building a coliseum type structure on the grounds.

3. Review of December Fairgrounds User Group Meeting

Several people who attended the December 5, 2012 meeting provided an overview of what was discussed. They stated that overall it was a positive discussion that could/should be built upon in subsequent meetings.

4. County Fairgrounds Updates

Randy Scholz and Bill Zeitz reminded those in attendance that the county has officially accepted the insurance claim for the grandstand in the amount of over \$1.2 million. The entire amount will be given to the county as long as it has a signed contract with a builder for a replacement structure by sometime in June 2013. Scholz mentioned that if a building contract is not signed and the county has not received an extension on the six month timeline, then it would forego about \$900,000 of the claim. Both Zeitz and Scholz indicated that the insurance company seems more amenable now to entertaining an extension request than was initially expressed. Scholz stated that the estimate to build a new grandstand similar to the old one is about \$1.2 million.

5. Expo Center Building Overview

Tim Gruling of Agra Industries provided an overview of what the firm has been designing in collaboration with the Fairgrounds User Group. Gruling stated that the total preliminary estimated cost of the building is around \$7 million. He mentioned that he thought that the cost could be reduced as even more specifics about the design are pinned down. He stated that the building would be about 82,000 square feet and seat 3,400. Gruling mentioned that patrons would sit on aluminum bench seats and that the facility would have a dirt floor. Dale Christiansen stated that he has talked to Agra about reorienting the building from east to west to north to south, something the User Group feels would be more accommodating to current and future fairgrounds events. He also mentioned that during concerts upwards of an additional 3,400 people could sit on the floor, doubling capacity. Gruling also stated that the next step in the process is to hire an architectural firm to develop a complete building design, something that Agra cannot do in house. He estimated that the cost of developing detailed architectural renderings would likely be between \$100,000 and \$175,000. He indicated that Agra would continue to work on the project if the county made a commitment toward paying these architectural fees. Agra is also planning to contribute a substantial amount to the project during the building phase. Mr. Zeitz informally asked how many in the audience wanted to see an Expo Center built rather than a grandstand. Nearly everyone raised their hand. There was also discussion about whether the building would require a ventilation system and where parking displaced by the building's footprint would be relocated.

6. Humane Society Building Plan Updates

Pat Hoerstmann stated that the Humane Society is looking to raise about \$900,000 for a renovation/expansion of its existing facility. He mentioned that the Humane Society has 17 years left on its lease with the county and that both parties would have to agree to

revoke the lease if the Society were asked to move or wanted to relocate. He reiterated that plans are now to add on to the existing building incrementally and south of the facility's current location. When asked if he thought an Expo Center location just to the west of the Humane Society would hurt operations he stated no.

7. Expo Center Authority Draft By-Laws and Draft Business Plan

Lersch provided copies and an overview of each document. He prefaced his comments by reminding those in attendance that in September 2012 the County Board passed a resolution stating that it is willing to consider the development of a volunteer fairgrounds management organization. In the draft by-laws, Lersch focused his comments on the proposed Authority's organizational structure and relationship with county government/departments. In the draft business plan, he emphasized the ideas that have been discussed by the User Group over the last two years.

8. Next Steps

ZeitZ suggested that all that was discussed during this meeting be presented at the February 20 Lincoln County Public Property Committee meeting. He stated that county fairgrounds matters would be placed on the meeting agenda. Lersch asked whether the next Fairgrounds User Group meeting should be scheduled now or be planned after the Public Property meeting. User Group representatives agreed that their next meeting would take place on February 25, 6:30 p.m. in the Lincoln County Service Center.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 8:20 p.m.

Notes submitted by Art Lersch, UW-Extension, Lincoln County.