

LINCOLN COUNTY
Fairgrounds Marketing & Usage Meeting
Thursday, January 9, 2014, 6:30 p.m.
Lincoln County Service Center, Room 156
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452

NOTES

1. Call meeting to order

Art Lersch called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. finding the following people in attendance: Graham Rankin, Garth Swanson, Jeff Hetfeld, Dick Stoeckmann, Dale Christiansen, Gene Bebel, and David Fox. Bryan Bloch, Bill Zeitz, and Pete Annis arrived shortly thereafter.

2. General Fairgrounds Updates

Those who attended the last Public Property meeting provided the update. Pete Annis and Dale Christiansen stated that the Marathon County berm architect (Tom Mudrovich) recommended that the Lincoln County berm system if approved for construction be placed on the far western side of the fairgrounds. Both Dale and Pete said that this would not be feasible (see item #4 below). Mudrovich reported that he estimates that berm system construction would cost no more than \$1.2 million. Graham Rankin pointed out that lighting is not included in the price.

Bill Zeitz stated that the City of Merrill plan commission indicated that paved parking would only be required on the site if an enclosed building meant to replace the old grandstand were erected. Blacktop would have to be included around any new structure for purposes of ADA compliance.

Jeff Hetfeld and Bill also indicated that the maintenance director is proposing that one of the bathrooms on the site be torn down, another be renovated, and another be constructed. Cost is preliminarily estimated to be between \$450,000 and \$750,000.

They also mentioned that seating could be acquired from the old Metrodome at \$40 per seat for a total cost of \$100,000. This low price they stated was subject to quickly rise depending on availability. The original deadline to acquire the seating at that price they indicated was January 5. Further discussion took place about seating options.

Bill stated that the January 13 Pine Crest agenda includes an item about using land to the east of the facility for fairgrounds event parking.

Dale and Pete indicated that many people in the community are waiting for the County Board to make a decision about what type of structure to build on the fairgrounds before committing their time, talents, and funds in support of the project.

3. Progress on Fairgrounds Study

Those in attendance mentioned that a comprehensive feasibility study will likely not be completed by the February County Board meeting. They said that the LCEDC director has mentioned that grant funding for such a study will not be available until later in 2014 and 2015. Discussion took place about having a preliminary presentation on fairgrounds matters at the January County Board meeting and making a more complete presentation using the maintenance director's and Tom Mudrovich's information on bathroom and berm building options/costs at the February County Board meeting.

4. Review Berm System Drawings & Proposed Location of Structure

Pete Annis presented a map from Tom Mudrovich showing the proposed location of a berm system on the far west side of the fairgrounds. Pete and Dale said that according to the groups they represent (Rodeo Committee and Fair Association) the proposed location would pose too many safety issues. Foot traffic is heavy toward the west side of the grounds mainly because most of the food vendors are located in that vicinity. Because food vendors are in the area events such as tractor pulls that emit excessive exhaust could not be held. Dale and Pete stated that according to feedback from their groups the far eastern end of the fairgrounds would be the optimal location for berm seating, with initial seating facing east. That area would be safe and provide enough staging space for a wide variety of events. Dave Fox mentioned that he would contact Mudrovich letting him know that Pete would be asking him to create a new map with this revised berm location and proposed bathroom positions. Pete also stated that he would request that Mudrovich show a berm system that is not as high and more spread out to between 210 and 250 feet in length. There was further discussion about possible Humane Society expansion plans relative to the proposed east grounds berm location.

5. Volunteer Management Organization Updates (by-laws, business plan)

A request was made by User Group representatives to change the entity mentioned in the documents to "Fairgrounds Marketing & User Group" rather than "Expo Center Authority." They said that this reflects the more realistic and at this time desired goal

of developing/constructing a berm system rather than an enclosed building meant to replace the demolished grandstand. They also reported that no changes were made to the by-laws and business plan outline since the last User Group meeting.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at the call of User Group representatives.

7. Adjourn

Motion was made by Dick Stoeckmann and seconded by Bill Zeitz to adjourn. All ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

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