

Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc.
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 24, 2024
Draft

The Meeting of the Board of Directors/Members of the Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc (SWFC), a nonprofit corporation, was duly called and held at the Pima County Fairground's Green Room on Thursday, October 24, 2024.

Directors Present: Garrett Ham, President; Judy Patrick, Secretary; Mark Cowley, Treasurer; Jim Murphy, Director; Marian LaLonde, Director and Marvin Selke, Emeritus Member.

Staff Present: Jon Baker, SWFC Executive Director; Julia Casillas, SWFC Operations Manager; Courtney Danloe, SWFC Chief Financial Officer; Launa Rabago, SWFC Marketing Manager; Amilia Gruber, SWFC Vendor Coordinator and John Osterhout, SWFC Maintenance Manager.

Others in Attendance: Susan Vos, RCM CPAS; Joey Schwanz, Pima County's Operations Program Manager; Patty Novakowski, Tucson Dressage Club; Barbara Carrapa, Professor of Sedimentary Geology and low-T Thermochronology at the University of Arizona and Equestrian participant; Sherman Scurry, M.D. and Equestrian participant; Jen Baltrus, Freedom Run Horse Shows and Lauren Schroeder, Steady Strides Riding Center.

a. **Call to Order:** Garrett Ham called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. followed by the pledge of allegiance.

b. **Roll Call:** Sheena Conner, Director and Alan Levin, Director; Absent.

c. **Call to the Public:** Patty Novaowski wanted to address the needs of the Equestrian events for the Tucson Dressage Club. She highlighted that it is a small show and that she valued the SWFC mission statement as its mission is to provide facilities and services for the community.

Sherman Scurry mentioned that she participates in the Equestrian shows. She is committed to attending meetings and highlighted the fact that the Fairgrounds are the only venue for large horse groups in Pima County, and she believes these horse groups contribute to the County's diversity. She stated that as a pediatrician, she sees anxious and depressed kids who, when they start working with horses and participating in equestrian events, feel accepted for who they are. This involvement teaches them teamwork.

Barbara Carrapa, an equestrian participant, stated that she was very interested in learning about the history of the Fairgrounds. She wants to better understand SWFC mission, and its priorities pertaining to Equestrian events and hopes to see this focus maintained.

Jen Baltrus mentioned that she is now managing all the Freedom Run Horse Shows along with the Tucson Fall Festival and Tucson Fall Classic horse shows. She attended the meeting to ensure the everyone understands her commitment to expanding the equestrian events at the Fairgrounds.

2. Staff Reports:

a. Executive Director

i. Goals and Updates

Jon Baker updated the Board and reminded staff that the Fairgrounds does not receive any funding from Pima County directly, making the Fairgrounds reliant on the revenue generated. As a 501C4 organization, we are not a charitable 501C3, so the money we earn is crucial for reinvesting in the Fairground's facilities. Jon also mentioned that he has been working with John Osterhout on staff certifications and all maintenance staff are now certified in forklift, scissor lift, and Hi-lift operations. He noted that John Osterhout, Raleigh Garcia, Steve Osborne, and Courtney Danloe have all been certified by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Launa Rabago highlighted the excellent working relationship with Visit Tucson Sports Marketing and that several inquiries have turned into signed contracts. Amilia Gruber provided an update on the new RV park software, mentioning some challenges with the software related to the types of events we contract. She pointed out the positive aspect of having real-time revenue tracking.

5. New Business:

a. Discussion and possible action regarding the Audit Reports for the fiscal year.

Susan Vos went over the Independent Auditor's Report and Financial Statements. She stated that the audit was completed on time. She highlighted that the financial health of the organization remains about the same as last year and compliant with all regulatory requirements. Additionally, she praised Courtney and the staff for being great to work with and being well organized.

Mark Cowley moved to approve the Audit Reports for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. Judy Patrick seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Susan Vos left at 10:15 a.m.

2. Staff Reports:

a. Executive Director

i. Goals and Updates

Jon Baker mentioned that Launa Rabago and Amilia Gruber have completed all the surveys that were part of Jon's goals. These surveys are now ready to be utilized by the public.

ii. Interim Events

Jon Baker noted that interim events, particularly western-themed ones, are rapidly growing in popularity and becoming a significant trend. He mentioned that the calendar is quickly filling up for 2025, with limited space for additional dates, and some events are already reserved for 2026.

iii. Pima County Fair 2025

Jon Baker mentioned that Amilia Gruber has already started accepting vendor applications for returning vendors for the Fair. She is prepared to fill the spots with returning vendors first and then add new ones. Additionally, he mentioned that Launa Rabago is working on booking concerts for the Fair.

iv. Governors Fund

Jon Baker reported that the Governor's Fund application has been successfully submitted and the check has already been received.

v. ARPA Grants

Jon Baker stated that all the ARPA grants have been completed.

vi. Projects

Jon Baker submitted all the projects, and they have all been approved by the County.

b. C.F.O.

i. Financial Report

Courtney Danloe reviewed the Balance Sheet, providing a brief overview of Fixed Assets and Liabilities. She also discussed the Profit and Loss statement by class.

Break out 10:30 a.m.

Break in 10:45 a.m.

Garrett Ham asked that item g. be pulled from the Consent Agenda for an individual decision.

3. Consent Agenda:

- a. Discussion and possible action regarding minutes of the 8/22/2024 Board meeting.**
- b. Discussion and possible action regarding the annual sublease with the Pima County Junior Livestock Sales, Inc.**
- c. Discussion and possible action regarding the annual sublease with the Tucson Kart Club, Inc.**
- d. Discussion and possible action regarding the sublease with the Southern Arizona Eventing Association.**
- e. Discussion and possible action regarding the annual reporting to Pima County.**
- f. Discussion and possible action regarding the Federal & State Tax returns for the fiscal year 2023/2024.**

Judy Patrick moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Mark Cowley seconded the motion. The motion carried.

3. Consent Agenda:

- g. Discussion and possible action regarding setting the date for the Annual Meeting for January 23, 2025, and tentative regular dates March 13, 2025, June 26, 2025, August 21, 2025, and October 23, 2025, for the calendar year.** Garrett Ham informed everyone that he would be unavailable for the meeting on October 23, 2025. He contacted the staff to find a suitable alternative, and they agreed that October 30, 2025, worked best for both him and the staff. The Board also agreed to change the meeting date.

Judy Patrick moved to approve the Consent Agenda item g. with the revised date. Mark Cowley seconded the motion. The motion passed.

4. Old Business:

a. Discussion and possible action regarding the Master Plan.

Jon Baker reviewed the Masterplan Priorities that he and the staff identified as the most important to begin once the Masterplan is approved. He listed all 10 priorities, highlighting Thurber RV Park as the most crucial and urgent to start. The Board suggested that the next step should be to obtain pricing for all projects according to the Masterplan list to determine the cost of each. Jon will then present the cost estimates for each Masterplan project to the Board at the January 2026 meeting.

b. Discussion and possible action regarding staffing and resource strategy.

Launa Rabago briefed the Board on the succession plan. The succession plan aims to identify and develop new leaders to replace outgoing leaders when they leave, retire, or pass away. Jon Baker distributed the updated Organizational Chart and mentioned that the only change was the role of the Operations Manager. The Operations Manager would move directly under the Executive Director effective January 1st, 2025. The Operations Manager will assume all responsibilities in the Director's absence.

5. New Business:

b. Discussion and possible action regarding the process for renewal or replacement of Board seat(s) expiring on 12/31.

Judy Patrick moved that we, as SWFC Directors, recommend to the Pima County Fair Commission the name of Garrett Ham to be reappointed to the Pima County Fair Commission seat, which he currently holds, and that expires on December 31, 2024. Marion LaLonde seconded the motion. The motion carried.

6. Closing Matters:

a. Announcements

Jon Baker praised the excellent marketing coordination with Launa Rabago and Visit Tucson Sports. Launa Rabago informed the Board and staff that the fairgrounds are one of the two finalist cities being considered by the International Miniature Bull Riding Association. Additionally, Launa mentioned that the SWFC won the Copper Cactus Award for Champion of Diversity and Inclusion which she accepted on behalf of the organization. The Board thanked her for her efforts to make this happen.

b. Adjournment

Judy Patrick moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 p.m. Marion LaLonde seconded the motion. The motion carried. A meeting of the Pima County Fair Commission was conducted following the SWFC meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Patrick
SWFC Secretary