

Southwestern Fair Commission, Inc.
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2025

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, March 13, 2025.

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

Staff Present: Jon Baker, SWFC Executive Director; Julia Casillas, SWFC Operations Manager; Launa Rabago, SWFC Marketing Manager; Amilia Gruber, SWFC Vendor Coordinator, John Osterhout, SWFC Maintenance Manager; Elizabeth Hague, SWFC staff; Angela Willis, SWFC staff; Mike Willis, SWFC staff; Denise Connors-Smith, SWFC staff; Sue Spotts, SWFC staff and Ken Spotts, SWFC staff.

Others in Attendance: Joey Schwanz, Pima County's Operations Program Manager; Char Gasker, Quilts of Valor; Denise Kastigar, Quilts of Valor; Rob Kernodle, Escapade Director and Duane Mathes, Escapade.

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

a. **Roll Call:** Alan Levin, Director; Absent.

b. **Call to the Public:** None

6. Closing Matters:

- a. **Announcements:** Char Gasker and Denise Kastigar awarded John Osterhout a Quilt of Valor. The mission of the Quilts of Valor Foundation is to cover service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor. They mentioned that as of February 28, 2025, 405,649 quilts had been awarded across the United States. The Tucson-based group has completed and awarded 175 quilts since it started in 2017.

John served in the Army, including active duty and the Army National Reserves, from 1992 to 1998. His duty stations included Stateside, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Being honored with the Quilt of Valor came with a three-part message from their hearts: Honor: They honor you for your service, for leaving all you hold dear to serve, whether in time of crisis or in time of peace.

Freedom: They acknowledge that "freedom is not free" and the cost of our freedom is the dedication of men and women like you. The Quilt of Valor unequivocally says, "thank you for your service and valor in serving our country".

Comfort: The quilt is meant to comfort you and remind you that although your family and friends cannot be with you at all times, you are forever in their thoughts and hearts.

SWFC staff attended to congratulate him and thank him for his sacrifice.

Jon Baker expressed his gratitude to the Board for their collaboration and support. He extended special recognition to Sheena Conner, the newest Board member. At the last Board meeting during discussions about preparations for the Fair and the extensive cleanup required by the maintenance team, Sheena approached Jon after the meeting with a proposal to connect the Fairgrounds with the Arizona Department of Corrections. Sheena successfully organized a meeting with the Warden, resulting in a commitment from the department to assist with the Fair's cleanup. They will be present during the first week of April and will return for thorough cleanup after the second week of the Fair. Jon thanked the Board once again, emphasizing the staff's appreciation for their support.

Marvin Selke announced the newest Hall of Fame inductees for 2025: Pam Skomski and Cinda and Doug Stidvent. All three have extensive 4-H experience and have consistently exceeded expectations in the industry.

Marvin also shared the sad news of Sharon Knop's passing. Sharon first came to the fairgrounds in 1977, working for a private company who was contracted for housekeeping. Even after her retirement, she continued to work at the Fairgrounds helping where needed especially during horse shows and worked as the Hall monitor in Pima Hall. Her dedication spanned over 40 years, and she was known for her love of the job. Sharon will be remembered for her smile and unwavering commitment.

2. Staff Reports:

a. Executive Director

i. Goals and updates

Jon Baker reviewed his list of goals and updates:

1. Keep overhead and expenses low to drive profit to the bottom line: Jon highlighted that updating the lighting to LED has significantly decreased electricity costs.
2. Address security issues for the Fair: Walkthrough metal detectors have been rented for the Fair and additional cameras have been installed throughout the fairgrounds.
3. Develop a target list to utilize the Old Pueblo Hall Conference and Event Center and other facilities: Launa and Garrett are working together on this.
4. Policy updates: The Executive Director's financial guidelines policy needs to be updated for the current year, although it won't be reviewed until October.
5. Password policy: Jon is working with IT to complete this by the next Board meeting in June.
6. Document activities and tasks: Julia Casillas mentioned that staff is currently using Monday.com to organize and update their tasks daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly. This platform allows staff to see each other's tasks and assist with overlapping responsibilities.
7. Create a staffing and resource strategy: Jon discussed the organizational chart at the last Board meeting and mentioned Julia's new responsibilities, including overseeing company staffing.

ii. Interim Events

Jon Baker mentioned that the last Crossroads of the West Gun show was held the first weekend of March. At that event, he coordinated with several members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors, providing them with a tour of the Fairgrounds and introducing them to Bob Templeton, the Crossroads of the West Gun show promoter. Jon highlighted the significant measures taken to ensure the event's safety, noting that the Fairgrounds surpasses other venues hosting gun shows in terms of safety protocols and overall security.

Jon reported that the Board received feedback from a horse show user group, which expressed concerns about the increased facility rates in a letter. He explained that the facility rates are carefully reviewed and compared multiple times with similar event venues before being presented to the Board for approval; ensuring fairness for both the Fairgrounds and the events. Garrett recommended that Jon contact the horse show group directly to address their concerns.

iii. Projects

Jon Baker discussed several projects for the upcoming Fair, including adding additional radios, working with the Sheriff's department on traffic control and adding extra lanes into the parking lots. He also mentioned hiring a new person to assist with parking and traffic flow, which is the most significant item needing revision before the Fair. He highlighted that the two main projects were security and traffic control.

b. C.F.O

i. Financial Report

Jon Baker updated the Board on the Financial Report.

3. Consent Agenda:

a. Discussion, and possible action regarding the minutes of the 01/30/2025 annual board meeting.

b. Discussion, and possible action regarding retaining Regier, Carr & Monroe as outside CPAs.

Jim Murphy moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Judy Patrick seconded the motion. The motion carried.

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