

Jefferson County Fair Park Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 10, 2025

1. **Call to order:**

Chair Blane Poulson called the meeting to order at 8:30am.

2. **Roll call (establish a quorum):**

Members Present: Curt Backlund, Blane Poulson, Libby Hafften, Mark Groose, Gary Skalitzky, Georgia McWilliam (via Teams)

Members Not Present: Brandon White

Others Present: Becky Roberts, Abby Schopen, Michael Luckey, Sarana Stolar (via Teams), Danielle Thompson (via Teams)

3. **Certification of compliance with Open Meetings Law:**

Michael Lucky certified compliance with the Open Meetings Law.

4. **Review of Agenda:**

A motion made by Backlund, seconded by Groose to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

5. **Public Comment:** No public comment.

6. **Approval of March 13 committee meeting minutes:**

A motion made by Backlund, seconded by Groose to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

7. **Communications:** An email was received from the Bridges Library System requesting 2,550 tickets to the Fair. Equating to approximately \$30,600 worth of fair tickets. Only 505 tickets or about \$5,000 worth were redeemed. The board discussed the limited return the fair has received from this initiative in the past. Board members raised concerns about the cost-effectiveness and whether this is a partnership that should be continued moving forward. It was agreed to provide them with 2,000 tickets, along with some cooperative partnership between Fair and the Library program going forward.

8. **Discussion /Update of Jefferson County Fair 2025 planning notes:**

With 90 days remaining until the fair, most major items have been reserved or ordered. The team is now shifting focus to logistics, including specific placement for items such as bleachers. Volunteer recruitment is currently underway. The team is actively seeking event ambassadors and volunteers to assist in key areas including the Kids Zone, entry gates, and rodeo safety. Roberts is coordinating with the HR department to post employment opportunities fair staff. There was discussion regarding the Fair Advisory Board, focusing on its historical role and how it will evolve going forward. Efforts are ongoing to connect with local fundraising groups for support in staffing gate positions. Website content and marketing efforts are ramping up, and this year will see the return of promotional yard signs as part of the outreach strategy.

9. **Discussion on Fair Park operations updates:**

The Fair Park sustained wind damage recently, resulting in the loss of all event trailers, a light pole in the outdoor arena, fence line trees down, and significant roof damage to the goat barn. The team is currently working with the Director of Facilities and the insurance providers to address these issues. Additionally, a sizable sinkhole was discovered and addressed in the parking lot. The office is currently fully staffed, and attention has now shifted toward hiring additional summer help for the fair. Facility improvements include upgrades to the kitchen area, most notably the installation of a new refrigerator. The Fair Park was awarded a \$1,000 grant from the Wisconsin Association of Fairs. Roberts is actively working on developing emergency preparedness plans for a variety of event scenarios. Plans are also underway for an off-campus workshop day focused on team building for staff.

10. **Report on UW-Whitewater Economic Impact Study process:**

In 2023, an economic impact study was commissioned. Upon review, Roberts determined that the initial study was incomplete and has requested completion to be done in 2025. Student representatives from UW-Whitewater will attend three upcoming events, including the Jefferson County Fair, the Wisconsin Sheep & Wool Festival, and the Fall Madison Classics Car Show to collect the data to finalize the report. Deliverables are expected in Q4 2025.

11. **Report on status of sponsorship building agreements:**

Roberts provided an update on the agreements between the Kiwanis Club of Jefferson County and Fair Park, as well as a similar agreement with the Jefferson County Agri-Business Club. Fair Park staff have been actively working on cleaning and preparing the buildings in anticipation of the upcoming transition. Additionally, each club will install new signage on their respective buildings.

12. **Discussion and possible action on property and building acquisition opportunities:**

Roberts shared that both subjects have been discussed with the Buildings & Grounds Committee as well as the Finance Committee. While the proposal for the building has not gained significant support, there was some positive discussion regarding the land acquisition. Finance has asked for Capital Planning items needed at Fair Park as the next step. It is the intention to present that information in June.

13. **Discussion and possible action on tentative future meeting schedule and agenda items:**

Possible land acquisition should remain on the agenda for the May 2025 meeting.

14. **Adjournment:**

Motion made by Skalitzky, seconded by Backlund to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:40am

Respectfully submitted,
Abby Schopen
Fair Park Events Manager