

Jefferson County Fair Park Committee

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 8, 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, Brandon White

Others Present: Becky Roberts, Abby Schopen, Michael Luckey, Danielle Thompson (via Teams), Mike Miers, John Fox

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

Michael Luckey certified compliance with the Open Meetings Law.

4. **Review of Agenda:**

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

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

6. **Approval of April 10, 2025, committee meeting minutes:**

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

7. **Communications:** It was shared that the Fair Coordinator secured two grants equaling \$5,000 to secure new goat pens.

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

With 60 days remaining until the Fair, most major items have been reserved or ordered. Planning is progressing smoothly, and marketing efforts are well underway. Fair posters, Rodeo posters, banners, and billboards have all been printed. The brochure will be available following Memorial Day Weekend. Our Fairest of the Fair is actively promoting the event in the community. Five-packs of admission tickets will be sent out to the Premier Banks of Jefferson County. Yard signs are available for distribution, and a social media campaign has been launched to build excitement.

Exhibitor entries are due by May 23rd, and preferred parking and camping reservations are now live. An unusually high number of vendor applications have been received this year, with many vendors expressing enthusiasm about the opportunity to be located inside a building.

Some new special theme days for the Fair include Sensory Day on Wednesday and Food Pantry Day on Thursday.

Roberts shared that she is currently looking into rain insurance options to help mitigate potential weather-related disruptions. She also provided an update from DATCP regarding current concerns about bird flu.

9. **Discussion and possible action on auction/market animal processors for Fair 2025**

Roberts reported ongoing difficulties in securing a poultry processor for the 2025 Fair. Several potential solutions were presented and discussed. The group explored the option of using a mobile processing unit, which would perform all processing on-site the day after the Fair concludes.

A motion was made by Backlund, seconded by Grosse, to approve the use of the mobile processor. Motion carried.

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

There was an update on the remaining cleanup efforts following the March windstorm, along with a discussion about the seasonal challenges of turning the water back on throughout the park.

Roberts provided an update on recent Fair Park activity and upcoming events. She shared the revenue figures from winter storage and gave a brief overview of the recent Car Show & Swap Meet as well as events in the pipeline, including observations about attendance and event logistics.

Website statistics were reviewed, highlighting current engagement levels. Roberts also gave an update on the new camping software rollout, noting progress on implementation and initial feedback from users.

An update was given on sponsorship activity for both the Fair Park and the Fair. Roberts shared that Fort Healthcare and Premier Bank, the two largest sponsors for the Fair Park, have significantly reduced their financial contributions this year.

There have been many groups at the Fair Park lately working on Community Service projects, including Generac & 4H. There was a discussion about the upcoming rodeos, namely track vs draft arena.

Staffing is ramping up. Applications for seasonal building & grounds positions as well as Fair Week help are live. Staff will be off-site May 14 for a team building day.

11. Review and discussion on Deferred Maintenance/Capital Planning Review & Report:

John Fox, Director of Facilities, presented a 10-year capital needs planning outline. His presentation emphasized that no significant investments have been made in Fair Park facilities for many years, aside from the installation of air conditioning in the Activity Center. This prompted discussion about responsibility for capital needs and deferred maintenance, specifically which departmental budget these projects should fall under moving forward.

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

John Fox also recommended that the County strategize the acquisition of surrounding farmland in order to maintain a protective buffer around the Fair Park. The group agreed that a conversation with the City is necessary to further explore this possibility. Additionally, the group discussed the Foremost Building, which had been offered at a reduced price to the Fair Park. After consideration, the group decided to decline the offer, noting that it is not a particularly advantageous deal and there is no current need, desire, or budget to support the infrastructure improvements that would be required.

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

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

14. Adjournment:

Motion made by Backlund, seconded by White to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:09am.

Respectfully submitted,
Abby Schopen
Fair Park Events Manager