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## Lancaster County Agricultural Society, Inc.

*A Nebraska non-profit corporation, designated as 501(c)(3) by the IRS  
and separate county-level political subdivision  
created under Nebraska law in 1870 to promote agriculture & youth.*

### MINUTES

#### Board of Directors Monthly Meeting

Lancaster Room—Lancaster Event Center Fairgrounds

4100 N. 84<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln NE 68507

7:30pm - Thursday, April 20, 2023

**President Ronnau** called the monthly meeting of the Lancaster County Agricultural Society board to order at 7:30pm.

**Proof of due notice** was given in the Lincoln Journal Star and the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was displayed in the room.

**Board members present** in person at the beginning of the meeting were Hagan, Ronnau, Suing, Rutt, Cooper, Sump, and Hardesty all in person. Cusick-Rawlinson (in person) and Dowding (online non-voting) arrived during the meeting as noted and Cusick-Rawlinson departed before end of meeting as noted. Also present in person were LEC staff Dickerson, Bowen, Rief, and Jones. LEC Staff members attending via zoom were N. Dowding and Lois Harrison. Also attending in person were Karen Wobig and Nicole Miller on behalf of County Extension staff and board.

**Approval of minutes** – The minutes from the March meeting were presented. Suing moved to approve the minutes; Hagan seconded the motion. The March minutes were approved without objection.

**Officer and Committee reports** - Ronnau provided a report from the District 1 meeting in Seward. Ronnau said that conversation was had around the need for Agricultural Societies to follow public meeting rules and to track and archive fairgrounds information properly. Ronnau congratulated the Lancaster Ag Society board for their commitment to following the public meeting standards and for keeping thorough records of the Lancaster County Fairgrounds. Ronnau shared information about what other Ag Societies across Nebraska are doing. Ronnau stated that Parr, from the Nebraska State Fair, would like to meet with the Lancaster County Agricultural Society to discuss things we share in common.

No other officer or committee reports were presented.

7:36pm Board member Cusick-Rawlinson arrived.

**Extension Update** - Karen Wobig and Nicole Miller were in attendance on behalf of County Extension staff and board, respectively. Wobig reports that Calvin's position as Livestock Educator has been filled by a person from Missouri with previous Extension experience. Wobig said that this new staff member has a great deal of animal experience and will step into the position in May. Wobig also reported that previous livestock intern, Stephanie will be returning this summer to provide support to the new staff member.

**Communication from the public** - No members of the public spoke.

**2023 Fair Update** - Jones shared that the team is reaching out to new sponsors. Jones said that B&R will be doing an advertising exchange this year. B&R will receive a spot on the LEC Video board on 84<sup>th</sup> Street and in exchange, they will show information about the 2023 Fair on their grocery TV video streams that air at their self-checkouts. Jones stated that Frontier Coop will be providing the exhibitor breakfast as well as the hot dog feed. Jones said she is also working to build remotes with radio personalities and to add live music option. Jones stated that she continues to work with other sponsors to build the sponsorship list.

8:17pm Board member Dowding joined via zoom and did not vote.

Jones shared plans for the Family Fun Zone in MPA at the fair. Jones said she has received positive feedback about the addition of STEM educational aspect to the fair with the SAC Museum bringing an exhibit as well as the Branched Oak Observatory bringing an interactive system to allow people to send a moon signal that then comes back to them. Jones also stated that Magical Lights (LEC's new holiday lights event) will have a presence in the fair attraction zone. Jones said she is also working to get Governor Pillen, Coach Ruhle, and various football players to come do a meet and greet during the fair. Dickerson suggested that this would be a great draw for the paid events (Demo Derby, Figure 8 Races, etc). It was also suggested that with his livestock background, Governor Pillen might attend the premium livestock auction.

Rief provided a fair Motorsports update. He stated that staff had been working to find a way to increase spectator attendance and incorporate child involvement at the Motorsports events. Rief said that the staff is working on a pre-registration plan for the Demo Derby to help increase interest and draw larger crowds. Rief asked if the board would be able to help in the pits and grandstand at the Motorsports shows. Cusick-Rawlinson stated that she would like to see additional family-friendly experiences planned in that area to increase spectator participation during breaks.

N. Dowding discussed the carnival security plan. N. Dowding explained that a metal chain link fence and a clear bag policy will be added for the 2023 carnival.

Ronnau provided an update on the new Ag Olympics for exhibitors right before checkout on Sunday. Ronnau shared that some possible events would include hay throwing, tractor tire throwing, stick horse races, sack races, corn shucking, horseshoes, and other games. Jones said she is working to create an award system for participants in various age groups.

N. Dowding shared that he is looking for ideas to fill 2<sup>nd</sup> fair week dates in the MPA and Lincoln Room. He also stated that staff is working to add more open Livestock premiums to attract more contestants. N. Dowding suggested a minimum number of head or contestants to receive a cash prize in the open classes. He said the team believes this would help to draw more competitors. N. Dowding reported that he is finalizing commitments from show superintendents and is continuing to build the Open shows back up since the Covid pandemic shutdown. N. Dowding also stated that a person would need to be found to run the computer and Showworks program for the open static exhibits.

N. Dowding presented an update on the occupancy permit for the grandstand/announcer stand. He stated that work continues on getting the electrical completed to raise a junction box for the announcer stand. N. Dowding said that he is working to acquire updated quotes for price comparisons on this job.

Harrison shared information regarding the fair budget. Discussion was had around projected fair expenses as well as possibilities for increasing income for the 2023 year.

LEC staff member Joni Jones exited the meeting.

**Conversation with Potential NHSFR Trade Show Manager** - The board welcomed John Kaiser, Black Hills Stock Show and State Fair Manager, to the meeting via zoom. Kaiser shared information about himself and his experience managing stock shows. Kaiser said he already has established relationships with many of the NHSFR vendors, making him a familiar face among the Rodeo crowd. Kaiser could provide the LCAS support in customer service and relationship establishment with upcoming NHSFR



Trade Show vendors. Kaiser wants to help the vendors understand that their success is also the event location's success. Kaiser would come to Lincoln intermittently before the NHSFR event and would stay during the event to help wherever needed. Cusick-Rawlinson asked about Kaiser's expectations from the LEC Fairgrounds in regard to communication, service, and support. Kaiser said that many of the concerns from the previous NHSFR have been addressed by the LEC staff, so vendor concerns would be his main focus. Kaiser said he would want to work with a couple specific long time Rodeo Finals sponsors to calm their concerns about the future NHSFR events at the LEC Fairgrounds. Ronnau stated that the LCAS wants to keep the Rodeo-goers, sponsors, and vendors happy and create a successful NHSFR/LEC Fairgrounds relationship. Ronnau thanked Kaiser for his willingness to jump in and help provide a successful NHSFR show. Ronnau explained the process of moving ahead in the conversation of bringing Kaiser onboard as the LCAS is a public agency. Kaiser thanked the board for their time and left the meeting at 8:03pm. Discussion continued about the need to have a familiar face among the Rodeo crowd at the NHSFR. Board members discussed who would be interested in serving on a committee to explore this relationship. Cooper made a motion that a committee would be formed, consisting of: Suing, Hagan, Ronnau, Dickerson, Skillet and N. Dowding, to explore a contract with John Kaiser to work on the NHSFR at LEC Fairgrounds and report back to the board. Cusick-Rawlinson seconded the motion. Ronnau called for additional discussion--there was no additional discussion. Motion passed with no objections.

**Operations Report** - N. Dowding shared information about upcoming events. The UNL Rodeo, a Nebraska Quarter Horse Show, the Vintage Market, a reptile show, UNL Plant Sale, and Roman Greco Wrestling are all coming up in the next few weeks. Discussion was held around campground rentals as they have recently increased for the new National Cowboy Mounted Shooting Show with some coming from as far as Canada. Cooper asked for information regarding the cash register updates. Rief said that price quotes and demonstrations are being finalized to roll out before fair time. N. Dowding said that there have been several large booking and banquet requests recently, including two large corporate holiday banquets and a 50 and Over Barrel Race that will need 700 stalls.

Dickerson talked about the booking policy. Dickerson stated that comparisons had been done with other facilities booking policies and best practices. After some discussion, Cusick-Rawlinson made a motion to accept and approve the booking policy as presented. Rutt seconded. Ronnau asked if there was any further discussion before a roll call vote was taken. Cusick-Rawlinson asked for clarification on one point. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 8-0.

N. Dowding talked about the customer surveys. Dowding shared that the emailed PDF post-event surveys are not being returned by show organizers. N. Dowding said changing to an online survey would make it easier for clients to complete these surveys. N. Dowding explained that the survey was reviewed at a staff meeting and reduced in size/length of time to complete. Additional information was listed asking for

specific feedback on various departments, facility improvements, and stand-out team members. Cooper asked to have additional questions added that are specific to the facility size, options, general operations, and overall condition. A brief discussion was had around what name to use to address show promoters or organizers in the survey.

9:15pm Cusick-Rawlinson left.

**Financial Report** - Harrison explained the information included in the February and March financials. Hagan moved to accept the February Financials with property tax corrections as presented. Suing seconded the motion. Ronnau asked if there was additional discussion, no discussion was needed. A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed 7-0. Sump made a motion to accept the March financials. Hagan seconded the motion. Ronnau asked for additional discussion; there was no additional discussion. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 7-0. The March checks were presented for approval. Cooper moved to approve the March checks totaling \$480,226.74. Hagan seconded. Ronnau asked if any further discussion was needed. There was no additional discussion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 7-0.

Harrison reviewed the information provided on the FY23 budget to date. Ronnau thanked Harrison for the information and stated that she likes having it early so that she can take the time to review it before the meetings.

Harrison presented information about the 2023-2024 rental pricing. Harrison explained that she and Dickerson are looking at inflation levels and reviewing the consumer price index to determine what changes need to be made in 2024 pricing. Ronnau asked if any research had been done to compare LEC fees to those of other, similar facilities. Dickerson talked about increases in cost of overhead and hourly staff wages. Sump asked if the proposed increase would be enough to sustain the facility. Discussion was had around estimating increases over the next year. Hardesty stated that being conservative on the increase could become a problem in the future. Discussion was had around tying the increase to an index. Cooper moved that rental pricing be approved with an increase of 6% for FY 2024. Sump seconded the motion. Ronnau asked if there was additional discussion--no additional discussion was needed. A roll call vote was taken. Motion passed 7-0.

Harrison exited the meeting.

**Managing Director Report** - Dickerson discussed the Convention Center bill, LB709. Dickerson said that the bill has not been moved forward as proposed with \$4 million proposed for LEC, however this LEC funding was saved by some of the senators who are working to get it tied into the Governor's budget. Dickerson talked about Federal HUD EDI proposed grant information presented by Congressman Flood.

Dickerson said that Congressman Flood highlighted the LCAS AgTech Hub planning grant in a recent Chamber presentation as a way to continue to keep youth engaged in agriculture. Dickerson said discussions were taking place with Vest and Admundson about accessing a small amount of the county capital levy to support critical maintenance/upgrades to keep up with the heavy use of the LEC Fairgrounds, based on the impact of LCAS on the community.

Dickerson provided the board with draft of the capital budget including prioritized first projects with existing remainder of ARPA funds. Ronnau encouraged the board to look through the capital projects and suggested any comments be shared with Dickerson or LEC staff. Cooper asked if rodeo requests were broken out separately as he feels that this would help support ongoing conversations with the NHSFR. Dickerson explained where individual requests were listed in the information.

Dickerson talked about open staff positions that will soon be posted. These include a full-time accounting specialist, full-time marketing coordinator, and summer interns.

**Verizon/ATT cell tower contract** - Discussion was had around updating the Verizon (added equipment) and ATT (new equipment) cell tower contracts. Rutt made a motion to approve the board President to sign the updated Verizon and ATT cell tower contracts. Suing seconded the motion. Ronnau asked if there was any additional discussion; there was no additional discussion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was approved 7-0.

**Other Business** – none.

#### **Executive Session -**

Cooper made a motion to add two agenda items to the Executive Session of 1. adding Car Swap Meet to the existing negotiation with clients topic and 2. adding discussion of UNL Grounds Rental contract for the 2026/27 NHSFR into the executive session and to start the Executive Session. Hagan seconded the motion. Ronnau asked if there was any additional discussion. There was none. Motion passed without objection. At 10:10 pm moved into Executive Session with staff members Dickerson, N. Dowding, J. Rief present. At 10:45 pm Cooper moved and Hagan seconded to move out of Executive Session. Motion was passed without objection.

Hardesty moved and Rutt seconded to approve the LCAS President to sign the UNL Grounds Rental contract for the 2026/27 NHSFR. There was no further discussion. Motion carried by roll call vote 7-0.

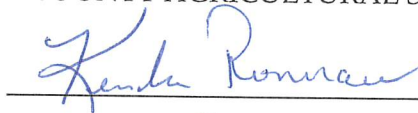
**Adjournment** - Hardesty moved and Suing seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 pm. Motion passed without objection.



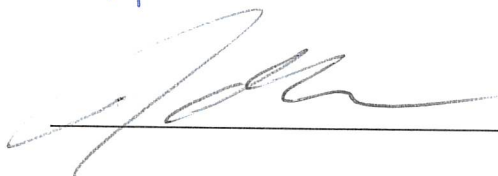
PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED as set forth herein on this 18<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2023.

Submitted by the LANCASTER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY IN THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

President Kendra Ronnau



Secretary John Cooper



Next meeting scheduled for: June 15, 2023 at 7:30pm

**MEETING ROOM TBA**

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