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Lancaster County Agricultural Society, Inc.

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

MINUTES

**Board of Directors Monthly Meeting
Lancaster Room – Sandhills Global Event Center
4100 N. 84th Street, Lincoln NE 68507
7:00pm - January 30, 2024**

President Ronnau called the monthly meeting of the Lancaster County Agricultural Society board to order at 7:00pm.

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

Lancaster Ag Society Board members attending in person were Hardesty, Ronnau, Dowding, Cooper, Rutt, Hagan, and Suing. Arriving later were Cusick-Rawlinson at 7:09pm and Sump at 8:32pm. SGEC staff in attendance included Bowen, Rief, Dickerson, and N. Dowding. SGEC staff attending online was Harrison. Members of public included Karen Wobig from UNL/Lancaster County Extension and Ron Bohaty.

The Annual Facility Insurance Renewal Update was presented Rob Burkett of UNICO Group SGEC's facility/liability insurance agency. Burkett reported that he has been working on getting quotes from hundreds of suppliers for SGEC's upcoming annual insurance renewal on March

1st. Burkett said that the premium for the workers compensation policy has decreased due to the SGEC practicing good safety measures and lower activity during the pandemic years. Burkett stated that he is continuing to work to find the best price quotes for other needed coverages and reviewed overall insurance industry trends.

7:09pm Cusick-Rawlinson arrived.

Cooper asked Burkett about lowering valuations of some items on the equipment list. Burkett said he was working to acquire updated information on valuations of equipment with SGEC staff. Cooper also asked about coverage on leased equipment. Burkett talked about how coverage on leased equipment would be handled between longer-term leased equipment vs. having coverage already in effect for short-term borrowed/rented equipment that goes on/off grounds all year. Cooper asked Burkett what coverage would be available to better reflect items that are outside on the grounds. Burkett said that he had recently started looking into this and would have a better idea of what that would look like in a few weeks. There were no other questions. Burkett stated that he should have more information at the next meeting that would allow for final approval for renewal of SGEC insurance policies.

Approval of minutes - The minutes from the December monthly meeting were presented. Cusick-Rawlinson moved to approve the minutes; Rutt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. The December monthly meeting minutes were approved in a vote of 8-0. The minutes from the December annual meeting were presented. Cusick-Rawlinson moved to approve the minutes; Hardesty seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. The December annual meeting minutes were approved in a vote of 8-0.

Officer Reports - Ronnau thanked the board for moving the monthly meeting to work with her schedule. Ronnau also thanked the board for their support during her recent loss. There were no other officer reports.

Committee Reports

NHSFR Committee--Hagan reported on the NHSFR Rodeo. Hagan said he visited recently with NHSFR Lincoln Event Manager John Kaiser to talk about priorities that he, Dickerson and Skillett had prepared for NHSFR Lincoln planning for July 2026. Hagan said that Kaiser plans to be in town in April to further discuss updates with SGEC staff. Hagan said he feels comfortable that Kaiser is continuing to move forward with building relationships with NHSRA staff and sponsors/vendors on behalf of the SGEC.

Fund Development Committee Agenda Item to Designate Give to Lincoln donations to Lancaster Fairgrounds Endowment Fund - Cusick-Rawlinson provided information on

transferring income from the day of giving to the Lincoln Community Foundation to be deposited into the Ag Society's Lancaster County Fairgrounds endowment fund. Give to Lincoln Day donations now total approximately \$9K to date. Cusick-Rawlinson suggested that moving this money would allow the Ag Society to fulfill the commitment to meet the initial \$10K required by the deadline of 2025 to complete the process of permanently establishing the fairground's Lincoln Community Foundation endowment fund and ensuring the funds deposited there to date stay in the fairgrounds' endowment fund. Ronnau asked for additional discussion. There was none. Suing moved to designate Ag Society's Give to Lincoln Annual Giving Day donations, present and future, to the Lancaster County Agricultural Society Fairgrounds Endowment Fund; Hagan seconded the motion. Ronnau asked if there was any additional discussion. There was no additional discussion. A roll call vote was held, and the motion passed 8-0. Cusick -Rawlinson will follow up on this in the marketing of Give To Lincoln Day this year to focus on raising funds for the endowment.

Annual Election of Ag Society Board Officers - Ronnau discussed the four Lancaster County Ag Society officer positions that are up for election tonight. Ronnau asked the newer board members if they had any questions about these officer positions. Ronnau asked for nominations for officers. Hagan moved to keep the slate of officers as they were in 2023 which was Ronnau as President, R. Dowding as Vice President, Cooper as Secretary and Rutt as Treasurer. Suing seconded the motion. Ronnau asked again two times if there were other nominations for these positions. There were none. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 8-0.

Designation of 2024 Lancaster County Fairgrounds JPA Members from Ag Society - Ronnau stated that Vest and Amundson will continue to be the Lancaster County Commissioners serving on the JPA. Ronnau said that Hagan, Suing, and Ronnau served in this position in 2023. Ronnau asked for nominations to fill the Ag Society member positions for the JPA. There were none. Ronnau asked a second time for nominations for Ag Society members positions on the JPA. Dowding moved to retain the current Ag Society board members of Hagan, Ronnau and Suing to serve on the JPA board for 2024. Rutt seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 8-0.

Karen Wobig from Lancaster County Extension provided an update. Wobig talked about the Nebline for March/April. Wobig stated that in the past this issue included the nomination information for the Ag Society VIP awards. Wobig asked if the board would like to continue to have this information in this issue. Dickerson confirmed yes and asked Wobig to send information on this to her as had been done for announcements done each year in the Nebline. Wobig shared that a new livestock person, Madelaine Polk, has been hired. Wobig asked about how pavilions will be labeled for the Fair Book. Dickerson confirmed that they will be labeled

by new names, no pavilion numbers. Dickerson said she would send this information out to the Extension office.

Communication from the public - There was no communication from the public.

Fair Update - Harrison provided financial highlights from the 2023 fair. Harrison explained that fair attendance is counted by cars and gate tickets. Harrison stated that these fair attendance was up 23% vs. 2022 with just over 129,000 attendees. Harrison noted the weather was in the 80s-90s entire fair with just two short storms impacting fair operations the first week — carnival/outdoor attractions closed ½ hour early on 1st Saturday at 9:30 pm and Sunday it rained for an hour at 4 pm during the highly attended Hispanic Festival. Harrison stated that the 4-H numbers provided by Extension team showed a decrease from the previous year as 4-H reports that they are struggling to keep kids involved in their program. Harrison reported that the open static entries doubled from 2022 to 2023. Dickerson complimented Suing and Rutt for their work in the open static events and stated that they should be proud of this success. Harrison provided a review of key events for the 2023 fair. Harrison said that the Figure 8 and Demo Derby had increased competitors and their friends/family helped grow attendance due to the additional payouts provided to competitors. The strategy is that with consistently strong number of competitors that the general public attendance will grow as know the show will be good to watch. N. Dowding stated that overall food and beverage sales were up 60% over the previous year. Dickerson pointed out the success of the new Bull Ride in the Grandstand and discussed looking for chute sponsors for the 2024 event to help raise more sponsor funds there.

N. Dowding talked about the deadlines for the 2024 fair book. N. Dowding stated that the deadline is coming up quickly, so the team is moving forward with bookings. N. Dowding stated that Sara Juengel is a new addition to the team acting as Fair Coordinator and is doing a great job. N. Dowding said that the team is reaching out to attraction options including a raptor show, a reptile show, an otter show, and racing pigs to see about adding one of them. Dowding stated that the racing pigs were an attendee favorite in years past. Dickerson suggested doing the reptile show and racing pigs both if available would be similar cost to the sharks previous year.

Conversation was had around expanding the wiener dog race as it was a success in 2023. Cusick-Rawlinson suggested reaching out to invite the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile to come to the fair during this event.

8:32pm Sump arrived.

Report from Kearney NAFE Convention - Sump and Rief provided an update from the NAFE Convention. Rief said that they spent time speaking with vendors and bands and made good

contacts. Rief stated that they had some new ideas for future events for the fair, thanks to these contacts.

Sump shared that he had spoken with a drone light show vendor about cost and possibilities. Sump talked about attending the convention for the first time as an Ag Society board member and the things he learned about the fair planning process. Sump also stated that he spoke with VisitNebraska.com about a grant program that might be helpful in providing funds for youth events and the fair.

The 2024 fair planning update was provided by N. Dowding. N. Dowding reviewed the new and changing roles of several staff members. N. Dowding said Sara Juengel will take over fair entertainment and food vendors, Anjanette Rief will work with commercial vendors, and Renita may work on calling smaller sponsorships. There was discussion about adding another cultural event, a draft horse exhibit, a best of all breeds horse show and about possible changes to the Grandstand events.

N. Dowding talked about the carnival contract and options around the contract. Ronnau stated that a subcommittee should be created to work with staff on recommendations for the 2026 and 2027 carnival. Ronnau asked for volunteers for this committee. Hardesty, Ronnau, and Rutt volunteered for the committee, with Cusick-Rawlinson as a backup if needed.

Cusick-Rawlinson made a motion to move number 14 on the agenda up to discuss at this time. This motion was seconded by Hagan. Ronnau asked for discussion, there was none. The motion passed without objection.

Operations Report - N. Dowding said that several shows have signed new contracts for this year including the Magical Lights show who had a successful first year in 2023. N. Dowding talked about the new ideas that Magical Lights provided for their 2nd year for 2024. N. Dowding also discussed additional ideas for a Christmas Village that would be run by SGEN. N. Dowding reports that the Deer and Game Expo was successful, the Gun Show had great attendance, and that the Pool Tournament attendance was up with 80 tables running for competitors.

Rief provided an IT update as it related to current construction and maintenance projects. N. Dowding stated that currently the emergency lights in the LivestockMarket Pavilion were being finished and the wider kitchen entrance door in the Good Times Grill will be put up in March. N. Dowding said that the NE Ag Expo was happy with the updates that had been done to the LivestockMarket Pavilion roof, LivestockMarket & EquineMarket Pavilion new LED brighter lighting, Nebraska Room polished floor, Meeting Center painting/wallpaper, SGEN way-finding signs inside and outside. He talked about the discovery of new water drips from the ceiling of

the TractorHouse Pavilion that might be same condensation/insulation issues fixed in LivestockMarket Pavilion. N. Dowding shared that Good Times Grill restroom remodeling will be done during June and July. N. Dowding said that meetings continue with Hampton to get pricing and to prioritize other remodeling projects part of the \$10M Infrastructure Modernization project.

Conversation returned to item 13 on the agenda

Financial Report - Harrison reported that the yearly audit was started yesterday. Harrison said that in the past it did not start before April but with the support of the SGEC accounting firm adding audit staffing that could work during tax season, the audit prep has begun, and Harrison believes it will be completed before the May deadline to the State.

Harrison presented the November Profit and Loss statements and balance sheet for preliminary acceptance. Harrison said this is preliminary acceptance while the auditor finalizes the year-end financials. Ronnau asked if there were any questions on the November financials. There were none. Sump made a motion to accept the unaudited November financials; Cusick-Rawlinson seconded the motion. Ronnau asked for additional discussion. There was no discussion. A roll call vote was taken; the motion passed 9-0.

Harrison presented the December Profit and Loss statements and balance sheet. Cooper asked if there was a way to easily discern the Sandhills Global contribution to this month's revenue. Harrison pointed out the accounting where naming rights revenues and costs were being separated out including any reimbursements from Sandhills Global for naming rights costs per the contract. Cusick-Rawlinson moved to accept the December financials and Dowding seconded. Ronnau asked if there was any additional discussion. Rutt said she would like to see a year-to-date column added on the Dec 2023 profit and loss statement even though only the one month of results on the P&L in the new fiscal year to show that all the accounts were cleared out properly from the previous fiscal year. Harrison said she would send to Treasurer Rutt. Ronnau asked if there was any other discussion. There was none. A roll call vote was taken; the motion passed 9-0.

Harrison presented information on the November and December accounts receivable and accounts payable that are now finalized, as well as the year-to-date budget performance. No questions were presented.

Harrison presented the information for the approval of December checks totaling \$280,481.97. Cusick-Rawlinson asked about the Hampton checks and Harrison addressed the question. Cusick-Rawlinson made a motion to approve the December checks; Cooper seconded. Ronnau

asked if there were additional questions; there were none. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 9-0.

Harrison talked about information provided related to draw 10 on the state ARPA fund. Harrison explained information on the HVAC bill for the unit above the Good Times Grill and the options for a repair or replacement due to its age. Cooper stated that the control system for a new HVAC should be kept in mind to make sure that it is compatible if a new system is needed. Ronnau asked for additional questions; there were none. Suing moved to approve Draw 10 for \$182,634.67 on the state ARPA funds; Hardesty seconded. Ronnau asked if there was any additional discussion. Cusick-Rawlinson asked for further explanation on the IT updates listed in the information. Harrison and Rief talked about the entries for IT updates. Ronnau asked if there were any other questions; there were none. A roll call vote was taken; the motion passed 9-0.

Harrison talked about carry over of unused vacation and comp time for three full-time employees that have not been able to use all their leave. Harrison stated that this was due to understaffing in certain areas. Ronnau asked for discussion; there was none. Hagan moved to allow employees to carry over their unused paid time off and comp time; Rutt seconded. Ronnau asked for additional discussion. There was none. A roll call vote was taken; the motion passed 9-0. Ronnau stated that the board appreciates the dedication and hard work of these and all employees that work so hard to keep the SGEC moving forward.

Harrison spoke to the board about the impact of new Clover cash register system implemented just before the NE Ag Expo in early December on the Cafe team tips. The use of this program has helped to double tips over the amount from last year with much higher tips from credit card payments with a screen asking if would like to tip now facing the customer.

Harrison talked about the SGEC full time team member benefits package in the process of annual renewal on February 1. She explained that there will be a change in dental insurance carriers due to poor service due to a corporate management change, but all other benefits are looking to be on track as is and SGEC's benefits insurance agent, Kollmorgen, did a nice job explaining the value of SGEC's leading benefit package to the full-time staff in a recent benefits enrollment meeting when compared to other small/medium businesses in the area.

Managing Director Report - Dickerson provided an update to the board on the current status of the grants and funding sources. Dickerson stated that she continues to work with the legal team to research information that will help move forward on which funding sources can be used in what capacities for the SGEC including some questions from State Department of Economic Development. The Shovel Ready Grant (SRG) appears to be ready to be certified now with matching funds secured and asked for board approval to submit these SRG matching funds in a

submittal to the State. Dickerson noted matching fund sources have to be finalized by the end of 2024 and the SRG has to be expended by the end of 2026. She asked board for approval to submit known matching funds now and this could be updated by end of 2024 if other matching grant sources are known.

Rutt made a motion to authorize Dickerson to submit matching funds known at this time for the \$5 million State Shovel Ready grant from the new \$1.25M Lancaster County Visitors Improvement Fund grant, \$2.5 million in Ag Society funds on hand and final \$1.25 million from the \$475K per year Sandhills Global naming rights contract payments in years 2024-2026. Hardesty seconded the motion. Ronnau asked if there was additional discussion; there was none. A roll call vote was taken; motion passed 9-0.

Dickerson provided an update on current open positions. Dickerson said that there are open positions in accounting, marketing, and sponsorships. Dickerson said interviews are under way for a food and beverage manager to work with Bunch and a third event coordinator/event sales team member would be joining the end of February.

Dickerson said that she was pleased to announce the addition of a new Operations Director, Ron Bohaty. Dickerson introduced Bohaty to the board and said she feels good about this position match and the future with Bohaty. Dickerson said Bohaty's background was a great fit to hit the ground running with knowledge of operations at SGEC as he's worked part-time over several years at SGEC and his knowledge of facility/grounds/equipment operations in general from his work at the County Engineering in addition to other work experiences over the years as well as overall management experience. Bohaty shared information about himself and his experience that led him to SGEC. Ronnau stated that she is thrilled and feels lucky to add Bohaty to the team. Dickerson explained that Bohaty will be helpful in managing the construction, purchasing and will supervise all the guest-facing department managers including Operations, Maintenance, Food & Beverage, IT and Security and will be a great support to the team as bigger events draw closer. The board welcomed Bohaty to the SGEC staff.

Dickerson shared that the IAFE Region 5 Conference with fairgrounds managers from a five-state region will hold their banquet and tour the SGEC fairgrounds on February 24th while conducting their conference in Lincoln this year.

February meetings - Ronnau asked the board to consider moving the February monthly board meeting from the 15th to the 22nd with the lateness of the January meeting. There was brief conversation around moving both the LCAS February monthly and the Fairgrounds JPA meetings to February 27. It was decided these meetings will be moved to Tuesday February 27 with the JPA meeting at 6:30pm and the LCAS Board meeting to start no earlier than 7pm.

Other Business - The board presented a sympathy card to Ronnau for the recent loss of her daughter.

Adjournment - Cusick Rawlinson made a motion to adjourn; Hagen seconded the motion. The motion passed without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 10:16pm.

Next meeting scheduled for: TUESDAY February 27, 2024 at 7:00pm
See SandhillsGlobalEventCenter.org → Public Notices

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED as set forth herein on this _____ day of _____, 2024. Submitted by the LANCASTER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY IN THE STATE OF NEBRASKA.

President Kendra Ronnau _____

Secretary John Cooper _____