



Home of the



A nonprofit 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to growing community like yours, and proud home of the Super Fair

## **Lancaster County Agricultural Society, Inc.**

*A Nebraska 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation  
and quasi-governmental organization created under Nebraska law in 1870  
to promote agriculture, youth, and community  
through management of Lancaster's county fairgrounds  
and organizing the annual Lancaster county fair*

### **MINUTES**

Board of Directors Monthly Meeting  
Lancaster Room - Sandhills Global Event Center  
4100 N. 84<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln NE 68507  
Thursday, April 18, 2024 – 7:30 pm

**President Ronnau called the monthly meeting** of the Lancaster County Agricultural Society board to order at 7:31pm.

**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 Ronnau, Hardesty, Suing, R. Dowding, Hagan, Rutt, Cooper, Cusick-Rawlinson, and Sump. SGEC staff in attendance included Bowen, Rief, Dickerson, Bohaty, Stara, Juengel, Bunch, Harrison and N. Dowding. SGEC staff attending online was Skillett.

Also attending online were Karen Wobig, Tracey Anderson, and Nicole Miller on behalf of Nebraska Extension staff and board in Lancaster County.

**Approval of Minutes** - The minutes from the March meeting were presented for approval. Hagan moved to approve the minutes and Sump seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Dowding, Suing, and Rutt abstained. The motion passed 6 to 0.

**Officer Reports** – President Ronnau stated that the State FFA Convention was reported to be a success with good attendance. There were no other officer reports.

**Committee Reports** – For Rodeo Committee, Hagan shared that NHSFR Lincoln Event Manager John Kaiser had visited SCEC to work with staff over the past week. Hagan reported that Chas and Nate were able to get through a lot of conversation and planning with Kaiser.

For Fund Development Committee, Cusick-Rawlinson talked about the upcoming Give to Lincoln Day on May 30th. Cusick-Rawlinson said that a Give to Lincoln Day account has been set up and all donations this year will go to the Lancaster County Ag Society endowment fund at the Lincoln Community Foundation this year. Cusick-Rawlinson shared that Give to Lincoln will last from May 1 through May 30 and that matching funds will be offered. Ronnau thanked Cusick-Rawlinson for all her work on this project.

For Premium Auction Committee, Ronnau shared that there had been discussion at the previous meeting about moving the Premium Auction to a different day next year.

There were no other committee reports.

**Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County** - Karen Wobig, Tracey Anderson, and Nicole Miller attended virtually. Anderson shared that programming has recently picked up with the third session of embryology ending. Anderson said that chicks will soon be picked up from 200 classrooms. Anderson shared that Extension staff have been working on grants and gearing up for the adult volunteer training. Anderson shared that Madelaine Polk, the new 4-H Extension Assistant focused on Animal Science, including leading the livestock shows at the Super Fair, is working on a poultry session tonight and has been working hard to get ready for a big summer.

**Communication from the public** - No public in attendance.

**2024 Lancaster County Fair update** - N. Dowding shared information about the fair book that was handed out to the board. N. Dowding said that there is a nice overview of this year's schedule on the inside the back cover. N. Dowding said there will be six events in the Grandstand in 2024. N. Dowding reported that two added nights were added to the Grandstand schedule with the NE Bush Pullers Tractor Pull on the first Friday and the second night of Bull Riding now on 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday and Saturday after first successful year last year. N. Dowding said that the goal is to get sponsors for the six bucking chutes at the bull riding.

Juengel reported on the Free Music Series. Juengel stated that all band contracts have been signed. Juengel said that the Hispanic Festival will be twice as long at ten hours on Sunday in 2024. Juengel reports that she is working on collaborations on giveaways, social media, and promotions. Juengel stated that the wiener dog races will be moving to the TractorHouse Pavilion to allow for a larger spectator area. Juengel said that this should also help eliminate the sound interference from the cornhole tourney in FR8Star Pavilion. Juengel shared that the team is working to possibly add Corgi races and establish a method for pre-entry and other prizes for these dog races.

Juengel stated that a mass email had been sent to past vendors and new possible vendors including nonprofits and ag producers, inviting them to have displays. Juengel said that there will

be some upgrades at the Fun at the Farm display hosted by Paula Peterson with the Lancaster County Farm Bureau including a tractor for climbing, a petting zoo, and additional educational activities for younger children inside the Currency Pavilion. Juengel talked about options for food vendors and asked the board for ideas on educational activities or displays that would be good for kids inside the FR8Star Pavilion. Ronnau suggested a roping practice area that would be managed and supervised to help start building up excitement for the National High School Finals Rodeo. Ronnau congratulated Juengel and N. Dowding on being a great team. N. Dowding said that Hedrick's Racing Pigs and NoWear BMX are signed as free attractions. N. Dowding also stated that the pony rides will be replaced this year with a gem mining display.

**Operations Director Report** - Bohaty shared information regarding the current construction projects for the \$10 million Fairgrounds Infrastructure Modernization as per the list provided. Ronnau asked how long after surveys are done will work begin on the Gate 4 driveway and the multi-site dump station at Gate 4 would be completed. Bohaty said that it should just be a matter of weeks for work to begin and that he hoped most of the things presented on the list will be completed before the fair. Bohaty said they hoped to have all overhead doors planned to be replaced done before the fair.

Dickerson talked about the SGEC digital sign on 84<sup>th</sup> Street. Dickerson said that all LED panels on the south side have severe sun damage and are hard to read so new panels are being manufactured and the extra working panels will be stored as replacement parts for both sides of the screen is the least expensive fix at this point. The N side is still in good shape so now the lifespan of the two sides might be another 5-7 years when both could be replaced with the latest technology at that point.

Bohaty stated that Skillett is working to get quotes on new horse stalls.

Rief said he is working on facility-wide Wi-Fi upgrades and additions across the entire 160 acres. The existing system installed in 2015 is now at end of life and no longer supported by the manufacturers. The new Wi-Fi will be located in the remaining parking lots/entrance driveways where tickets often sold or cameras needed as well as in the National Campground section. Cusick-Rawlinson thanked Rief for his research to find the best Wi-Fi option with strong bandwidth. Cusick-Rawlinson asked if a sponsor had been found for the Wi-Fi. Dickerson said that had not been a point of focus to date, but that it will be investigated further moving forward as a new Sponsorship Manager is hired.

Dickerson said that many construction projects have come in under budget estimates to date, so the team feels pretty good about that. Dickerson shared that the 84<sup>th</sup> Street digital sign repair and the office addition will come under the Shovel Ready Infrastructure Modernization Grant.

Bohaty asked if there were any other questions on the project list that had been sent. There were none.

Assistant Controller Hannah Stara talked about the FY25 event rental space pricing proposal. Stara explained the information provided proposing a 6% increase on rental spaces to keep up with inflationary cost increases experienced by SGEC to service events. Ronnau asked if comparisons have been done with other facilities' pricing. Ronnau stated concern that this increase could price smaller community events out of the facility. Stara explained that the recommended increase is based on the increase in expenses such as facility insurance, employee benefits and competitive salary pressures. Cusick-Rawlinson said that she agrees the expenses need to be covered but she is also worried that this will price out small shows and meetings. Ronnau stated concern for not being able to give back to the community. Dickerson said that J. Hagan is doing some research on

the effect on non-profit events. Dickerson stated that possible revenue increases from year-round non-event camping could help offset the expense shortage. Bohaty said that research is being done to find software that will allow for additional services to be added for online purchase of non-event camping, horse hotel, and other information. Dickerson reminded the board that the rental pricing change is for 2025 events that book as much as year in advance. Ronnau commended the team for their work on this and the time that has been spent putting the information together.

Dickerson said that they are still working on hiring a second food and beverage (F&B) manager. Dickerson stated that it was believed the position to be filled but the applicant had not responded of late. Dickerson said there are a few applicants available and the search will continue. Ronnau stated that this is an area that is bringing in good revenue so the position needs attention and support to find a good fit. Bunch stated that even if a management counterpart cannot be found, three to four full time employees to help support her would be helpful. Ronnau suggested reaching out to the SCC Culinary School for potential F&B employees. Bunch said that she had previously done this without any success, but that she would talk to them again.

At 8:42pm, Cusick-Rawlinson moved to go into Executive Session for Board input on long-term pouring rights agreement negotiations with Eric Smallwood, APEX Marketing & Amy Dickerson, Managing Director and other SGEC present. Hagan seconded the motion. The motion passed by roll call vote, 9-0.

At 9:20pm, R. Dowding moved to leave the Executive Session and Suing seconded. A roll call vote was taken, the motion passed 9-0.

Hagan moved to give Managing Director Dickerson the right to sign a new long-term pouring contract with the chosen non-alcoholic beverage vendor on behalf of the Lancaster County Ag Society with input from Eric Smallwood from APEX Marketing and SGEC Food & Beverage Manager Lisa Bunch. Hardesty seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 9-0.

9:20pm Cusick-Rawlinson left the room.

**Financial Report** - Harrison said the audit is complete and on time for the end of May deadline with the State Auditor's office.

Harrison shared information about the financials that had been presented to the board. Sump made a motion to accept the March financials; Hardesty seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 8-0.

Harrison reviewed the accounts receivable and accounts payable information for March. Dickerson pointed out that major reimbursements have been added to the accounts receivable information that was presented.

9:26pm Cusick-Rawlinson returned.

Harrison discussed year to date budget information. Harrison presented the March checks totaling \$966,792.04 for board approval. Sump made a motion to approve the March checks as presented; Hagan seconded. A roll call vote was taken. The motion was passed 9-0.

Harrison presented the proposed State Shovel Ready Grant draw request #13.

Dickerson shared pricing and latest concept drawings for the driveway "Welcome to the home of the Super Fair" arch entry sign proposal for gates 1 and 3 that was discussed in last month's board

meeting. Discussion was held around the addition of the signs to the gated entrances. Rutt said that she felt that the cost for this addition was too great. Ronnau stated that she believes it's important to have a sign reminding visitors that the facility is first and foremost the Lancaster County Fairgrounds. R. Dowding stated that this is a lot of money, but he also felt that there needs to be something identifying the facility as the home of the Lancaster County Super Fair. Ronnau suggested a fair mural might be considered on the E side of TractorHouse Pavilion. Ronnau asked to see a price comparison of this to the overhead signs. Cusick-Rawlinson and Cooper stated concern for an overhead sign being hit by vehicles as they enter the gates. Sump said that he does not believe people will forget that the facility is the county fairgrounds. Bohaty and Stara stated that a mural would not qualify under the State Shovel Ready Grant financials while the gate signage would. Cooper stated that he is concerned that when future building phases begin, overhead driveway signs would have to be moved or removed. Other suggestions were made for options that would identify the grounds as the home of the Lancaster County Fair e.g. corner of 84<sup>th</sup> & Havelock signage, digital signs at entrances etc. Dickerson stated that she will have the team look into additional options to identify the grounds as the Lancaster County Fairgrounds.

Cooper made a motion to approve draw 13 from the State Shovel Ready Grant monies with the gate arch signs removed for a final draw amount to be \$34,442.20. Hardesty seconded the motion. Ronnau asked if there was any additional discussion. There was none. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 9-0.

**Managing Director Report** - Dickerson said that new hire, Gina Nathan had started work as the Marketing Manager last week. Dickerson explained that Nathan's first focuses will be the fair and non-event camping campaigns.

Dickerson shared information about recent federal grant requests submitted to Senator Fisher and Representative Flood's offices for monies to begin the building of Pavilion 5. Dickerson talked about efforts to find matching fund sources. Cusick-Rawlinson stated that the grant proposal was well written, and she hopes that it is reviewed strongly.

Dickerson said that the city and county budget season was quickly approaching, so discussions will begin soon with the lobbyists to establish a plan for support requests.

Dickerson shared that she is actively recruiting a Sponsorship Manager with an affinity to agriculture. Ronnau suggested a contact that might be able to help with this search.

Dickerson provided an update on the naming process. Dickerson said that the final naming signage list had been finalized with SGEC general counsel Gene Summerlin and APEX Marketing Eric Smallwood's assistance working with Sandhills Global which will be helpful as both parties are responsible for the care and updates to the signs over the 15-year agreement. The naming signage list is now recorded in a naming rights contract addendum signed with Sandhills Global. Dickerson stated that the goal to have the few remaining naming signs installed by fair time.

Dickerson talked about NHSFR Lincoln Event Manager John Kaiser's visit. Dickerson stated Kaiser has been talking weekly to Rodeo staff in Denver on an almost weekly basis. Dickerson said that during his visit, Kaiser was able to work with N. Dowding, Skillett, and Bohaty to talk about improvements from the first NHSFR Lincoln in 2021. Ronnau asked about the announcer stand visibility around electrical panels on the south side for the timing staff. Bohaty said that two ideas are being discussed at this time and the team feels that they have good ideas to address this visibility issue. Dickerson talked about off-site facilities that need to be reserved in the community for the queen's and shooting contests. Visits were made to these facilities and both organizations are enthusiastic about their involvement. The Queen's Contest will have to be moved from

Waverly High School theater due to a potential large construction project there in 2026 to the newly renovated UNL East Campus Union Great Plains Room. Dickerson stated that there are just over two years left until the NHSFR returns in July 2026, so it is important to get on the calendars with key services, volunteer chairs and sponsors. Bohaty stated that he has been trained on the Emergency Training process which will help with some of this planning. Dickerson said that conversations with Kaiser led to a clarification of who does what between Kaiser and the SGEC management team in relation to the NHSFR. The SGEC staff will continue working on the things that they do for current events around facility services and fair-type activities like renting all extra needed equipment from light towers to shower trailers. Kaiser will work on the aspects that SGEC must provide that are not done for any other event except NHSFR like the national trade show, the outdoor stalling, the rodeo arenas, the check-in of contestants/horses/RVs Ronnau agreed that this was a good plan and stated that Kaiser has the expertise in this area and should be allowed to handle the NHSFR items independent from the team.

**Change of December meetings and Board Election** - Dickerson talked about moving the December annual and monthly meetings and the annual board election from December 12, 2024 to December 19, 2024. Dickerson said the Nebraska Ag Expo show ends on Thursday December 12th causes a conflict the way the calendar falls this year. Ronnau stated that the following Thursday December 19 is too late in the year for some people with the holidays the following week. Ronnau suggested looking at an earlier date. Cusick-Rawlinson agreed and suggested looking at an earlier date. Dickerson asked about the first week in December. Ronnau suggested additional research on local events during December and asked if there was still time before a decision had to be made. Dickerson said she will do some additional research and bring the information to the next monthly meeting.

**Other Business** - There was no other business discussed.

**Adjournment** - Hardesty moved to adjourn the meeting; Cooper seconded. The motion passed without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 10:17pm.

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 \_\_\_\_\_