



### **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 Supplemental Meeting Thursday May 7, 2020 at 7:30 PM**

President Ronnau called the meeting of the Lancaster Country Agricultural Society to order at 7:40 p.m. on a Zoom video conference. Ronnau reminded the board that Governor Ricketts issued an executive order (20-03) permitting public bodies to meet virtually and still be in accordance of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act. The Open Meeting Act laws were displayed to attendees on the screen, and notice was given to the Lincoln Journal Star.

Board members present were Rawlinson, Swanson, Cooper, Rutt, Ronnau, Doeschot, Dowding, and Suing. Messick joined the meeting at 7:53 p.m. Also present were LEC Managing Director Amy Dickerson, Lancaster Co. Fairgrounds JPA Member & County Board Commissioner Roma Amundson, Extension Educator 4-H Youth Development Tracy Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Leader Karen Wobig, LEC Operations Director Greg Rook, LEC Accounting Manager Lois Hartzell, Ag. Society Board Clerk Jess Nguyen, LEC Managers/Staff Sue Morrison, Lisa Bunch, Loretta Yerger, and Nate Dowding.

**Approval of minutes** – Dowding motioned to approve the minutes from the April regular board meeting. Swanson seconded. Motion passed 8-0, with Messick not present.

#### **Limited Committee reports**

- COVID Finance (Ronnau): Hartzell updated the board on the financials so far this month. LEC is designating different people to call to collect on accounts receivables. Lawn and Leisure, Circus, and VVS have all paid their ½ rental contract obligation bills despite COVID cancelations to help keep LEC core crew employed. In terms of accounts payable, a lot of vendors are working with LEC to delay payments and work things out in this time of no events since mid-March due to COVID. It looks like in latest cash flow projection that LEC will have funds to keep core staff on board until October so far. The Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) has become available again, and an application has been sent in by LEC Financial Consultant Bruce Gubser. EIDL is only accepting applications from

agricultural related entities which makes LEC eligible to apply. Hartzell also gave an update on the capital budget that Bruce is working on. They are asking for a quarter of a cent out of the 15 cent county levy to help build our capital reserves up. These reserves can only be used for permanent improvements that enhance the value of the buildings/land.

- Fund Development (Cusick-Rawlinson): Working on getting Give to Lincoln Day donations & marketing campaign all set up. Looking at the bigger picture is to have the community see LEC as a non-profit, so this is more of public relations than thinking we will get major donations. Giving Lincoln Day is open until May 28 which is the actual Give to Lincoln Day.

**Update from public health department meeting** – Ronnau and Dickerson spoke with Steve Beal (Lincoln/Lancaster Co operations director for COVID emergency command team) and Ben Davey (Lincoln/Lancaster Co Health Dept. writing health guidelines for different entities). Ronnau updated the board that when the meeting took place, the governor did not want cross county travel. Things have changed since then. LEC and the board want to have events, but they do not want to be the reason for a spike in cases. The health department has commended the board on the decision made so far on the public fair postponed to next year. The health department will have a meeting/tour at LEC soon to see what is possible to do within the facility and help get guidelines in place to be compliant with what the new normal has become.

**Extension Report / Communications** – Wobig reported that the office is pretty much the same – everyone is still working remotely and cannot go into office as they are still following the guidelines put in place by the University. Most events have been canceled until end of June. There will not be any face-to-face programming through at least June 15. Dave Varner has been named interim director of Extension effective June 30. Anderson commented that they are moving ahead with a lot of the 4-H programming to go virtually and doing research on how this option could work for fair. A speech contest was held virtually in March with 39 participants and went very well.

**2020 Fair Update** – Dickerson started the conversation by overviewing what the different options for the exhibitor fair were. Plan A is 4-H/FFA Exhibitor physical fair still open to the general public. Dickerson thinks it is an exceptionally low chance of this happening because there would be so many people and animals in one space making it hard to keep all exhibitors and families in attendance safe. Plan B would be for the exhibitor fair to be in-person but not open to the public. There would be modifications to fit physical distancing rules including different livestock species going in/out over four days, possible having to split the static entries over multiple days in/out same day as well as horse show modifications to spread out the exhibitors without the show days getting too long. Dickerson will talk more in depth about this plan with the health department. Plan C is to do a totally online or “virtual” exhibitor fair with the public invited to watch. This 100% can happen and LEC could prepare this as a backup if the other plans fall through. Dickerson showed a “how to create a virtual fair” presentation that highlighted some notes from a

county in Florida who had their fair online and a livestock show in New York who actually grew their engagement through a virtual fair.

Nate Dowding showed the board Plan B in more detail by showing maps of the spaces LEC usually uses during the fair for exhibitors. Usually this portion happens over four days, but to keep crowding down there would be two species shown per day. Pavilion 1 would be modified to have hogs and sheep utilize the same pens to create more space and save labor. Staff would disinfect between showings. There is a single show ring that has panels around it to help enforce social distancing between families who are watching. In the Multipurpose Arena (MPA) there is a show ring, space for llamas, poultry, and rabbits and bucket calves would show in MPA with pens on MPA side of P1. Shows may go a bit longer because it takes a little longer to get up to the show ring with the distancing, especially with hogs because you are not leading them with a halter.

Cooper suggested limiting entries to have a better handle on how many animals are coming in and help with the timing. It was also suggested that some classes, especially with horses, are cut down. Ronnau would like the board to make some decisions for the next meeting on the 21st to help Extension have time to make plans for any modifications including virtual aspects and purchases like trophies and awards. She would also like the group to think about how this affects others if we were to cause COVID to be spread between the 800 youth from across the county as the fair takes place a couple weeks before kids will go back to school.

Dickerson showed financial projections of Lancaster County Super Fair scenarios.

- Plan A--The fair usually spends all the \$236,000 annual fair property tax support and through gate & ticket sales and carnival brings in over \$148,000 with all the public coming out to the fair.
- Plan B--With a low attendance projection due to COVID in 2020 if we are even allowed to hold the public fair, the fair would lose \$10,000 if we had gone forward with the full public fair plans which the board already decided not to do.
- Plan C--If the fair goes completely online, it is projected to allow \$200,000 left of the annual fair support to remain. This would go a long way to keeping the fairgrounds funded with no to few events rest of year due to COVID with core staff being there for 2021 and the future. LEC's 320+ annual events normally subsidize the fair by about \$100,000 (without looking at all additional overhead costs for LEC grounds/staff to be available to plan and host the fair each year).
- Plan D--An exhibitor-only physical fair (physical exhibitor with limited family and no public) would be projected to keep \$140,000 of the public fair support remaining to support the fairgrounds through this COVID pandemic.

Dickerson mentioned that to guarantee an exhibitor experience if we went with Plan D that LCAS, LEC and Extension all needed to be ready with Plan C as a backup in case something is cancelled at last minute by the health department if COVID worsened.

Wobig commented that there are some pieces of the fair that would be easier to do in-person, but for planning purposes for Extension, she is concerned if something changes she

wants 4-H kids to be as prepared as they can be.

Ronnau asked for feedback from the other board members keeping in mind that even if numbers fall, it would not be a normal fair – volunteers and security would be necessary to enforce health guidelines, no sitting around with others, needing to stay with family members only, and getting in and going home promptly. Suing had some concern with the policing of people throughout the show to enforce the health guidelines. Rawlinson wondered if there is a possibility of having a blend of plans B and C, and if there is an option of not having a fair at all. She also questioned how tech support for exhibitors would be provided, especially for those who may not have access to resources. Rutt commented that the static exhibits would be one of the easiest to go virtual on and would open physical space for other things. Swanson's major concern is that most people will not be comfortable going to a public gathering with the current situation. He also brought up the issue of contact tracing. Messick commented that county fairs all over the country are cancelling and maybe that's the way Lancaster may go too.

Wobig said the University acknowledges this is a county by county decision where the managers of the fairgrounds will decide on what to do with each county's fair. If current COVID restrictive rules and guidelines are extended into fair time, then the fair would be forced to go virtual. Extension has already decided not to do their online Clover College in June because the sheer amount of classes did not lend well to virtual. Dickerson will send Wobig and Anderson the fair planning presentation for their thoughts and comments to prepare for the next meeting where some decision will be made to go forward with planning.

**COVID Financial Options Report** – Dickerson updated the board on what has been happening at LEC in regard to the current COVID situation. LEC is now a COVID testing site through the Governor's Test Nebraska initiative. She encouraged the group to get friends and family to take the assessment. This makes LEC the third site in the state. Next Tuesday will be the biggest activity at LEC since mid-March. There will be a primary election and blood drive as well as Test Nebraska all going on and the plant sale setting up. The UNL plant sale will also have curbside pick-up next week. Most of usual May events have voluntarily decided to reschedule.

**NHSFR Report** - Rook gave updates on the work LES has been doing on the grounds. A transformer was put in that powers the grandstand and new campground area. An electrical tower was also finished which powers a quarter of the new campground. Grass seed is also being put down again soon.

**Other Business** – Lisa Bunch gave a quick overview on spring cleaning efforts for the South Stand Café and Good Times Grill and other cafes and coolers/freezers. Walls and ceilings have been cleaned. Appliances and machines like popcorn kettle, coffee machine, ice machine, cooling cans, and warmers have also been cleaned and are ready to be used.

**Communication from the public** – none

**Adjournment** - It was motioned by Rutt and seconded by Cooper to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. Motion passed 9-0.

Respectfully submitted by: Jess Nguyen – LCAS Board Clerk

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Secretary Cooper

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President Ronnau

Next regular monthly meeting: Thursday, May 21, 2020 at 7:30PM