

FAIRGROUNDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Held at Freeland Library Meeting Room, 5495 Harbor Avenue, Freeland WA 98249

With virtual access via Zoom Meeting Service

Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at 6:00 pm

AGENDA

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88077387681>

Meeting ID: 880 7738 7681

One tap mobile

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Meeting ID: 880 7738 7681

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88077387681>

Meeting Agenda Approval

August 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes Approval

Port Update

Fairgrounds Update

General Discussion

- Other/Roundtable

Old Business

New Business

Action Items

- Review current list of concerns/action items/top priorities to Commissioners
- Any formal correspondence to Port Commissioners
- Other

Fairgrounds Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – September 20, 2023
6:00 pm Hybrid (in person and Zoom) meeting

In attendance

Gary Gabelein South Whidbey Historical Society, Chair
Commissioner Melanie Bacon Island County
Gwendy Hastings At-Large
Clayton Canfield At-Large
Virginia Keck Fair Association
Thomas Gill City of Langley
Amanda Ellis Port of South Whidbey – Fairgrounds Director
David Stern Port of South Whidbey – Fairgrounds Marketing and Events Coordinator
Angi Mozer Port of South Whidbey – Executive Director
Dr. Ashley Hernandez-Hall – 4-H/WSU Extension

Not in attendance

Loretta Strothman Martin Langley Chamber of Commerce
Carissa Moore WWGA
Shannon Bly Tenants

Agenda Approved: Approved.

Minutes Approved: Minutes from August 16, 2023 not voted upon.

Port Update:

- Angi Mozer reported that the Port Commissioners would like to have a Special Meeting with the Fair Association and the Fairgrounds Advisory Committee to discuss the Fairgrounds housing concept. Angi will coordinate the meeting. The Commissioners intend to do a walkthrough of the Fairgrounds with the attendees of the meeting to get firsthand knowledge from the groups about what is going on and the challenges the groups face.
- Angi followed up on the question of Fair attendance at past Fair events. Having and knowing the attendance is important for understanding the economic impact of the Fair event. Amanda clarified that it would be helpful to understand the system for counting tickets – is it actual tickets sold and counted, or is it a multiplier based on the number of exhibits reported (for smaller rural fairs)?

Fairgrounds Update:

- Amanda reported that the Fairgrounds has transitioned from event season to planning and maintenance/repair/project season
- August events included LittleBIGFest, Shake and Bake Automotive Festival, WWGA's OMOKSEE with a huge attendance including use of the campground. Amanda noted issues with the electrical system in the campground.
- September events include Outcast Theater's running show, another WWGA event, camping for DjangoFest.
- No change in tenant spaces; kitchens are at full capacity based on storage space and cold storage space. We purchased a new freezer for the Coffman kitchen; the previous freezer failed.
- In addition to electrical issues in the campground, there have been several water leaks in that area. Water leaks are particularly difficult because the lines are underground and they are not mapped. After the campgrounds' high usage this summer additional power pedestals are not working; only a few are left working.
- Safety of the food booths along the midway is a continued concern. The structural assessment received recently indicate they are dangerous for occupancy.
- Amanda recommended having special speakers at the Fairgrounds Advisory Committee meetings. Speakers could provide 10-minute updates, for example tenants to present their needs, and the structural engineers that are looking at the structures on the Fairgrounds.
- Clayton asked if there is an existing list of projects and prioritization. Amanda responded that we are working on that. Clayton asked if there is a report from the structural engineer, Amanda responded that yes there is a report.
- Commissioner Bacon is supportive of the idea of having guest speakers present to the FAC. Commissioner Bacon requested the regular financial update for the Fairgrounds. Angi committed to providing that.

- Cali Keck, citizen online asked if there is an intent to get an estimate for rebuilding the food booths, and if funding were made available, would it be possible to complete construction before next year's Fair? Amanda reported that it would not be possible to rebuild the food booths prior to next year's Fair. Angi added that the Port will do everything it can to make sure the food booths are safe for use. Just the design and engineering for a building likely would take a year, and using the \$400,000 restroom as a basis of cost estimating, replacing the food booths would be a couple million dollars at least, which the Port does not have at this time. Cali offered that the campground water and electrical should be a top priority because it is an income source. She relayed that there was a Google review of the campground and the review indicated that the restroom was not available and power wasn't available. Amanda mentioned that return customers may not realize the new restrooms and showers are available, and they are attempting to access the old restrooms and showers near the main entrance of the property, and that is a learning curve. Addressing the electrical issues at the campground is a very high priority for the Port.
- Thomas Gill mentioned the lodging tax funding available from the City of Langley. The primary purpose of that fund is support shoulder season activity, which the campground serves. The Port may want to apply for and leverage those funds for the Port's projects. Thomas mentioned that food trucks could be a potential backup plan for the source of food while the food booths issues are solved.
- Commissioner Bacon mentioned Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC) dollars for campground improvements. \$700k will be given out this year. The funding supports the Chambers, and campground improvements are likely eligible.
- Thomas Gill offered that the Port could potentially use the recent vehicle EV charging station funding to assist with the electrical upgrades of the campground, especially since we don't have any DC charging stations on the Island at all. Amanda reported that the Port is looking into solar/battery power backup in collaboration with the City that could support EV charging. The Chief of Police brought up the suggestion, since the City has purchased a Tesla.

General Discussion/Roundtable:

Marian Myszkowski: is a neighbor of the Fairgrounds and wanted to share a great experience she had at the Fairgrounds. She was attending Whidbey Island Grown's annual Open House, which was packed with supporters and farmers, etc. Then as she was leaving there were many cars parked for a gathering of musicians. The vibrant activity was really great to see, especially on a Tuesday, and as a public space for everyone.

Gwendy: asked about Fair attendance numbers, and if DjangoFest will be using the Fairgrounds? Amanda mentioned the Fairgrounds will support camping for DjangoFest.

Dr. Ashley Hernandez-Hall: representing 4-H. 4-H is hoping to do more collaborative projects with the Port.

Cali Keck: asked if there are plans for landscaping at the Fairgrounds? Specifically trees for shade during the summer and shrubbery at the front of the campgrounds to help with dust abatement. David Stern reported on his communications with the Whidbey Island Conservation District to assist with shade and dust as well as water absorption from storms with native plants.

David Stern: reported that this winter he will be working on large-event and small-event emergency preparedness plans (for example if a large thunderstorm occurs during an event). The organizers of the future Renaissance Fair asked about the Port's emergency plan, highlighting the need to develop one. Commissioner Bacon recommended that David reach out to Eric Brooks with the County's Department of Emergency Management

Old Business: None.

New Business: Gwendy asked about RCEDF funds. Amanda reported that funds can be used for Coffman, namely shoring up the alcove, replacing the hot water heater and replacing some equipment. Funds can be used for the Pole building including heating and electrical repairs. Gwendy asked about signage for emergency preparedness purposes. The current naming structure of the barns with people's names may not provide immediate understanding in cases of emergency. A simpler nomenclature may be better for first responders. Amanda mentioned evacuation and exit routes and an associated map have been high on the list to establish for the Fairgrounds. Thomas mentioned creating a "streets and addresses" structure could be useful. Street names can honor the names associated with the Fairgrounds (Coffman Avenue, Gabelein Alley, etc.).

Next Meeting: Scheduled for October 18 at 6:00 p.m. in person [The Joint Port Commissioners/Fair Association/Fairgrounds Advisory Committee was held during the designated October FAC time.]