

**MINUTES**  
**LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**& LANCASTER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY**  
**LANCASTER EVENT CENTER, LANCASTER ROOM, 4100 N. 84<sup>TH</sup> STREET**  
**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2017**  
**7:00 P.M.**

*Advance public notice of the Board of Commissioners meeting was posted on the County-City Building bulletin board and the Lancaster County, Nebraska, web site and emailed to the media on November 9, 2017.*

Commissioners present: Todd Wiltgen, Chair; Bill Avery, Vice Chair; Roma Amundson, Jennifer Brinkman and Deb Schorr

Agricultural Society Board Members present: Ron Dowding, President; Kendra Ronnau, Vice-President; Jamie Bauman, Secretary; Karen Rutt, Treasurer; John Cooper, Jim Swanson, Ron Suing, Tom Messick and Jay Wilkinson

Others present: Dan Nolte, County Clerk; Hoyt Kraeger, Lancaster Event Center Business Development; and Amy Dickerson, Lancaster Event Center Managing Director

**1) Call the meeting to order**

Commissioner Wiltgen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2) Proof of due notice of public meeting and location of Nebraska Open Meetings Act**

**3) Roll call for Ag Society Board and County Board**

Roll was called for both Boards.

**4) Approval of Minutes from last year's meeting**

**MOTION:** Ronnau moved and Cooper seconded approval of the minutes. Swanson, Messick, Bauman, Rutt, Suing, Cooper, Ronnau and Dowding voted yes. Wilkinson was absent. Motion carried 8-0.

NOTE: The Lancaster County Board of Commissioners approved the minutes from last year on November 29, 2016.

**5) Lancaster County Super Fair Report – Jamie Bauman, Ag Society Secretary**

Wilkinson entered the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Bauman provided a presentation on the Lancaster County Super Fair (Exhibit A). She said the public attendance was up over 17% from 2016 with a total attendance of 130,000 over the ten days. Bauman discussed the continued challenges of attendance and revenue once the 4-H exhibits are completed. The fair currently runs ten days which is demanding on the staff and volunteers.

Bauman noted some of the changes for 2018:

- 4 days of 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA)
- Focus more on 4-H
- Carnival will extend 6 days after 4-H is completed

## **6) Lancaster Event Center Report – Amy Dickerson, Managing Director**

Amy Dickerson, Managing Director, provided an overview of the Lancaster Event Center (LEC) and National High School Finals Rodeo (NHSFR) (Exhibit B). She said the LEC not only host events but host and run their own event which is one of the largest, most respected 4-H county fairs in Nebraska.

Dickerson commended the LEC staff for their dedication and openness to change. She said the employees all work hard to take care of the customers and provide them with the best experience at LEC.

Dickerson said the goal is to keep the LEC space affordable for youth, other non-profits, government and small business groups. She stated it is important to attract regional and national events which are more profitable to the LEC. Dickerson said this helps not only support the smaller community events but also is a boost to the City of Lincoln economy. She said the LEC continues to climb in the national rankings for regional and national events. Dickerson noted an economic study showed \$40,000,000 spent annually from outside of Lancaster County.

## **7) NHSFR Preparations Update – Amy Dickerson, Managing Director**

Wiltgen noted that the Lancaster County Board utilizing the Visitors Improvement Fund Grant awarded the LEC \$3,000,000 for the purpose of hosting the NHSFR. He said a significant effort was made to attract the event by Governor Ricketts, Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau and LEC staff.

Dickerson said the rodeo will take place in July 2020 and 2021 with approximately 1700 high school age contestants participating in thirteen performances over ten days. She said past impact studies show a minimum of \$16,000,000 economic impact with approximately 50,000 visitors. Dickerson stated the event rotates every two years to other sites. She added if the NHSFR governing board feels LEC hosted a successful event it would return in 2026 and 2027.

Dickerson discussed improvements and additions to the facility:

- Camp grounds expanded
- 3500 capacity covered grandstand
- 1900 horse stalls
- Additional parking

Wiltgen inquired if the Lancaster County Board would need to approve construction contracts. Dickerson said she has not had to do so in the past.

## **8) LEC Market Study Report – Susan Sieger – Crossroads Consulting**

Susan Sieger, Crossroads Consulting, provided a presentation that includes the LEC Market Study Report (Exhibit C). She said it is important to continue to grow and meet the needs of the user groups for long term success. Sieger stated the LEC is currently at capacity for key seasons. She said the master plan process began before acquiring the NHSFR and feels it is important that long term needs are integrated around that event.

Sieger noted the success of the LEC comes from accessibility with interstate access, service by two airports and available hotels. She added that several events have outgrown the space and upgrades can result in more events. Sieger said securing multiday national events are important in maintaining success.

Sieger discussed how to prioritize improvements:

- Strong recognizable brand identity
- Short and long term objectives
- Management
- Demographics and accessibility
- Proactive and strategic marketing

## **9) LEC Master Plan Update – JoAnne Kissel, Clark Enersen Partners & Master Planning Committee**

JoAnne Kissel, Clark Enersen Partners, presented an overview of the LEC Master Plan Update (Exhibit D). She explained when the facility was built a three phase expansion was planned. Kissel said Phase 3 addresses the issue of access to LEC along with increased parking. The expanded campground, when not being used for campers, will be utilized for overflow parking. Kissel stated the main part of the third phase is the arena, coliseum and additional pavilion which will allow for more regional events.

Avery inquired how much of the new area will be in the flood plain. Kissel stated all the new construction will be out of the flood plains.

Kissel said if the decision is made to go ahead with the public bond election there will be materials that are needed such as graphics and designs for public education.

Brinkman asked if the size of the coliseum is the same size as was proposed ten years ago. Kissel said over the last ten years it most likely has changed. She noted there has been a great deal of collaboration to ensure the size is appropriate.

In response to Avery's inquiry regarding the size of bond that will be needed, Kissel said it is too early to tell as planning is still ongoing. Dickerson said while final numbers are not available the cost could be between \$60 million to \$70 million.

## **10) LEC Phase 3 Financing Options – Tom Huston, Cline Williams**

Tom Huston, Cline Williams, said an amendment to an agreement with the City of Lincoln will be required to address some of the questions through the master planning process. He noted one

concern of the City is that the LEC does not compete with Pinnacle Bank Arena. Huston said the financing plan for the NHSFR is in place but not the Phase 3 Master Plan. He stated they are looking at a variety of funding sources including grants and state legislature financing acts to minimize the amount of public debt. Huston noted the Sports Arena Facility Financing Act as well as the Community Development Law to permit enhance employment area (EEA) could be viable sources of funding.

Brinkman questioned if the EEA requires City Council approval. Huston said yes it would have to be put into effect by ordinance and approved by the City Council.

### **11) LEC Phase 3 Expansion Public Survey Results – Chris Peterson, CP Strategies**

Chris Peterson, CP Strategies, presented an overview of the public survey results (Exhibit E). He stated a brief high level survey was performed to gauge public opinion of the LEC, support of the facility expansion and test support of potential financing options for expansion. Peterson said 400 voters from Lancaster County were randomly selected. He stated there was definitely an aversion to property tax solution for financing of the proposed expansion. Peterson said the favorability of a bond increased after providing those surveyed with the economic benefits of expansion.

### **12) Comments from the public**

Tom Christenbaum, Nebraska Quarter Horse Association, said they have approximately 25 shows per year. He stated previously those shows were scattered throughout the state and now all shows are held at LEC. Christenbaum said the proposed updates are needed.

Debbie Brehm stated she and her daughter were recently at a horse show in Ohio that had a \$285,000,000 economic impact. She said while that is a very large show, it is an example of what expanded facilities can mean to a community.

Dale Nelson appeared in support of the expansion. He is affiliated with the Cornhusker Tractor and Truck Pulls. Nelson said the event is growing and could be potential of a televised event that would bring in a large number of spectators.

Mark Osner stated he is involved with the Nebraska Power Farming Show which continues to grow and has twenty vendors on a waiting list. He said more space is needed to accommodate the vendors and exhibits. Osner said 3000 exhibitor badges are issued with 55% of those exhibitors visiting from out of state. He noted even though the show is free there is still an economic impact on the community.

Keri Price said she is a member of the Star City Llama and Alpaca 4-H Group. She expressed concern that the open shows the second week of the fair would be cancelled. Price said those shows are necessary to qualify for a national event.

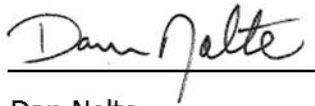
Ronnau said the Ag Society made the decision to discontinue the open classes for financial and staffing issues. She stated restructure of the open classes is an option but those groups would need to find their own sponsorship.

Joel Armstrong said that attracting national shows will be difficult because of the state required brucellosis testing for livestock. He stated several other states repealed the requirement. Armstrong said this could be deterring national shows from coming to LEC.

Karen Kerbig appeared and expressed concern with the elimination of the open class shows for llamas. She said there have been offers to host events in out state Nebraska. Kerbig she would like to see events remain in Lancaster County.

### 13) Adjournment

**MOTION:** Brinkman moved and Avery seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:43 p.m. Schorr, Brinkman, Avery, Amundson and Wiltgen voted yes. Motion carried 5-0.



Dan Nolte  
Lancaster County Clerk

