

Yuma County Fair Board Meeting  
August 21, 2023 7:00 pm  
Yuma County Fairgrounds – YUMA

The post-fair August meeting was called to order at 7:10 by BJ Mekelburg. In attendance were Fair Board members BJ Mekelburg, Tom Mekelburg, Justin Crossland, David Blach, Harold Blackham, Jaden Campbell and Robin Schneider; Rodeo Manager Cassidee Rogers; YC Commissioners Scott Weaver, Adam Gates; CSU Extension Taylor Travis; YC Fairgrounds Event Manager Carmen Murray; 4-H Superintendents Mariya Mekelburg, Curt Lapp and guests. The reading of the July minutes was postponed until September since they were not available at the time of the meeting.

Committee and Special Reports – (only committees with action or discussion are listed)

- Event Manager – C Murray suggested someone else be responsible for vendors in the future as it is too much to manage during the fair. Murray stated she will be looking for other carnival contractors for next year as they have already increased the contract amount for 2024 to \$8000. The Yuma VFW Post has asked to find someone else as security volunteers for the Exhibit Building next year.
- Rodeo – C Rogers reviewed the PRCA rodeo for the 2023 fair. Some of the problems with the electrical for running the A/V were discussed. There was discussion about challenges of getting the arena ready for all of the events happening during the fair and the lack of help in getting it completed. Rogers would like to establish a rodeo crew/committee to be responsible for the arena and prepping all of the area for the rodeo and horse events alone or lay out what the grounds maintenance needs to be responsible for. She is very thankful for all those that pitched in to make sure it was completed but it needs to be delegated in some manner so each night it is addressed for the different events during the fair. She said the contract with Cervis is up for renewal and spoke about some problems with the stock contractor so she may be looking for other options for the next years ahead. She also talked about the need for a coordinator to run the County Events. It is a challenge to find someone to help run it as most county volunteers also are competing and therefore do not want to help. She requested a committee to organize and run that event. She believes it could be a paid position as well. Overall the 2023 PRCA rodeos were a success. Approximately 1700 tickets were sold for over \$28,000 in sales and the \$37,800 in event sponsorships. It was suggested the \$17 ticket prices be raised next year to a suggested \$22.
- Parade – J Campbell reported the parade went fairly well despite a late start. It was a more disorganized event than it has been in other years. He expects to have more information at future meetings, especially about the direction the parade is going, possibly with the Yuma Chamber of Commerce helping with the parade. There were some questions about the parade committee members getting tickets to the rodeos for their help and it was stated the county has not done free tickets in several years.
- Livestock Sale – the Livestock Sale was again a very successful and record event with approximately \$550,000 in sales and over \$590,000 with add-ons included. It was suggested to ask the buying groups to have a lead buyer in the group be a point of contact and secondly to have more runners from the Livestock Sale committee to visit with the lead buyer and coordinate the amount from each buyer within the group. The extension office feels they are a few weeks ahead with respect to collecting revenue from the buyers although there is a little slow down from the US Mail. Suggestions were made to have the committee address directions to the buyers in their invitations prior to the fair. It was felt the reduction in the size of the ring was a positive step. Moving the announcer's stand was also good except for protection from wind and weather blowing in from the north. It was discussed to potentially move the existing shade currently not being utilized to this area.
- Superintendents – notes and/or comments for different departments are listed below:
  - Beef - everything seemed to run well with the exception of a few steers being pulled shortly before the show so the class sizes were affected.
  - Swine - M Mekelburg made a suggestion for a second set of holding pens for the pigs show, as well as getting two handheld microphones instead of a headset. C Lapp suggested we look into re-working or defining the family animal as well as providing “Top 5” awards (especially for the swine) instead of the general champion and reserve. Lapp also gave a few general recommendations or considerations to put

the community BBQ on the last day and hold an end of the fair parade instead of packing so many things on the Saturday schedule.

- Sheep & Goat - a letter from an exhibitor (parents of) was reviewed and it was decided we need to speak with the sheep/goat superintendents about their actions with or “helping” family members in the show ring. It was suggested also that we gain another superintendent with experience in goats and Tylin Zwirn’s name was suggested.
- Horse - a list from Ryan Noble was read by Mekelburg. A couple of items which gave him some frustration were, needing to find a trail judge on short notice, as well as some severe weather sneaking up on the ranch horse show and he didn’t feel a strong notification process was in place at the time. A suggestion was made to adopt a flag system of “green”- weather is a go, “yellow”-watch the skies, and “red”-take cover. He was also frustrated with how the horse exhibitors were treated at the parade with some undeserved reprimanding and a poor order in the parade with the other entries. He thought the youth exhibitors were asked to get out of the stalls earlier than usual due to rodeo contestants moving in, which is not fair to those exhibitors. The ‘Open’ portion of the horse program is down and the program is also in need of some volunteers. The horse stalls are in need of work to bring in suitable fill material and level the stalls. A cover or shelter for the exterior stalls was also requested.
- In general it was suggested a list of expectations needs to be drawn up for ALL the superintendents about duties and expectations. It was mentioned the Yuma County Emergency Response, Jake Rockwell, was keeping their eye on impending weather and storms and at no time felt it warranted any public notifications.
- Livestock -A second hauler was requested to help Wray Meat Pack take animals back to their location in Wray on Monday morning. A suggestion to request one representative from each 4-H club and FFA chapter within the county to be on the committee to help choose judges and overall improve the livestock shows and projects. BJ Mekelburg agreed to help facilitate the various members on the livestock committee. Positive responses were received about one judge judging 3 species (swine, sheep, and goats) and reducing mileage cost by staying one night in a hotel.

## OLD BUSINESS

No specific unfinished business was brought before the board.

## NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business brought before the board during the meeting, however there was a lot of discussion about successes and improvements to be made.

- The formation of committees has been an improvement to the effectiveness of the board. However, the committees would increase their effectiveness with more community volunteers and at least one fair board member on each committee. It was suggested we also make another committee for ‘Music Entertainment’ to handle the Friday Night Show and other music on the fairgrounds, staging and sound.
- Despite not having the Mexican band during the fair, it was agreed this would be a nice addition to the fair for next year.
- Communication continues to be very important to the success of the fair, especially as events and rules change. It also continues to be a challenge to figure out what is most effective and to reach as many people as possible. There were several conflicts during the fair that could have been avoided with improved communication.
- The Fairbook continues to be an important communication tool for all things related to the YC Fair. It is becoming increasingly important to make the proper changes, as well as consolidating the material. It was suggested a deadline be set for new introductions to the fair schedule and rules for the events as well (April?). It was discussed if the level of project detail for the Home Ec and General projects needs to be listed in the fairbook or if it is already listed at 4-H Online, could it be eliminated from the fairbook.

- Earlier in the meeting J Campbell spoke about a few ways he thought we could improve the Night Show after attending the Chase County Fair, who had an extraordinary turnout for their show in 2023. His suggestions were in support of starting earlier in the year and having someone attend a fall event in Nashville to attain the artist for the following year. He believes we need to have a major artist with live music to get the youth to attend concerts. This fielded a lot of conversation about if this will make a difference in the attendance to the night show or if the commissioners and board should look another direction. R Schneider agreed the draw of a major artist is important but shared concern about competing with other artists and fairs within the 10-day time frame of local fairs and how it may affect Yuma County's attendance.
- Thoughts were shared about doing a Thursday start to the fair to reduce the fair by one day as some feel it is being drug out too long. This proposal would keep the livestock shows in the same order and move the parade to Monday.
- Reminders of the August 31 letters of interest were given to the three fair board members up for renewal and any other interested individuals wanting to join the board. It was suggested that a list of expectations be given to current and new board members of their responsibilities.
- A thank you was given to Lori Hoffner and Deb Higgins for their work on the concessions building including awning covers, historical photos on the walls and table decorations which were added during the days of fair.

S Weaver handed out a preliminary budget and expenditure list for the 2023 YC Fair. The Yuma County Commissioners plan to get the Fair Board much more involved in the budgeting for the 2024 YC Fair and where the county is spending the money set aside for the fair. The current budget is approximately \$100,000 above and beyond some of the other regular budgeted items and beginning January they would like to have the board become familiar with and hold discussions about the allocation of the budget in different areas. The commissioners will help the board and still look over expenditures for the fair, but they would like to give some of the budgeting responsibilities to the board. In order to make this possible, it was suggested the board add a committee specifically for budgeting and combine the vendor, sponsorship and marketing committees. A proposed list of committees are as follows:

-Budget	-Sponsorship, Marketing	-Vendor & Activities	-Grounds & Sound	-Beer Garden	Security
-Livestock	-Livestock Sale Promo	-Parade	-Volunteer	-Night Show & Music	-County Events

The commissioners also updated the board on a few projects which will be considered in the next year including: working on an electrical split, filling the Grounds Maintenance position, working on County Events coordination, insulating and A/C for the Exhibit Hall, A/C in the Concession building, and Office renovations.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:05 pm. Next meeting will be September 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm in Yuma at the fairgrounds.

Respectively submitted

Robin Schneider, Secretary