

**Minutes of Meeting
North Idaho State Fair
June 30, 2020
1:00 p.m.**

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Chris Fillios, Commissioner Leslie Duncan, and Commissioner Bill Brooks met to discuss the following agenda item. Also present were BOCC Communications Manager Nancy Jones, Senior Business Analyst Nanci Plouffe and Deputy Clerk Ronnie Davisson. Also present were Panhandle Health District Director Lora Whalen, North Idaho State Fair General Manager Alexcia Jordan, Fair Board Vice Chair Elise Burton, Fair Board Members Linda Rider and Ken Renner, University of Idaho Extension Educator Sharla Wilson, 4H Program Coordinator Teresa Balderrama, and citizens Russ McLain, Madison Hardy, Peter Riggs, Nathan Tull, Jeff Tyler, Elaine Price, Erin Olson, Mallery Sisson, Brent Regan, Doug Duncan, Jennifer Lehner, Mattie Lehner, Josie Lehner, Jody Gehlker, Michele Sheets, Keith Sandy, Pat Riley, Robert Koca, Taylor Landis, Kim Shaver, Norbit Twillman, and Vicki Tripp.

- A. Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Fillios called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.
- B. Changes to the Agenda (Action):** There were no changes to the agenda.
- C. Business (Action):**

Chairman Fillios informed the meeting attendees that there would be testimony given by Fairgrounds General Manager Alexcia Jordan and Panhandle Health Director Lora Whalen during the meeting. He also explained that he had discussed the liability of whether to proceed with the Fair with the County's insurer, ICRMP, and that ICRMP said the County was not insured against pollutants, which was what COVID-19 was considered.

2020 North Idaho State Fair Status Discussion with Fair Director Alexcia Jordan and North Idaho Fair Board of Directors

Panhandle Health Director Lora Whalen began the discussion by stating that she appreciated the community and Ms. Jordan, who had remained in touch during the pandemic. Ms. Whalen said that as of meeting time, there were 315 cases in the five northern counties, with 255 of those cases being in Kootenai County. She said it was a younger crowd that was going in to social settings, like bars and restaurants, which were causing the spread.

Ms. Whalen said that some of the more recent cases had come from gatherings, like Father's Day and graduations. Commissioner Leslie Duncan pointed out that those were more intimate settings and she did not consider the Fair to be intimate. She said when she went to the Fair, she did not come in contact with many people, even if it were crowded. Commissioner Duncan explained that most of the numbers came from the increase in testing. Ms. Whalen agreed there was an increase in testing, but they focused on the positive results when determining the ratio, and had said they had seen an overall increase in positive results. She pointed out that the Fair drew visitors and vendors from all over, and that was why Public Health had made the recommendation to cancel the

Fair. Commissioner Duncan asked Ms. Whalen to clarify if that also meant all the activities associated with the Fair, like the rodeo and 4H. Ms. Whalen said she would have to understand what parts of the Fair and how many people were involved, but that it would be a risk regardless.

Chairman Fillios pointed out that when Ms. Jordan had presented her initial plan to hold the Fair, Ms. Whalen believed it to be too conservative, which led him to believe the decision was not easily made, to which Ms. Whalen agreed. Commissioner Duncan said it was difficult to plan two months in advance when there was an opportunity at hand to see how the situation unfolded.

Ms. Jordan said that until the week prior, they had been preparing to move forward with the Fair and all of its events with a plan approved by Ms. Whalen. She said the plan had a cost of \$75,000 in order to implement the restrictions: increased signage, limited capacity, disinfecting stations, etc. Ms. Jordan explained that the cost to put on the Fair every year was approximately \$800,000, a cost they handled on their own. She also said that over 97,000 people visited the Fair over the event's five days.

Ms. Jordan said that after she had spoken to Ms. Whalen, the plan to move forward with the Fair would need to be much more conservative than it already was. She said that after much thought, consideration and discussions, the Fair Board, via an email vote, had unanimously voted to cancel the Fair, but to continue with 4H. She said the children were the root and heritage of the Fair and had been working very hard on their projects. Further, they had developed a plan where the children could still exhibit their projects and show and sell their animals in a safe environment.

Ms. Jordan expressed that it was a decision that had not come lightly, the risk was too high, the unknowns were too great, and the future of the Fair was dependent on the decision made. She asked the Board to understand their sadness and know that the 2021 Fair would be bigger than ever.

Commissioner Duncan asked if they were to move forward with 4H whether there would be a possibility of increasing capacity for more people to attend and partake in the auction. 4H Extension Educator Sharla Wilson said they had been working with Ms. Jordan since March to develop plans for the 4H program, one of which would focus on just 4H events where they could manage crowd size and space. She pointed out the plan would be solely for the youth to complete their 4H experience. Chairman Fillios asked if they accommodate social distancing, and Ms. Wilson said they could, because they would have access to much more space on the ground and they would be able to limit the amount of spectators.

Ms. Wilson informed the Board that they had been discussing the addition of an online component well before the pandemic, wherein the auction and the purchase of the animals could be made available online.

Chairman Fillios opened the meeting to public testimony.

Jody Gehlker, unincorporated Kootenai County, said that she strongly believed the Fair should be allowed to continue. She said the County was minimally impacted, but economically dependent on tourism. Restaurants, the Coeur d'Alene Resort and other services were open, so the Fair should also be open. Further, there were many local artisans that used the Fair to showcase their crafts, while the 4H children put their hearts and souls into raising their animals. She said the Fair had always been good about providing hand washing stations, and that the community needed to be able to come together to have wholesome fun again.

Nathan Tull, 4089 W. Pleasant Lane, Post Falls, said that since it was an election year, the Fair provided the opportunity for current candidates to meet the voters. He also pointed out that the Fair was a chance for kids this year to have a sense of normalcy. He asked the Board to please consider letting the Fair continue.

Pat Riley, Kootenai County, said that he thought that continuing with 4H would be a great thing, saying that the children had worked diligently over the past several years and that the Fair would be able to provide proper protection. Mr. Riley then stated he stood in opposition of the cancellation of the Fair but supported the continuation of 4H.

Russ McLain, 2360 E. Hayden View, said that it was very refreshing listening to Ms. Jordan, Ms. Wilson and Ms. Whalen, whom he found to be reasonable and practical. He also commended Ms. Wilson on the idea to place the 4H auction online. Mr. McLain also told the Board that listening to Ms. Jordan, Ms. Wilson and Ms. Whalen was the right thing to do.

Jeff Tyler, 5892 W. Harbor Drive, said that he was in favor of the fair continuing as initially planned. He said that the death rates were similar to those of the flu and was unsure why it was causing so many closures. He said the community loved their freedom and were disagreeing with all the closures.

Brent Regan, 6100 E. Borley Road, said he was unsure how having the Fair would affect the testing rate, which he believed to be unrelated. He said because the hospitalization rate was so low, it did not make sense to cause the financial hardship of closing the Fair. He also said that the Fair takes place in an area with the least transmutability, as it was open air and had plenty of sunshine and UV lights. He then stated just to use logic and reason, not fear.

Mattie Lehner, 28646 N. Lindsey Lane, Athol, said that she was 15 years old and would be very thankful for the chance to show and sell her animals. She said for the 4H kids, it was not about selling the animals – it was about memories, meeting new people, dancing on the dance floor and staying up late with friends. She said that if someone did not want to get sick – stay at home. She then asked why it was okay for thousands to riot and protest, but there could be no family Fair. Ms. Lehner expressed the week of the Fair was her favorite week of the entire year and pointed out that the closure impacted not just the 4H kids, but also the vendors that make their money at the Fair.

Jeremiah Jenkins, 11425 E. Bunco Rd, Athol, said that he seconded all prior public testimony and that he believed the Board was overstepping their bounds by closing down

the bars, churches, and restaurants. He also said that the Board should tell Governor Little that Kootenai County would not shut down.

Chairman Fillios concluded Public Testimony.

Commissioner Duncan said that continuing with 4H was an easy decision, but she was concerned about the costs of the Fair that would be unloaded on the taxpayers should the Fair not have the attendance needed. She said that she was not prepared to say no, but also acknowledged that Ms. Jordan needed a prompt Board decision so as to avoid any additional costs.

Commissioner Bill Brooks said that because it took 14 days to show signs of COVID-19, the decision to cancel the Fair would be cutting it close and did not feel the County was in a position to take that risk. He also said that he did not want to jeopardize the Fair's future by letting the Fair incur all the debt to cancel at such a late time, because it could destroy the Fair's future for a long time to come. He said he hated to say it, but they should cancel the Fair and continue with 4H. Ms. Jordan agreed and said that she thought it would be the best way to ensure the Fair has a bright future.

Chairman Fillios said he was not willing to take the risk of a potential \$800,000 loss and said that the Board had to ensure the future of the Fair; with that, he said that 4H should continue, but said he believed it would be careless on the Board's part to allow the Fair to continue.

Commissioner Brooks moved to cancel the Fair, except for 4H and 4H to be planned by the Fair Board and Ms. Jordan. Chairman Fillios seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, Deputy Clerk Davisson called the roll:

Commissioner Brooks: Aye
Commissioner Duncan: Nay
Chairman Fillios: Aye

The motion carried.

D. Public Comment (Discussion): This section is reserved for citizens wishing to address the Board regarding a County related issue. Idaho Law prohibits Board action on items brought under this section except in an emergency circumstance. Comments related to future public hearings should be held for that public hearing. There were no additional public comments.

Chairman Fillios adjourned the meeting at 1:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM BRANNON, CLERK

CHRIS FILLIOS, CHAIRMAN

BY: _____
Ronnie Davisson, Deputy Clerk
