

Illinois State Fair Advisory Board Meeting  
June 16, 2015

A meeting of the Board of State Fair Advisors was held on Tuesday, June 16, 2015 commencing at 1:00 pm in the FFA Conference Room at the Illinois Department of Agriculture Building.

Advisory Board members present were:

**In Person:**

Mike Ammann	Allen Entwistle	Bill Fugate	Mike Martz
Jim Maurer	Gary McConnell	Bill Range	Ray Ropp
Sue Schafer	John Slayton	Rod Stoll	Brad Temple
Pat Walker			

**Phone Participants:** George Obernagel, III and Tami Craig Schilling

**Members absent:** Marla Behrends; Duane Noland; Doug Parett and Paul Walker

**Others present:**

Philip Nelson, Director, Illinois Department of Agriculture  
Patrick Buchen, Manager, Illinois and DuQuoin State Fairs  
Janet Dobrinsky, Assistant State Fair Manager, Illinois State Fair  
Kevin Gordon, Entertainment Manager, Illinois State Fair  
Dennis Morris, Special Events/Corporate Sponsorship, Illinois State Fair  
Lori Kirby, Space Rental, Illinois State Fair  
Pamela Harmon, Competitive Events/Entry, Illinois State Fair  
Kim Hart, Grandstand/Ticket Office, Illinois State Fair  
Tammy Payne, Credentials Office, Illinois State Fair  
Tim Blackorby, Bureau of Buildings and Grounds, Central Management Services  
Rhonda Jachino, Bureau Chief of County Fairs & Horse Racing, Department of Agriculture  
Ray Hanks, Division Manager of Food Safety & Animal Protection, Department of Agriculture  
Kristi Jones, Public Information Office, Department of Agriculture  
Rebecca Clark, Public Information office, Department of Agriculture  
Luke Sailer, Bureau Chief of Business Services, Department of Agriculture  
Regina Burris, Bureau of Business Services, Department of Agriculture  
John Teefy, Office of Legal Services, Department of Agriculture  
Reid Blossom, IL Beef Association  
Jill Johnson, IL Beef Association

Director Philip Nelson called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm, welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting. All attendees then introduced themselves and the meeting proceeded.

Director Nelson announced a meeting of the Advisory Board on July 15 in DuQuoin. He indicated it is a different kind of fair more focused on horse racing and its historic past. He is excited about a lot of changes to both fairs making them more customer focused and bringing back Agriculture. He indicated that a lot of changes have already been implemented and outlined the disadvantage to Patrick Buchen

coming into the process late. He wants a wrap-up meeting scheduled for late November to evaluate but welcomes thoughts and suggestions prior to that. He recognizes the many challenges surrounded by the word “money” but is ready for the challenge.

Director Nelson called for approval of the minutes from the December, 2014 meeting. Allen Entwistle made a motion for approval with Jim Maurer seconding the motion. The minutes were approved as written.

Patrick Buchen then spoke about managing 2 fairs and the synergy to share staff. He brings a lot of experience to the position: managing the Indiana State Fair, National Western Stock Show in Denver, and the last 20 years has owned his own Exposition company. He also has a long history of agriculture. He was raised on a Sesquicentennial Farm starting in 4-H sleeping in the dorms and the cattle barns. 36 years ago he brought his bride-to-be to the IL State Fair for her first fair. He’s excited to be an “Agriculture” IL State Fair manager.

Janet Dobrinsky spoke about her efforts attracting corporate sponsors. Has put together a packet of information to give sponsors the opportunity to become part of the fair. She discussed the levels of sponsorship: Diamond - \$50,000+; Platinum - \$25-50,000; Gold - \$15-25,000; Friends of the Fair - \$5-15,000.

She also indicated that she is assisting with non-fair activities as well – currently focusing on bringing back the National High School Rodeo. She informed the members that there is a \$6,000,000 economic impact and is working closely with the city of Springfield for funding to secure the event.

Janet informed the members that there are 73 trees on the fairgrounds that need to be removed due to Emerald Ash Borer disease. Because it will be impossible to remove all of them prior to the fair, those with public safety concerns will be removed first.

Janet explained to the members that she is also responsible for advertising for both fairs and is currently working on media buys. New this year, she is trying to use the ads to connect both fairs.

Kevin Gordon then spoke to the members about ISF entertainment. Indicated that we have 150-200 applications for an average of 80-100 placements for the 9 free stages (including Roving entertainment) and spend an average of \$150,000 (spent approx. \$104,000 in 2016). Most of those granted a contract are negotiated down from their original price with their submission. He let everyone know that the beer tents are responsible for booking and paying their own entertainment.

Kevin has been working with the DuQuoin State Fair regarding entertainment as well and has 7/10 offers confirmed. In 2014, the DSF spent \$400,000 in entertainment. 2015 will be around the same budget with upgraded entertainment. The IL State Fair entertainment budget is \$1.89 million. Since my tenure with ISF, we have never spent more than \$325,000 per act; therefore, realizing we cannot compete with larger venues.

Kim Hart informed the members of the new stage side parties being offered this year for 9 concerts. For an additional \$30, the fairgoer can enjoy live entertainment, cash bar and a possible artist

visit for an hour prior to the concert in a tent back stage. She defined the Country Concert Blowout where fairgoers can purchase 3 country concerts for \$99.00.

Mike Martz asked how about the screening process of the free entertainment applications. Kevin explained that a committee reviews and rates the applications/auditions based on cost and availability.

Kevin said a record was set in 2013 on entertainment acts with revenue of \$2.1 million. He also said that Hank Williams set a record for most beer sales – 8.1 beers/person.

Brad Temple asked if the stage side parties could be an option for a corporate outing. Buchen indicated that he thought the Orr Building would be a better fit for a corporate outing. He indicated that the Orr Building, for the first time in a while, is available for other functions during the fair as the rabbits and chickens had been moved to the 105 Building. Brad indicated it would be hard to hear the concert from the Orr Building.

Dennis Morris introduced himself having been with the ISF for 15 years as Special Events/Sponsorship Manager as well as assisting with the 14 free entertainment stages. Dennis is also responsible for the twilight parade. He indicated that there are special events every day including CrossFit Competition, education for children at Farmer's Little Helper, Veteran's Day which has been moved back to Lincoln Stage from the Director's Lawn, Park District Day, etc.

Dennis also informed the members that corporate sponsorships in 2014 were \$300,000 in actual dollars and \$270,000 in in-kind donations. The sponsorship is limited to the 10 days of the fair. This year, with Janet's assistance, it is being expanded to also include \$25,000 worth of equipment from Altorfer and Farm Credit sponsoring the Media Tent. Dennis also works with various groups such as IL Lottery and County Market to sponsor the stage side parties.

Patrick Buchen then introduced Lori Kirby, Space Rental Manager, indicating that this area is a huge source of revenue for the IL State Fair.

Lori indicated that there are over 450 food and merchandise vendors on the grounds with a 90% return rate. In 2015 there are 35 new vendors with 8 of them being food vendors. Yesteryear Ice Cream is one she is excited about – they make ice cream using John Deere tractors. Also new this year is a mining company where kids can pan for gold and a free phone charging station in the Expo Building.

Lori informed the members of some big moves in 2015 – the AG Tent is being relocated to the corner of Central and Main; the dive show is moving near Gate 2 Heartland area; the wine tent is moving to the Artisan's Building and the art exhibits will again be in the Artisan's Building but also on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Expo Building.

Lori explained that we are bringing back the "Golden Abe's Food Contest". In 2014 there were 26 entries and we expect more in 2015. The entrants receive newspaper and video coverage and the winner's report long lines.

Allen Entwistle asked if there was a set fee charged to vendors. Lori explained that there are 9 zones based on traffic flow taking the 5 year average of all vendors in those zones. Also added in is a formula for frontage space.

Director Nelson was excited to inform the members that they will see more farm machinery in the commodities area, outside the AG tent, and 3-4 days of exhibits on drones. But one of the things he's most excited about, thanks to Kristi Jones and Rebecca Clark, are the barn tours twice each day with experts speaking during each tour.

Patrick Buchen then introduced Pam Harmon, Competitive Events Manager. He began the introduction by informing the members that Director Nelson and Ray Hanks had changed a lot of the competitive events dates and times.

Pam indicated that her office is busy processing the entries received and counting ribbons and trophies. Because 2015 had not been finalized she indicated the comparison between 2013 and 2014 as general entries were up 11% and livestock entries were down 3%.

Tammy Payne was then introduced as overseeing the Credentials Office. She explained that the Credentials Office includes the campground, golf cars, parking/admission and the Mega Pass.

She explained to the members that the Mega Pass is an "ID Card" which allows the owner unlimited rides all 11 days of the fair in the Carnival Midway and Adventure Village. She indicated that the holiday price is \$55 which includes a free lanyard. The rates from January-July are \$70 with another increase August 1 to \$90.00. She indicated that we are currently up 1,000 from same date in 2014 but 3,000 short of meeting the 6,700 sold in 2014.

Tammy then explained the process of accepting camping applications on April 1 and assigning spaces based on first come first served to vendors and exhibitors staying 6 nights or longer. She indicated all campsites were reserved by noon on April 1 with 430 total placements, 53 on the waitlist and applications still being received.

She informed the members that there will be no changes to the golf car restrictions of 2014. Golf cars are reserved for vendors, state government agencies and those camping in the ISF campground. The same traffic restrictions after 10a will also be enforced in 2015.

Tammy indicated that all credentials should be received by mid next week where they will then be audited in and disbursements will begin. She informed the members that they will be receiving an admission book and parking pass in hopes that they will be able to attend and provide comments/suggestions to the ISF staff.

And, finally, Tammy informed all members that effective January, 2012 all elected or appointed members of a public body subject to the Open Meetings Act must complete the electronic training. She directed each member to the instructions in their packet and asked that they complete as quickly as possible and return certificate to her.

Tammy then turned the meeting over to John Teefy, Legal staff, to discuss Ethics training. John Teefy then passed out the 2015 Ethics Training to all board members asking that they get the certificate of completion back to Tammy Payne as quickly as possible.

Patrick Buchen then informed members that Norm Hill, Assistant Fair Manager for the DuQuoin State Fair, was unable to attend today's meeting. Patrick hopes that everyone will be able to attend a State

Fair Advisory Board meeting on July 15 in DuQuoin as well as attending the 2015 DuQuoin State Fair. Emphasis on the Expo Building and trying to attract more vendors is the emphasis for DuQuoin. Patrick is thrilled that DuQuoin has the staff that they have, appreciates the assistance of the Springfield staff and welcomes comments/suggestions from the Advisory Board members.

Director Nelson then informed the members that there will be a lot of changes at the 2015 IL State Fair, such as:

- Focus on Youth – 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday
  - Possible to select from 4 species the grand champion on that day
  - At 4p, all champions will commence to the Coliseum
  - Governor will be involved in this ceremony
  - Rita with RFD radio will be the announcer for the Selection of Champions
  - Will educate public about what is taking place
  - Understand not as easy but hopes to fill the Coliseum
- AG Day
  - No luncheon
  - 9:00 breakfast instead
  - A number of awards to be presented at Orr Building
  - 3:00 ice cream social at Coliseum – free to those attending Sale of Champions
  - Sale of Champions being moved to Coliseum to highlight the youth
  - Sale of Champions to take place from 4p-6p

Mike Martz asked if local communications stations would be present during the fair. Kristi Jones indicated that the Press Office is working with all local stations and they will be present. She explained the addition of the big screens in front of the AG Tent where there will be a live stream from the Coliseum, talks with employees of the Department of Agriculture and other “agriculture folks” addressing the question “Why I’m a Part of Agriculture”.

Ray Hanks, Division Manager of Food Safety and Animal Protection, indicated that we are focusing on making disqualification stronger. In the past, you were just disqualified for the current year. Proposal is that you are disqualified for the next two years as well as your immediate family being disqualified also. We will be sending samples to the horse racing lab, then federal toxicology lab in Denver. Young exhibitors need to be aware of food safety issues. The ISF has been lax regarding this in the past compared to other states.

Director Nelson is excited to inform the members that the University of Illinois, School of Veterinary Medicine will provide all veterinary services for the 2015 ISF.

Director Nelson recognizes that the many changes will not go without complaint; however, he wants everyone to know that the changes are in hopes of getting the ISF to be more consistent with the national shows. Once he has a list of exhibitors, his hope is to send a letter explaining the changes. He also informed the members of an “Exhibitor reception” to be held the Wednesday before the fair opens for parents and exhibitors where they will also explain the changes.

Director Nelson then introduced Rhonda Jachino, Bureau Chief of County Fairs and Horse Racing. Rhonda indicated that we fully intend to host horse racing at the fair. She explained that IDOA is

charged with promoting breeding and one way we do that is through the horse races. DuQuoin State Fair hosts the championship races, the ISF hosts the Grand Circuit Races, IL top drivers and trainers race at our fairs, we have the fastest mile track in the country and Walker Stables out of Sherman, IL is one of the largest Standardbred breeders in the country.

Director Nelson wonders if we need to look outside the box and consider a public/private partnership. He explained that this failed through Flider's directorship although he worked extremely hard with the legislators. He questions whether this needs to be done publicly, legislatively or through the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. He informed the members that Frank Mautino and Raymond Poe support our proposals.

Patrick Buchen then informed the members that we need to address several other issues such as:

- Golf Cars - the aging fleet of cars owned by the IL State Fair:
  - Selling all back to BSPGC
  - Selling some for new models
- The permit fees charged by the ISF for those bringing their own golf cars
- The location of the carnival and possibly moving it back to Happy Hollow:
  - Larger footprint is needed
  - ISF collected \$471,000 in 2014
- Fire Station
  - Pay them a privilege fee of \$100,000 per year to be on the grounds and this needs to be negotiated
  - Currently do not bill anyone in the city of Springfield because property taxes cover the fee – going to meet with the City of Springfield regarding this issue
- Ambulance Services
  - Currently pay \$46,000 per year for their service (including EMS)
  - Possibly less costly to pay per incident

Tami Craig Schilling implied it is a benefit to the ISF to have them on the fairgrounds at all times. Nelson indicated that they have 3 employees on staff at all times. Jim Maurer suggested looking into the volunteer paramedic program. Director Nelson indicated that he is going to work with the Mayor of the city of Springfield.

Kevin Gordon interjected that the ambulance service contract is \$46,000 per year with an additional \$145/hour usage charge. Allen Entwistle indicated that he had to be taken off the fairgrounds by ambulance one year. He did have to pay the ambulance fee so he is wondering why we pay \$46,000/year.

Patrick then identified other areas that we need to address:

- City Water Light and Power
  - Currently pay approximately \$144,000 for water & \$139,000 for sewer when a majority of the water usage is watering the tracks and not going into the sewer system. Water usage/sewer charge needs to be re-evaluated
  - Why is there no well on 366 acres – finds it hard to believe that there is no water we can tap into underground

- Who can show in 4-H shows
  - Have to be 8 to be in 4-H
  - ISF rules state have to be 10 years or older to show
  - Need to be careful and suggesting that we take younger entrants
  - We will need to and will work with 4-H regarding this proposed change
- Competitive Events Entry Department
  - All entries are done by manual entry
  - Need to get to a point where things can be done on-line
  - By 2016, should be able to implement
  - Will be costly initially but needs to be done

Tammi Craig Schilling suggested that we look into what is driving the entries down. Patrick agreed and suggested that there are just fewer people in agriculture overall. His goal is to educate people more about agriculture. Ray Ropp also suggested that one possible problem is the school schedules starting so much earlier each year. He suggested that he would like to see the dates of the ISF changed.

Patrick explained that would not solve the issues because the calendar changes also and the dates of the ISF are set by statute.

Other issues Patrick Buchen would like to address in the near future:

- Non-Fair Events:
  - 37% of 160 non-Fair Events are Banquets/Receptions
  - Next Largest (20%) are weddings
  - 17% of our non-fair events are livestock
  - BUT, 68-69% of our non-fair expenditures are livestock related – cleaning barns
- Feed Barn/Manure Removal Contract:
  - The discussions for the rodeo returning included \$100,000 which almost took us out of the running – it was bumped down to \$80,000
  - Would like the SFAB members to assist him in getting a return call from ADM to discuss the potential of hauling manure to them
  - Feed Barn – need to bring this in-house and have Buildings & Grounds oversee this function

Patrick recognized that the fairgrounds is an excellent opportunity and recognizes that money is an issue but rather than investing in crumbling buildings – develop partnerships and build new. In Madison, WI, 17 buildings were removed to build the New Holland Center.

The DuQuoin State Fairgrounds is a beautiful facility but underutilized. He asked all SFAB members to provide suggestions on how we can improve both fairgrounds and their usage.

Patrick informed the members that it's falsely reported that the fairs lose revenue each year. He also explained that we are under the umbrella that we cannot spend \$1 until we make \$1. He informed them of the financials for both fairs:

- IL State Fair:
  - 366 acres
  - 170 buildings with 156 utilized

- Revenue (including non-fair): \$6.6 million
  - Expenditures: \$7.5 million
- DuQuoin State Fair:
  - 480 acres
  - 366 building (500,000 square feet)
  - Revenue: \$1.15 million
  - Expenditures: \$1.8 million

Director Nelson suggested that there is barely one roof on the entire fairgrounds that is not in need of repair. \$1.2 million was spent on restroom renovations in Building 29. Because the roof was never repaired, extensive damage was done and the building is now condemned. The decision needs to be made whether the building can be repaired or should be hauled away – both very costly. A conference call was held with CDB a few weeks ago to begin discussions regarding the future of Building 29.

Director Nelson also indicated that Buildings and Grounds was moved to Central Management Services 12 years ago. He is meeting with CMS every 2-3 weeks to get them moved back under the IL Department of Agriculture. He says they are coming back but probably not until after the fair. (Post-meeting Correction: Buildings and Grounds was transferred to CMS in November, 2011).

Director Nelson was happy to announce that a huge issue from previous fairs has been resolved and the restrooms in the Jr. Livestock Building will be open and usable during the fair. He also indicated that 8<sup>th</sup> Street refurbishing from Gate 7 to the Jr. Livestock Building should begin soon and is expected to be completed before the start of the fair.

Ray Ropp thanked Director Nelson and the entire staff for their hard work, their thoughts and for making it exciting to be a part of the Board.

Director Nelson realizes this meeting was loaded with information and looks forward to continuing discussions on all issues in the future. He thanked everyone for their time and hopes to see everyone at the meeting on July 15 in DuQuoin.

John Slayton made a motion to adjourn. Allen Entwistle seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.