



Linn County NEWS



Contact: Alex Paul, Linn County Communications Officer, 541-967-3825 or email: apaul@co.linn.or.us

Commissioners to examine Fair & Expo Center grant options

ALBANY — When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Linn County in March 2020, the Linn County Board of Commissioners quickly determined that the Fair & Expo Center was a prime central location to provide public vaccination clinics — both in-house and drive-through — and hold circuit court activities as well.

At the time, the commissioners said they would do the right thing and then worry about money later.

Tuesday, commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker agreed it is time to determine how money has or hasn't flowed into and out of the facility that saw virtually all of its usual events like horse, dog and RV shows dry up for almost 18 months.

Fair Manager Randy Porter was directed to work with County Treasurer Michelle Hawkins to determine what state and federal COVID-19 money has been received and to investigate if the county has opportunities to apply for any current grants to offset operating expenses.

Porter said the facility has missed out on about \$1.7 million in revenue due to the pandemic.

Board Chair Nyquist said he would like the following information:

- What has the COVID-19 pandemic cost the facility?

- The gross and net revenue since March 2020.
- What is the amount of state and/or federal reimbursement so far?

Porter said the good news is that bookings are starting to increase and that the facility's busiest months are usually January through May.

"We have the big ag show in November and then, all of our other events except a small one, are planning to go straight ahead as usual," Porter said.

Porter also said painting is done except for touch-ups. McClinton Painting has been working for several weeks. The last time buildings were painted was in 2005.

Porter said he has ordered 40 new tables. He said that over the last 23 years, tables have broken and replacements are needed.

He also informed the board that fair manager Ronda Sherman has resigned and has taken a position with the Oregon State Fair. He will work with the Linn County Fair Board to seek her replacement.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Discussed participating in a new Oregon Timber Counties Coalition, whose goal would be to lobby for improved management of U.S.

Forest Service lands and to promote projects that will increase the productivity and health of those lands. In addition to Linn, other counties will include Coos, Douglas, Klamath, Marion, Polk and Tillamook. Commissioner Tucker said it's important the counties have a voice in Washington, D.C. He said the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Bureau of Land Management are far ahead of the Forest Service in terms of clean up and timber sales after the September 2020 fires that devastated much of the Santiam Canyon.

- Approved an agreement with Greater Albany Public Schools for \$131,987 to provide programs at the detention center and the Jackson Street Youth Shelter. Also approved was an agreement for \$8,750 to provide services from polygraphs to transportation to young people.
- Approved a contract amendment with Peaceful Family Solutions.

Media contact: Alex Paul, Linn County Communications Officer, 541-967-3825 or email apaul@co.linn.or.us.

October 26, 2021