



## BOARD SUMMARY REPORT

**Date:** September 3, 2020

**To:** Board of County Commissioners

**Through:** Shannon Carter, Intergovernmental Relations and Open Spaces Director  
Michelle Halstead, Communications and Administrative Services Director

**From:** Glen Poole, Open Space Operations Manager  
Matt Bixenman, Fairgrounds Site Manager

**Subject:** **Fairgrounds and Park Steering Committee Update**

### **Direction/Information**

Open Space Fairgrounds management staff will provide an update on the Fairgrounds and Park Steering Committee membership, the functionality of the Committee and seek direction from the Board regarding the future of the Fairgrounds and Park Steering Committee.

### **Background**

The Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Park Steering Committee (ACFP Steering Committee) was created by Board resolution in October of 2005 just prior to the completion and opening of the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Event Center for the 2006 County Fair. The ACFP Steering Committee was to assist County staff with addressing the uncertainty surrounding the new facility's place in the Front Range event market and the County. The ACFP Steering Committee's objective was to provide recommendations for the development of the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Park by identifying community needs and sources for future funding in support of the Fairgrounds and Park's Mission as defined in the site's 2009 Master Plan.

Over the last 14 years, the Fairgrounds and Event Center has successfully established itself in the Front Range event market and within the County through the assistance of the ACFP Steering Committee. Together Fairgrounds staff and Committee members secured a diverse client base and positive revenue sources that sustain the ongoing operation of the facility. As outlined in the 2019 Fairgrounds Annual Report, the Event Center promoted, scheduled, and facilitated 735 events last year. The most frequent uses of the Event Center were youth/4-H extension programming, quinceaneras/cultural events, sporting events, public meetings, and interdepartmental County functions. In 2019, the Fairgrounds staff made a concerted effort to increase the rental of the Exhibition Hall, to improve client services and to provide consistent follow up with new event inquiries which produced a record \$493,183 dollars in Event Center revenue. The Fairgrounds staff and the County realized a 40% cost recovery for the Event Center (standard operating costs vs. event cash revenue generated).

In 2019, the Open Spaces Department initiated an update to the Department's historic 2010 Master Plan to support the County's growing population, changing demographics and the 2023 renewal of the Open Space Sales and Use Tax. In parallel with the Open Space Master Planning process, Fairgrounds staff initiated an evaluation of the ACFP Steering Committee as six Committee member's terms were set to expire in early 2020. Staff saw an opportunity to follow the Board of County Commissioner's previous practice of enforcing term limits and complete the Committee evaluation process to support the financial future of the Event Center. The Board of County Commissioner were supportive of the staff evaluation of the ACFP Steering Committee. As a result of the operational impacts of the pandemic several ACFP Steering Committee meetings were cancelled, and some the ACFP Steering Committee members did not receive formal notification letters of their term limited status until August of 2020. The current pandemic created a need to establish the Fairgrounds as an Alternate Care Facility to support County response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Fairground's event calendar and associated event revenue were significantly impacted by the pandemic.

### **Links to Align Arapahoe**

#### Quality of Life

Operate a quality Fairgrounds and Event Center that meets the evolving needs of the County's diverse residents, business clients and event producers.

#### Service First

The Fairgrounds Event Center focuses on providing diverse, well maintained event spaces / amenities and strong customer services while adapting to changing industry trends and evolving County demographics.

#### Fiscal Responsibility

Maintain a diverse client and event base who utilize the facility, arenas, and park amenities. Support an annual business and cost recovery plan that is sustainable while addressing impacts of the current pandemic and shifting industry trends.

### **Discussion**

The Fairgrounds Event Center has 14 years of operational history, site development and financial success. Fairgrounds staff recommends the mission, purpose, and membership of the ACFP Steering Committee be adjusted to focus on supporting the utilization of the Fairgrounds and Event Center and not on the development of the facility or capital fundraising. This fundamental shift in the focus of the ACFP Steering Committee will assist Fairgrounds staff and the facility in adapting to changing event markets, addressing the impacts of the current pandemic and evolving County demographics while honoring the 2009 Master Plan mission for the County's Fairgrounds and Park.

#### ACFP Steering Committee Staff Evaluation

- **Name:** Fairgrounds staff and County Attorney Office recommends the name of the Committee shift from ACFP Steering Committee to Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Park Advisory Committee. (Impacts Committee Resolution #050589 and By-Laws)

- **Mission:** Staff recommends changing the Committee's mission to focus on utilization of the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Park in support of the 2009 Fairgrounds Master Plan vs. development of the facility / site and capital fundraising. (Article II of the By-Laws)
- **Purpose:** Staff recommends updating the purpose of the Committee to focus on increasing community awareness and involvement, providing input on the facility's business plan, including event market expansion and meeting annual cost recovery goals, providing input on implementation of the Fairground's 2009 Master Plan, and identifying community needs and desires. Remove references to capital fundraising and site design. (Article III of the By-Laws and Committee Resolution #050589)
- **Responsibilities:** Adjust responsibilities to remove references to fundraising, attending other County Committee meetings, writing/presenting annual reports, similar too other County advisory committees' structures. (Article IV of the By-Laws)
- **Membership:** Staff recommends retaining a seven-member Steering Committee, one from member for each district with two at-large members. Staff recommends members be Arapahoe County residents and/or business owners that represent both urban and rural interests, have experience in event planning, customer service, marketing, or conference management, or have a 4-H or agricultural background. Staff also recommends the addition of two ex-officio members to represent local convention, visitor, chamber, and/or economic development groups. These ex-officio members will provide professional level experience, local business contacts and additional market diversity to the Committee. (Article VI of the By-Laws)
- **Election of Officers and Voting:** Revise the election of officer's process to ensure it supports the designation, service, and timing of the Committee Chair's membership on the Arapahoe County Foundation. Allow for members to serve out their voting capacities via virtual platforms. (Article VII and XI of the By-Laws)
- **Duties of the Officers and Scribe:** Establish a member of the Committee as the Scribe, remove reference for staff serving as a Committee Scribe. (Article VIII of the By-Laws)
- **Meetings:** Align the regular meeting requirements and frequency with business need and the needs of the Committee members. Allow for less frequent meetings and alternate flexible meeting times as this will improve member recruitment, retention, and meeting engagement. (Article IX of the By-Laws)

The Fairgrounds staff have also been reviewing and revising the Event Center's annual business development and marketing plans to address the impacts of the pandemic and the resulting changes to the local event industry. Fairgrounds staff see a strong connection between the re-focusing of the ACFP Steering Committee and the future implementation of revised business and marketing plans. The outcome of both efforts center on increasing the utilization of the facility and ensuring its ongoing financial sustainability. The refocused ACFP Steering Committee can play a role in assisting Fairgrounds staff with post-pandemic recovery and long-term community use of the facility through the identification of new event markets, new clients, and new approaches to hosting events. Revisions of the By-Laws will support improved Committee member recruitment, meeting engagement and attendance. The revision of the Committee's original resolution and associated by-laws will need to be formally approved and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

**Alternatives**

1. Update ACFP Steering Committee Resolution and By-Laws based on Fairgrounds staff Committee evaluation and recommendations presented during this Study Session.
2. Update ACFP Steering Committee Resolution and By-Laws based on Fairgrounds staff Committee evaluation and recommendations with the addition of edits or revisions provided by the Board of County Commissioners at this Study Session.

**Fiscal Impact**

The Fairgrounds and Event Center relies on an adaptable business plan that is built on current market knowledge/trends, citizen engagement, local partnerships, and a focus on customer service. The Fairground's staff allocate County resources and staff time to facilitating the ACFP Steering Committee. Updating the ACFP Steering Committee Resolution and By-Laws while supporting the diversity of the Committee will provide additional support to the financial sustainability of the Fairgrounds and Event Center.

**Concurrence**

Arapahoe County Fairgrounds event and business development staff concur.

**Attorney Comments**

County Attorney staff will review suggested changes to the ACFP Steering Committee resolution or associated Committee By-Laws.

**Reviewed By**

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Michelle Halstead, Communications and Administrative Services Director  
Tiffanie Bleau, Sr. Assistant County Attorney