



Minutes

Oregon Racing Commission February 18, 2016

Meeting Detail

The Oregon Racing Commission (ORC) met on Thursday, February 18, 2016, in Room 1C of the Portland State Office Building (PSOB), 800 N.E. Oregon St., Portland, OR.

Call to Order

Chair Charles Williamson called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

In Attendance

Commissioners: Chair Charles Williamson, Commissioner Michael Huber, DVM; Commissioner Christopher Dudley; Vice-Chair Jan Palmer, DVM

Staff

Jack McGrail, Executive Director; G. Catriona McCracken, Assistant Attorney General

Excused

Commissioner Angel Baez

AGENDA ITEMS

Approvals:

February 18, 2016, Meeting Agenda

Action: Motion to approve the February 18, 2016, meeting agenda.

Moved by: Commissioner Christopher Dudley

Seconded: Commissioner Michael Huber, DVM

Vote: Chair Williamson took roll and the results were unanimous with 4 Ayes, 0 Nays.

January 21, 2016, Meeting Minutes

Action: Motion to approve the January 21, 2016, Commission Meeting Minutes as submitted.

Moved by: Commissioner Christopher Dudley

Seconded: Commissioner Michael Huber, DVM

Vote: Chair Williamson took roll and the results were unanimous with 4 Ayes, 0 Nays.

Old Business:

Sub-Committee Update Reports:

a. Advanced Deposit Wagering (ADW) and Multi-Jurisdictional Hubs

No report.

b. Best Practices

No report.

c. Budget and Hub Funds

No report.

d. Medication and Horse Welfare

Commissioner Michael Huber, DVM, reported that the sub-committee met this morning. Dr. Alice Lombard, DVM, presented results of a pilot project looking at levels of certain medications in equine blood and urine. The sub-committee discussed Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) and positive test results during the last Portland Meadows (PM) meet; model rules; and catastrophic injuries. Commissioner Huber reported for the current PM meet, there had been 5 catastrophic injuries in 2,863 starts, for an incidence rate of 1.75 per 1,000 starts, which is higher than last year's rate of 0.3 per 1,000. The rate in 2013-14 was 1.67. No reason has been pinpointed for the increase, Commissioner Huber stated, adding that it is above the benchmark of 1.5, but below the national average of 2.1.

Commissioner Huber reported that the sub-committee recommended to the stewards that they consider coming up with a way to monitor EIA using Coggins tests for the summer race meets.

e. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Jack McGrail reported that Portland Meadows concluded its meet with two great days of weather after a tough winter. However, he stated, the meet ended with a quarantine because of the presence of EIA. Horses shipping out were required to indicate their travel plans and get a Coggins test. Horses must have a negative Coggins before being allowed into the barns at Emerald Downs, he stated. Director McGrail noted that Commissioner Huber had reported this was the first EIA outbreak in 20 years in Oregon, and steps are being taken to implement Coggins requirements at the fairs in order to prevent a further outbreak. Director McGrail noted that because of an equine herpes outbreak with 72 confirmed positives, Sunland Park in New Mexico was under full quarantine and had not raced since January 22. He noted that the outbreak at PM had been contained very well by horsemen, PM staff and the Department of Agriculture.

Director McGrail stated that the fairs and stewards hired Shorty Martin, formerly of Les Bois Park, as the racing secretary. Director McGrail thanked John Everly for his service filling fields during the past two summers at fair meets.

Director McGrail reported that the Rules Advisory Committee met yesterday to discuss possible implementation of some or all of the National Uniform Medication Program. Although many significant racing states have adopted the program, he stated, Washington has not adopted all the initiatives, which is a consideration for Oregon horsemen. The discussion will continue next week.

Director McGrail thanked the Oregon Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association for an excellent banquet and auction.

Vice-Chair Palmer asked if Emerald Downs was instigating a requirement that horses have a negative Coggins before they ship in. Director McGrail said that was his understanding, adding that the extent of the rule was up to the track, not the Washington State Racing Commission.

f. Future of Racing in Oregon Group (FROG) update

Vice-Chair Jan Palmer, DVM, reported that FROG met last week. Discussion continued on how to help the fair meets with the jockey incentive program and tote companies and finding an intern to lead social media marketing.

g. Portland Meadows Report

General Manager Karsten Hennze reported meet statistics for Portland Meadows (PM) compared with the race meet application. Noting the switch from Sunday/Tuesday to Monday/Tuesday racing, Mr. Hennze noted that on-track and off-track (OTB) handle was down significantly, 30%, because of the move from Sunday racing. But that is offset by the increase in the grand total of wagering, which was up 27%; out-of-state handle was up 32%. Average field size in 374 races was 7.6, a decrease, he stated, adding that field size drives handle. At PM, 42% of favorites won, with 76% of favorites finishing in the money. That's a high percentage, he stated; the national average is in the low 30s.

Mr. Hennze reported that races are not as competitive as PM would like. This is a problem that is hard to address operationally, he noted, because it is a function of the horse population, but how PM writes its condition book does have an effect.

PM had no suspicious activity reported from a wagering-integrity perspective. A gate scratch of a heavy favorite during a Pick 6 did result in some unhappy calls from bettors, Mr. Hennze reported.

Catastrophic injuries were higher than PM would like, Mr. Hennze stated. Two of the five breakdowns occurred on a day when the track was thawing. In general, he stated, the track held up well to a large amount of water.

Thirty-one jockeys started at PM this year. Mr. Hennze called that a significant rider colony, noting that a few flew in for only a race or two.

Import handle is up 1.2% year-to-year, he stated, reversing a trend. The last five weeks of the PM meet included extra races, Mr. Hennze stated, using horses that were already on the grounds.

Mr. Hennze stated that running on Breeders Cup Saturday, when PM is up against other tracks around the country, was a good decision for people at the track, but not a good day financially. Oregon Championship Day, on a Sunday, was likewise a low handle day.

As an example, Mr. Hennze pulled statistics for three random simulcast Tuesdays. PM had a million-dollar day on January 12, when only three other tracks were running around the country. On that day, Mr. Hennze stated, PM won 27% of the market. On Feb. 9, closing day, PM had 12% of the Thoroughbred simulcast handle, or \$857,000, compared to a daily average of \$600,000-plus. That placed PM in third place for the day behind Fair Grounds Race Course, Sam Houston Race Park and Turf Paradise, he stated.

Mr. Hennze noted an average day for PM would be Nov. 17, when the track was in last place nationally with a handle of \$543,000. There are too many of those days, he explained, and not enough of the ones at the top. But, he added, PM is going in the right direction.

Using hub fund allocations, Mr. Hennze stated PM did some social media experiments and data analysis. He stated he was disappointed with results of the social media effort and expects to revamp it over the off-season, especially in light of the start of the Poker Room and Instant Racing at PM. Other hub funds went toward manure removal costs and high water fees (\$78,000). Other costs are associated with improving the TV image at the track, he stated.

Mr. Hennze added that PM has started talks with horsemen about a contract for next year.

New Business:

Discussion and Possible Approval of ORC Meeting at a Summer Fair:

Vice-Chair Palmer stated that the FROG meeting had included a discussion of the costs involved when the Commission attends a fair meet and whether it would be better to save that money and spend it elsewhere. A suggestion was made that Commissioners could attend the fair meets in a voluntary capacity to show support rather than holding a meeting.

Commissioner Dudley stated he thought it was a good idea to have one or two commissioners show the flag at a fair meet. Chair Williamson concurred, but stated he did not think there was a need for a Commission meeting. Commissioner Huber noted that the total cost of holding a meeting at a fair was significant.

The commissioners expressed a consensus that sending one or two commissioners to one or two fair meets as volunteers was desirable. Counsel Catriona McCracken cautioned the Commission that it must be sure not to meet as a quorum.

Chair Williamson asked that each commissioner speak with ORC staff about what fair meets they would like to attend. Vice-Chair Palmer suggested setting a goal that two meets be visited each year, to which Chair Williamson concurred, adding one or two commissioners could attend each meet. He asked Director McGrail to put together a memo seeking volunteers for the meets.

Contested Cases:

None

Other Business As May Properly Come Before the Commission:

None

Public Comment:

None

Confirmation of the Next Commission Meeting:

The next ORC meeting will be at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, March 17, 2016, in Room 1C of the Portland State Office Building, 800 N.E. Oregon St., Portland, OR. No vote was taken.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m.

Action: Motion to adjourn.

Moved by: Commissioner Michael Huber, DVM

Seconded: Commissioner Christopher Dudley

Vote: Chair Williamson took roll; results were unanimous with 4 Ayes, 0 Nays.