



**Minutes**  
**Oregon Racing Commission**  
**February 20, 2020**

**Meeting Detail**

The Oregon Racing Commission (ORC) met on Thursday, Feb. 20, 2020, in Room 1A of the Portland State Office Building (PSOB), 800 N.E. Oregon St., Portland, OR.

**Call to Order**

Chair Jan Palmer, DVM, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**In Attendance**

**Commissioners:** Chair Jan Palmer, DVM; Vice Chair Diego Conde; Commissioner Steven O’Hagan; Commissioner Charles Williamson

**Staff**

Executive Director Jack McGrail; Catriona McCracken, Assistant Attorney General (on phone)

**Agenda Items**

**Approvals:**

**Action:** Approval of the meeting agenda

**Moved by:** Vice Chair Diego Conde

**Seconded:** Commissioner Steven O’Hagan

**Vote:** Commissioners Palmer, Conde, Williamson and O’Hagan voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (4:0).

**Action:** Approval of the minutes from the Jan. 16, 2020, ORC meeting

**Moved by:** Vice Chair Diego Conde

**Seconded:** Commissioner Steven O’Hagan

**Vote:** Commissioners Palmer, Conde, Williamson and O’Hagan voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (4:0).

**Old Business:**

**Budget Subcommittee Report**

Chair Palmer reported that the subcommittee met this morning for a status update. The Commission has \$347,850 in hub funds available for allocation through June 30, she stated. This sum does not include moneys already allocated for the fair meets. Another \$650,000 will be available between July 1, 2020, and June 20, 2021. The subcommittee discussed wants and needs of the industry groups – Oregon Horsemen’s Benevolent and Protective Association (OHBPA), Oregon Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association (OTOBA) and Oregon Quarter Horse Racing Association (OQHRA) -- and Grants

Pass Downs. The subcommittee asked those groups to get together and formulate suggestions on how the money should be allocated and bring those suggestions to the Commission before next month's meeting.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Jack McGrail reported that he and Programs and Administrative Coordinator Karen Parkman appeared before a Ways and Means subcommittee in Salem on Feb. 4 to seek approval for expenditures for fiscal year 2021. The subcommittee recommended approval and passed the request on to the full Ways and Means committee, where it will become part of an omnibus bill hopefully to be approved at the end of the session. Director McGrail thanked industry representatives who appeared in Salem in support of the Commission: Dave Nelson of OQHRA, Lynnelle Smith of OTOBA and Randy Boden of OHBPA, as well as citing a letter sent by Kendra Lellis of Grants Pass Downs.

Director McGrail stated that all horses at the fair meets will be subject to pre-race exams. Veterinary staff will include Dr. Leon Pielstick at the Harney County meet and Dr. William Ferguson at the rest of the fairs.

He noted that during the Future of Racing in Oregon Group (FROG) meeting today, Randy Evers of Grants Pass Downs detailed a number of initiatives in the works at the track, including the purchase of a state-of-the-art equine ambulance.

### **New Business**

#### **Discussion of Potential Impact of Federal Legislation, HR 1754, "Horseracing Integrity Act of 2019," on horse racing in Oregon**

Commissioner Williamson stated that he was surprised that three Oregon congressmen are supporting the bill without discussing with Commission representatives how it would affect horse racing in Oregon. He added that he would like to hear what stakeholders think and then consider whether the Commission should take a position. He added that he fears the bill could swallow up a lot of the Commission's jurisdiction. He noted that Oregon does not have the same problems that Santa Anita has.

Commissioner Conde noted that on a personal level he opposes the bill, especially the ban on race-day Lasix, but as a Commissioner would like to hear from stakeholders. He encouraged the Commission to set a deadline and seek written opinions from stakeholders.

Director McGrail stated he would send an email to stakeholder groups soliciting opinions. He added that if the Commission decides to take a stance, it might be wise first to approach the Governor's Office, to see whether it has a position.

Commissioner Conde noted that stakeholders should feel free to contact Congressmen supporting the bill (Reps. Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici and Peter DeFazio).

Commissioner Williamson asked that the topic be put on next month's agenda for the Commission to revisit.

### **Public Comment:**

Randy Boden of the OHBPA reported on behalf of FROG, which he said heard from TMB Racing and OTOBA today. He noted that he is trying to make it possible for fair directors to increase their participation in FROG by calling in to meetings.

Randy Evers of Grants Pass Downs gave an update on work at the track. Frontside, more sand has been added to the racing surface; trackman Steve Wood will be spending a lot of time on site; the track will be widened to accommodate 10-horse fields at certain distances, which involves building a retaining wall, a barrier with a hedge, and fences on both sides; the Portland Meadows starting gate has been purchased and will be professionally cut down from 12 stalls to 10; a state-of-the-art new horse ambulance has been purchased from Kentucky.

On the backside, Mr. Evers stated, work includes permanent fencing (security will be round-the-clock, he added, with two guard stations positioned so they can see three gates); the purchase of all new, 12-by-12 wood stalls (half available for spring/summer; all available by fall). He noted that changes in security rules on the backside will require dogs to be kenneled or tied up; owners of loose dogs will be issued a first warning, then asked to remove their dog.

Mr. Evers turned to the OTB network. About 11 years ago, OTB handle across the state was about \$50 million, he stated. When Portland Meadows closed, it was about \$26 million. It is now under \$10 million. He noted that every \$1 million represents \$10,000 to the Commission, and every \$10 million represents about \$900,000 that goes to the industry for purses. Grants Pass Downs is hiring a management company to run the OTB network, he stated. Two new OTBs are opening: one in Klamath Falls and one at NE 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Killingsworth in Portland that will try to recapture Portland Meadows bettors. He added plans include incentive programs, handicapping contests, giveaways, increased presence at the OTB sites. Mr. Evers stated his goal was to get the handle to at least \$15 million by the end of this year and \$20 million by the end of next.

He added that Grants Pass Downs is hiring, including a human resources manager, controller and accounts payable/receivable person, as well as outsourcing work such as marketing and advertising. John Everly will return as racing secretary; Daniel Villalba will return as stall manager and Daniel Morris as starter. He is looking to hire someone nationally known as announcer.

Mr. Evers stated that he is worried about having enough horses for the spring meet, as racing will be competing with Emerald Downs and some of the California fairs. He encouraged the Commission and industry groups to do their part to get horses and jockeys to the meet, so Grants Pass could put out a good product around the country with full races.

He summed up by asking for patience. Noting that the property is owned by the Josephine County Fair and within the city limits, Mr. Evers stated that gaining approval for projects and changes can be slow. He also reported that TMB Racing has just paid \$3.5 million for the River Road property, 3 miles from the track. The longtime plan is for 400 stalls, an equestrian facility that could be used for everything from dressage to barrel racing to eventing, and dirt and a sand training track. The property is 240 acres; about 170 acres could be left in hay or alfalfa to support horse racing.

Horsemen can move in for the spring meet on April 5; training starts April 10; and racing starts May 10, Mr. Evers stated. He added that stalls erected in the spring/summer have to be removed for the county fair in the summer, then put back up by TMB for the fall meet – an expensive proposition. The new property will eventually give them more options.

In response to a question from Chair Palmer about security, Mr. Evers stated that he thought the new fences and security would be a substantial improvement over last year. The number one priority is safety of the horses and horsemen, he added.

**Contested Cases:**

None

**Confirmation of next meeting:**

The next Commission meeting will be at 1:30 p.m. March 19, 2020, in Room 1A of the Portland State Office Building.

**Adjournment:**

**Action:** Motion to adjourn.

**Moved by:** Commissioner Charles Williamson

**Seconded:** Vice Chair Diego Conde

**Vote:** Commissioners Palmer, Conde, Williamson and O'Hagan voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (4:0).

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2 p.m.