



Minutes
Oregon Racing Commission
January 20, 2022

Meeting Detail

The Oregon Racing Commission (ORC) met at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022. The meeting was held via videoconference.

Call to Order

Chair Diego Conde called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

In Attendance

Commissioners: Chair Diego Conde; Vice Chair Steve O'Hagan; Commissioner Charles Williamson; Commissioner Jan Palmer, DVM

Staff

Executive Director Jack McGrail; Catriona McCracken, Assistant Attorney General

Agenda Items

Approvals:

Action: Approval of the meeting agenda, amended to delete Grants Pass Downs report

Moved by: Commissioner Charles Williamson

Seconded: Vice Chair Steve O'Hagan

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

Action: Approval of the minutes from the Nov. 18, 2021, ORC meeting

Moved by: Commissioner Charles Williamson

Seconded: Vice Chair Steve O'Hagan

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

Old Business:

ADW Subcommittee Report

Subcommittee Chair Conde reported the subcommittee met this morning and renewed its commitment to responsible wagering. All the ORC's licensed ADWs are required to have a policy in place, he explained, but the goal is to make them more uniform, and the subcommittee

wants to move ahead with rulemaking on specifics. The subcommittee will seek comment from members of the public and interest groups, he added.

The subcommittee also discussed the possibility of putting together a database of self-excluded and problem gamblers, with that information available to be shared among the ADWs. That is a bigger project, he stated.

Budget Subcommittee Report

Subcommittee Chair Palmer reported that the subcommittee met this week to review revenue – which, although fluid, is on track – and funding requests from the fairs. All of those requests are not in yet, so the subcommittee is not recommending any action today.

Executive Director's Report

Director McGrail reported that the fair directors held a productive meeting on Tuesday, with a lot of renewed enthusiasm for summer racing. Issues to be worked out include the tote, photo finish, new jockey silks, and racing secretary for the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show.

The Commission still hasn't heard from Harney County about whether it intends to hold a race meet, but a new manager, Lindsey Robertson, starts the end of January and the Harney County Fair Board is scheduled to meet Feb. 7. Director McGrail added he will be in touch with them and hopes to have news by the next Commission meeting.

Two Legislative Concepts, 143 and 235, would have serious negative consequences for the horse racing industry in Oregon, he stated. He urged stakeholders to make their voices heard.

On the national scene, Senior State Veterinarian Tom Everman is monitoring the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act (HISA). The Commission doesn't yet know what compliance will involve.

Regarding the budget, Director McGrail noted that the agency has concerns about a website it is required to build, compliance with HISA, and an increase in the agency's legal bills.

Director McGrail noted the agency continues to reach out to tribal interests, with ADW Supervisor Connie Winn taking the lead on outreach. Chair Conde added that representatives of the Commission had a productive meeting in Roseburg with the counsel of the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians this month.

Director McGrail noted that the Commission has hired a new mutuels supervisor, Dawn Rome, who is based in Grants Pass.

New Business

Review and possible approval of Grants Pass Downs 2022 race meet schedule

Director McGrail stated that the Commission has received all the proper forms and documents for the proposed schedule, adding that it's a good program that can help the horsemen and the industry.

Randy Evers, GPD chief racing officer, noted that despite the challenges of coordinating with soccer and other uses of the Josephine County Fairgrounds, the calendar looks wonderful. The backside will open in early April, five weeks before racing starts May 9. Race days will primarily be Mondays and Tuesdays with a 5:30 p.m. post time, plus a few Sundays. There will be no racing June 12 and 13, to make it easier for horsemen to participate in racing at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show, and races will end July 5, to support the Crooked River Roundup's meet and give horsemen a week to get to Prineville. The spring/summer meet is 19 days.

For the fall meet, Mr. Evers stated, training starts Aug. 19. This is the week after the Tillamook County Fair, so horses can come directly to Grants Pass from the fair. The last race day is Oct. 25, two weeks earlier than in 2021, which should avoid the cold weather of last year's final race days. The fall meet also is 19 days, for a total 2022 calendar of 38 days (35 days were run last year). Mr. Evers added that the horsemen's groups support the calendar.

Chair Conde asked if the race meet was conditioned on approval of The Flying Lark license.

Mr. Evers stated that CEO Travis Boersma has said he cannot afford to run the meet without The Flying Lark.

Action: Approve 2022 Grants Pass Downs race meet schedule

Moved by: Commissioner Charles Williamson

Seconded: Commissioner Jan Palmer

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

Commissioner Williamson stated that the Commission should plan to hold a meeting in Grants Pass during the meet, and Chair Conde concurred.

Review and possible approval of 2022 Eastern Oregon Livestock Show Form A

Program and Administration Coordinator Karen Parkman reported that Form A for the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show was in order and as expected, with dates of June 10-12, 2022.

Action: Approve Eastern Oregon Livestock Show Form A

Moved by: Commissioner Charles Williamson

Seconded: Vice Chair Steve O'Hagan

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

Other Business as May Properly Come Before the Commission:

None

Contested Cases:

None

Public Comment:

Herman Baertschiger Jr., chairman of the Josephine County Board of Commissioners, addressed the Commission in support of Grants Pass Downs and The Flying Lark. Mr. Baertschiger gave a summary of the county's economic history, noting that historically it was based on the natural resources of timber and mining. He stated that 70 percent of the land is managed by the federal government, leaving very little available for economic development, and stressed the importance of embracing opportunities such as those presented by Mr. Boersma.

He added that since the 1970s, the county has lost a lot of general fund revenue that came from federal land royalties. That money was invested in the community – schools and the fairgrounds – and he doesn't foresee that money coming back. He noted that without the partnership with Mr. Boersma, the county would not have been able to keep the fairgrounds and its activities going. He urged the Commission to go forward with supporting horseracing and The Flying Lark, which is so important to the county, its citizens, and the horsemen.

Kitty Martz, executive director of Voices of Problem Gambling Recovery, cited findings from a white paper on "speed of play," commissioned by the ORC and written by Problem Gambling Solutions. Live horseracing, she explained, has a low speed-of-play, with races taking about 2 minutes to run, in addition to time between races. She stated problem-gambling experts have called for speed-of-play of digital games be regulated to be no faster than comparable land-based games. Ms. Martz expressed concern that speed-of-play for the machines proposed at GPD is faster than that of the old Portland Meadows machines.

Ms. Martz noted that speed-of-play in video games is correlated to their harmfulness. Video Lottery machines create a lot of addiction, she stated, but one percent of Lottery revenue is dedicated to prevention and treatment. She asked what the ORC is going to do for legitimate prevention, whether it is studying the issue, and asked that the Commission require its licensees to dedicate one percent of their revenue to treatment and prevention.

Dave Nelson, representing the Oregon Quarter Horse Racing Association (OQHRA), responded to Ms. Martz, noting that he served on a task force on compulsive gambling in the 1990s. He stated that there is a clear distinction between wagering on horses, which is a skill game, and the Lottery and casinos, which are not skill-based. Slot machines are the most addictive, he added. Horseracing, he noted, has identified the issue and done a lot to identify problem gambling; for example, each track has an addiction officer on staff. Mr. Nelson added that he appreciated Ms. Martz's comments, but video slots are the real culprit.

Leah Nelson of the OQHRA reported that the organization's 2022 directory and stakes book has just been mailed out, featuring the winner of the 2021 Firecracker Futurity on the front cover and a tribute to the late Eduardo Gutierrez Sosa on the back.

Confirmation of next meeting:

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Feb. 17, 2022, via videoconference.

Adjournment:

Action: Adjourn meeting

Moved by: Commissioner Charles Williamson

Seconded: Vice Chair Steve O'Hagan

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

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:07 p.m.