



Minutes
Oregon Racing Commission
Feb. 18, 2021

Meeting Detail

The Oregon Racing Commission (ORC) met at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 18, 2021. The meeting was held via videoconference.

Call to Order

Chair Diego Conde called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

In Attendance

Commissioners: Chair Diego Conde; Commissioner Jan Palmer, DVM; Commissioner Charles Williamson

Excused

Vice Chair Steve O'Hagan

Staff

Executive Director Jack McGrail; Catriona McCracken, Assistant Attorney General

Agenda Items

Approvals:

Action: Approval of the meeting agenda, amended to correct citations for executive session to ORS 192-355(1) and 192-660(2)(f)

Moved by: Commissioner Charles Williamson

Seconded: Commissioner Jan Palmer

Vote: Commissioners Conde, Palmer and Williamson voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (3:0).

Action: Approval of the minutes from the Jan. 21, 2021, ORC meeting

Moved by: Commissioner Charles Williamson

Seconded: Commissioner Jan Palmer

Vote: Commissioners Conde, Palmer and Williamson voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (3:0).

Old Business:

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director McGrail reported that the Commission's proposed legislation on sports betting has not been scheduled for a hearing. Although the legislation is important and would help the industry, he stated, it is more important to focus on legislation that would help get The Flying Lark and historic horseracing up and running in Grants Pass.

He reported that the Commission is reviewing problems with Truesdail (ALS) laboratories and the significant delays in getting test results. The agency will have more to share on the topic in coming months.

Proposed changes to the crop rules will be filed this week, with the Commission adopting the ARCI model rule. A rules hearing is scheduled for April 15, and public comment will be collected through the close of that hearing. Director McGrail said he has asked Darrell Haire of the Jockeys Guild to publicize the rule to the jockeys, and the information should also be disseminated through Grants Pass Downs and the Oregon Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, so jockeys, trainers, and owners are all aware of it.

Representatives of the summer fairs, Grants Pass Downs, and industry groups met this week via videoconference, Director McGrail reported. The good news is all the fairs really want to run this summer and are cautiously optimistic they can do so, with COVID protocols in place and improvement in COVID numbers. He noted that Prineville and Union remain in the "extreme" risk category, while Tillamook and Harney counties are lower risk.

The fairs discussion touched on wagering technology that would allow fans to make wagers from their seats that would be treated as on-track wagers, which is important for revenue. Nate Jacob of the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show talked about cordoning off sections of the grandstand to keep fans in cohorts for social distancing. Director McGrail reported that Camy VonSeggern of Tillamook expressed concerns about security, as well as noting that some of her volunteers had indicated a reluctance to help this year because of COVID. Doug Smith of the Crooked River Roundup stated that he expects attendance limits will result in a big drop in revenue – both from admissions and sales in the whiskey tent – and CRRU will need an influx of funds, a situation that holds true for all the fairs.

Director McGrail applauded all the fairs for their commitment to horseracing and praised the creative suggestions put forth. He asked representatives to submit information about funding in time for the Budget Subcommittee to review it next month.

Director McGrail noted that Chief Investigator Katrina Robson has resigned, effective this week, and the Commission will fill that position in coming weeks. Deputy State Steward Jim Smith has retired. The Commission has several leads for both positions and may be able to fill them without going through a full recruitment, he stated.

He added that the Commission is scheduled for a budget hearing March 24 before the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Development.

Grants Pass Downs (GPD) Report

Kendra Lellis, GPD vice president, reported that there was a hearing for Senate Bill 165 on historic horseracing yesterday, and it went smoothly, with no questions or expressed concerns. She thanked those who sent letters in support of the bill. Another meeting will be scheduled.

Rod Lowe, GPD chief operating officer, gave a construction update. Four tack rooms have been added, and work on other tack rooms is finished. Manure bins have been fixed or replaced. The 32 stalls that were rented last year are being replaced with new stalls in the “Canyonville” area. An additional 80 stalls are coming; they will be installed on another property, pending final zoning in April. Work has begun on the chute extension and will be finished by the time races begin.

Randy Evers, GPD president, reported that the OTBs exceeded \$1 million in wagering in January. February is always a quiet month, he explained, and last week’s ice storms knocked wagering back further, but he expects it to pick up in March with Kentucky Derby prep races. The OTBs, which have been closed because of COVID restrictions, are starting to reopen, Mr. Evers noted; those in Portland are limited to 25% of capacity. Two new OTBs will be open by April at bowling alleys Eugene and Roseburg, bringing the total to 11. Mr. Evers added that GPD is in discussion with a couple of tribal casinos about placing OTBs in their facilities.

New Business:

Review and possible approval of Form A for Eastern Oregon Livestock Show (EOLS)

Director McGrail noted that the application is for the EOLS’s regular dates, June 11-13, subject to the meet receiving approval to run from county and health officials.

Action: Approve Form A for Eastern Oregon Livestock Show

Moved by: Commissioner Charles Williamson

Seconded: Commission Jan Palmer

Vote: Commissioners Conde, Palmer and Williamson voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (3:0).

Other Business as May Properly Come Before the Commission:

None

Public Comment:

Leah Nelson of the Oregon Quarter Horse Racing Association, asked for clarification on the EOLS dates. Director McGrail stated they were June 11-13, with post times of 4 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. Saturday, and 1:45 p.m. Sunday.

Contested Cases:

None

Confirmation of next meeting:

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. March 18, 2020, via videoconference.

Executive Session:

The Commission went into Executive Session at 1:56 p.m. pursuant to ORS 192.355(1) and 192.660(2)(f) to discuss possible litigation. The Commission emerged from Executive Session at 2:07 p.m.

Adjournment:

Action: Adjourn meeting

Moved by: Commissioner Charles Williamson

Seconded: Vice Chair Steven O'Hagan

Vote: Commissioners Conde, Palmer and Williamson voted AYE, and the motion carried unanimously (3:0).

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:09 p.m.