



**Minutes**  
**Oregon Racing Commission**  
**Nov. 18, 2021**

**Meeting Detail**

The Oregon Racing Commission (ORC) met on Thursday, Nov. 18, 2021. 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 Steven O'Hagan; Commissioner Jan Palmer, DVM; Commissioner Charles Williamson

**Staff**

Catriona McCracken, Assistant Attorney General

**Agenda Items**

**Approvals:**

**Action:** Approval of the meeting agenda

**Moved by:** Commissioner Charles Williamson

**Seconded:** Vice Chair Steve O'Hagan

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

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

**Moved by:** Commissioner Charles Williamson

**Seconded:** Vice Chair Steve O'Hagan

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

**Old Business:**

**Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director McGrail was excused from the meeting due to a family emergency. Chair Conde presented his report.

Chair Conde reported that the executive director encouraged people to go to the website for the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority ([www.hisaus.org](http://www.hisaus.org)), review the rules and submit public comments by Dec. 2. The act is still on track to be implemented in July 2022.

Chair Conde noted an incident at Grants Pass Downs on the last day of racing was determined to be caused by human error. (GPD representatives will give more information.) Steps have been taken to ensure it doesn't happen again.

### **Grants Pass Downs (GPD) Report**

Randy Evers, GPD president, reported that overall, the meet went well. The biggest challenge was cold and rainy weather, forcing cancellation of some races (most of which were subsequently made up) and 10 training days. The track needs to do work on the drainage in the chute, he stated, noting that the oval was good.

Attendance was down about 20 percent compared to last year, which Mr. Evers attributed to the cold weather, competition with televised sports, and COVID continuing to keep people at home.

Mr. Evers explained that on the final night of racing, the lights went out during a race. No horses were injured; two jockeys went to the hospital with minor injuries, he stated. He added that human error was to blame and systems will be put in place by spring to prevent a recurrence.

The jockey colony was good, with several new riders, he stated, and at the peak, a record 470 horses were on the grounds. Handle was about the same as at the spring meet, averaging \$400,000 daily, and purses averaged \$75,000 daily, up about 13 percent over the spring. Starters averaged seven horses per race, down slightly from the spring meet, which Mr. Evers attributed to track conditions/scratches.

Social media is growing, he noted, with the GPD website receiving 30,000 hits per month, and the number of Facebook friends up 47 percent. Of that number, 62 percent are women, perhaps reflecting the success of women trainers and jockeys at the meet. Activity on Instagram and Twitter accounts is also up about 20 percent over last year.

Mr. Evers noted that the fall meet received almost \$100,000 in sponsorships, and mentioned the meet's promotional merchandise and the popularity of special events including Oktoberfest, fan appreciation night and a tribute to the late Eduardo Gutierrez Sosa. He noted that management had received overwhelming support regarding cancellation of races due to bad weather – people appreciated the concern for safety.

Mr. Evers added the track had some problems with fractional times, which they plan to fix by the spring meet. Jockey injuries were few: a broken toe and some bruised ribs.

### **New Business**

None

### **Other Business as May Properly Come Before the Commission**

None

**Public Comment:**

Speaking on behalf of the Oregon Horsemen’s Benevolent and Protective Association (OHBPA), Randy Boden urged the Commission to move ahead with licensing The Flying Lark. He noted that he has been involved in Oregon horse racing since 2008, and the industry’s biggest need is continuity. He praised Travis Boersma’s contribution to the industry in the form of improvements to the Grants Pass track and contributions to purses. Noting that historic horseracing (HHR) is a critical component in saving Oregon racing, he added that racing will not survive here unless the last piece is in place – The Flying Lark.

Dave Nelson, representing the Oregon Quarter Horse Racing Association (OQHRA), also asked the Commission to move forward with licensing The Flying Lark. A lobbyist for Portland Meadows from 1976-2006, Mr. Nelson briefly summarized the gaming landscape in Oregon. He reported the number of “screen game” (video poker, video slot) machines in Oregon has gone from none in 1991 (the year video poker was approved), to 12,000 in 1997, to an estimated 30,000 now. Parimutuel handle from 1991 to 1997 was \$120,000 million; by 2003, that had dropped to \$70 million – half of what it had been before the growth of video games.

Mr. Nelson cited the findings of a subsequent task force on gaming that found the horse racing industry provided economic value to the state, steady employment, entertainment value, was well regulated, and a nonpolluting industry. At the time, it contributed \$3.5 million to the general fund in the biennium.

Mr. Nelson noted that HHR is not new in Oregon – both Portland Meadows and Multnomah Greyhound Park had them. Legislation passed in 2013 clarified the machines’ standing. The Flying Lark, he added, is the industry using its own product to supplement revenue for people in the industry. He added that saying 250 machines at The Flying Lark would be a threat to the 30,000 already in play is “nuts” and asked the Commission to issue a license for The Flying Lark to begin operation as quickly as possible.

**Contested Cases:**

None

**Confirmation of next meeting:**

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Dec. 16, 2021, via videoconference.

**Adjournment:**

**Action:** Adjourn meeting

**Moved by:** Vice Chair Steven O’Hagan

**Seconded:** Commissioner Jan Palmer, DVM

**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 1:58 p.m.