

**ALLEGANY COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

August 24, 2022

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chairman Philip G. Stockin.

LEGISLATORS PRESENT: G. Barnes, J. Burdick, A. Cyr, K. Demick, D. Fanton, G. Hanchett, B. Harris, S. Havey, D. Healy, J. Ricci, J. Ricketts-Swales, P. Stockin (Absent: P. Curran, D. Root, J. Rumfelt)

OTHERS PRESENT: T. Boyde, A. Carrow, S. Decker, K. Hooker, C. Jones, C. Knapp, B. Riehle, T. Ross, (H. Hurd, D. Jennings, and other Allegany County Agricultural Society Members)

Allegany County Agricultural Society

Chairman Stockin welcomed Harry Hurd, David Jennings, and other members of the Allegany County Agricultural Society to discuss the Allegany County Fairgrounds and some of the repairs that are needed. Allegany County Agricultural Society President Harry Hurd thanked the Board for inviting them and remarked at how much they've enjoyed having the Board of Legislators hold a meeting at the Allegany County Fair for the last several years. Mr. Hurd stated that he's been an Allegany County Agricultural Society member for 20-25 years. He distributed a report showing the usage of the Fairgrounds not just during Fair week, but throughout the year. The report included a list of ten projects that they would like to complete, some of the items on the list being urgent needs due to safety concerns.

- Paving driveways and walkways
- Gas line replacement
- Water line replacement
- Electrical upgrades
- A new restroom and septic system
- Additional parking
- Additional bleachers for seating in grandstand area
- Heavy equipment – loader and roller
- Paint – animal barn roofs
- Concrete – dumpster area pad

Mr. Hurd stated over 23,000 people attended the Fair this year. He noted that they give out quite a few exhibitors passes, so not all attendees are paid admissions. There are other groups who use the fairgrounds throughout the year; some of those groups pay rent for use of the facility, others use it for free. Chairman Stockin asked how the attendance this year compared to previous years. Mr. Hurd stated it was one of our

highest attendance rates. He indicated that the 2021 Allegany County Fair had the highest attendance record.

Mr. Hurd went on to discuss some of the repairs that are needed, saying that the Allegany County Agricultural Society is not able to afford all of these repairs. One of the biggest issues is that the driveways need paving. Additionally, some of the walkways have been changed and need to be paved. Inspections that were done prior to the Fair resulted in a list of additional repairs that need to be made. He talked about the need for upgrades to the restrooms as well as the need for additional parking. Mr. Hurd stated that the grandstand is in pretty good shape and noted that it is considered a historic building, however they'd like additional seating. Legislator Hanchett asked Mr. Hurd how much land they are hoping to purchase in order to expand the parking area. Mr. Hurd stated they would like to purchase 2-3 acres.

Legislator Barnes stated he's in favor of the County making a sizable contribution to the Agricultural Society. He's visited other fairs to see how their facilities compare. He attended the Cattaraugus County Fair and stated that their grandstand area is very nice, and they are able to hold events that bring in a large number of people. Legislator Barnes stated that according to the Olean Times Herald, attendance at the Cattaraugus County Fair this year was over 100,000. He remarked on the poor condition of our fairground's stage and grandstand area and feels that vast improvements need to be made. Mr. Hurd stated that the Allegany County Fair had good entertainment for a number of years, but they lost too much money. They had to place 1,000 chairs on the racetrack in order to accommodate people.

Legislator Healy asked if the Cattaraugus County Fair Board owns the fairgrounds where the fair is held in Little Valley, and he wondered if that's the model for most fairs. Mr. Hurd stated that most fairgrounds are owned by an agricultural society. Legislator Healy stated that he's in favor of helping but would like to see it be part of a larger economic development plan. The fairgrounds are a perfect location right off from Interstate 86.

Legislator Ricci asked how much bleacher space could be purchased for \$20,000. Mr. Hurd stated that would probably buy bleachers to seat around 200 people. Mr. Hurd agreed that improvements should be made to the seating in the grandstand area.

Legislator Barnes suggested someone should put together a plan for improvements to the fairgrounds; a plan that could possibly be contributed to over the years. Mr. Barnes mentioned the possibility of spending some of the ARPA (American Relief Plan Act) funds on this. Legislator Harris stated that he gets the impression that there is universal support by the Legislators to support the fairgrounds, but there's probably wide variation on the amount to offer. He also noted that although there's a lot of ARPA money, there are limitations on how it's spent and there are a lot of other things to look at beyond the fairgrounds. He does think the Board could support the must-do projects. County Administrator Knapp agreed with some of the suggestions that were made and stated that the ARPA funds could be used to hire a consultant to help with planning for the fairgrounds. Legislator Harris stated that he does have a couple of apprehensions. Some taxpayers might not agree with using taxpayer funds to improve

private properties. Also, it's difficult to invest a lot of money into property that's only used a small portion of the year. Legislator Ricketts-Swales suggested asking people to donate money to the Agricultural Society when planning their estate. She also wondered if any schools or other organizations could donate bleachers. Mr. Hurd stated that some of their bleachers are ones that have been donated by schools. He said that borrowing bleachers is more difficult because it's difficult to move them.

Legislator Havey stated that he feels a smart use of the ARPA funds would be to do some of the more urgent projects such as paving. He thinks hiring a consultant would be a good investment.

Legislator Demick stated that he recently walked the grounds and measured things to get an estimate for the cost of paving. He suggested it would cost around \$230,000. He also commented on the equipment needs during the Fair. Mr. Hurd remarked that they were no longer able to borrow County equipment during the Fair due to insurance and union issues. Legislator Demick said he would look into that; there's got to be a way around that. Legislator Demick agreed that hiring a consultant who can put a plan together would be helpful. We need a 5–10-year plan, and a consultant could estimate costs for different projects.

Legislator Cyr thanked the Agricultural Society for all they do and offered his support.

Allegheny County Agricultural Society Vice President David Jennings stated that he agrees there's planning that needs to be done, but there are things on their project list that can't be delayed. He said there is paving that needs to be milled out soon; if they wait any longer there's going to be more that needs to be milled. He also remarked on gas and water lines that have leaks. He estimates they lost 5,000 gallons of water due to the water line leak during the Fair. He also noted the Health Department inspection brought up things that need to be repaired before next year.

Legislator Fanton suggested focusing on the immediate needs. The needs probably total around \$400,000, which is something he's comfortable with.

Legislator Harris asked what the next steps are. County Administrator Knapp stated the Board needs to decide what they want to do. We can work with the Agricultural Society to come up with estimates. We also need to look at ARPA guidelines to see what's required for bidding and procurement. She suggested the Administrative Team could work with the Agricultural Society on coming up with estimates and how we can go about funding these projects. County Attorney Allison Carrow added that money can be given to the Agricultural Society but if we are going to help in other ways, we have to be sure to abide by our own procurement policies.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m. on a motion by Legislator Cyr, seconded by Legislator Havey, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah M. Decker, Journal Clerk
Allegany County Board of Legislators