



**Pima County Fair Horse Racing Commission Meeting**  
**February 8, 2017**  
**Draft Minutes**

**Present:**

Commissioners:

- Zulema (Sue) Echerivel, District 1
- Tim Kelly, District 3
- John Ochoa, District 4
- Geronimo Ramirez, Jr. District 5

County Liaison:

- Catherine Strickland, Pima County Liaison

Meeting called to order by Chair Ramirez welcoming fellow commissioners for joining him in the third meeting of this new commission at 5:30pm.

**Approval of November 30, 2016 Minutes**

First order of business was to approve the November 30<sup>th</sup> minutes. Motion was made by Commissioner Echerivel and seconded by Commissioner Kelly. Motion passed.

**Update on Pima County Fair Dates to be run at Rillito Race Track**

Chair Ramirez asked about the race dates for February 11-12<sup>th</sup>. Asked Jaye Wells of Rillito Park Foundation for an update. He shared that per tomorrow's Arizona Racing Commission Meeting, the Feb. 11-12 and Mar. 18-19 races are expected to be approved as the Pima County Fair Horse Racing weekends. The decision to choose the first and last weekends of the meet was strategic—the first to allow the Horseman's to bring in their horses in one work and the last weekend to be promoted as the Pima County Fair Racing weekend to feature other fair activities and draw an extended crowd as it's traditionally the largest purse weekend.

Mr. Wells said that the approval of these dates should just be a formality, but noted that the owner of Turf Paradise, Jerry Simms, has recently lobbied the state commissioners of the AZ Department of Gaming (ADG) to suspend all fair racing contracts and table all votes. That blanket request covers Rillito but their fair racing dates are a separate item from the other fair racing dates he has objected to so hopefully they won't be affected. Mr. Wells explained that this came about due to funding losses associated with the law that reads that Fairs can sell a racing date to a commercial track and in return the taxes that would go to ADG are instead diverted as a goodwill donation from the commercial racetrack to the fair commission instead of funding the ADG.

Jaye Wells understands the concern of Turf Paradise and their shortcoming to the Revenue Tax Association (RTA) and feels that they will need to figure out how to support racing. Mr. Wells will attend tomorrow's Racing Commission meeting and his position will be that it doesn't affect Rillito as they have a responsibility to get horse racing going and to promote the importance of it. Mr. Wells said that the Commission should proceed as if these are the approved fair dates but will know for certain tomorrow.

Mr. Wells was excited to share that since the Pima County Board of Supervisors vote for a four-year extension on the contract, the Rillito Foundation has raised more pre-race money than ever before. The first weekend is basically sold out already.

Mike Weiss shared that Roberts Communication will be streaming the races nationwide in 60 outlets. The new student program with race track industry program involves 25 university students running all parts of the operation. Mr. Weiss struck a deal with the Paulick Report to study the program and get a sense for how the program impacts these students' careers.

Mr. Wells also shared that the post time on March 3<sup>rd</sup> was moved up from 3pm to 2:30pm to accommodate ADG's provision that at least 7 races must occur before sunset. On March 17<sup>th</sup> they will be able to do a test with the lights at night which will help them know how they can expand racing and hopefully increase revenue.

### **Liquor License and sales update**

Chair Ramirez gave an update that the liquor license agent transfer was resubmitted last month for the third time and he is still waiting to receive it.

### **Pima County Fair Dates Pari-Mutual update**

Mr. Wells said they are required to send in their attendance numbers and revenue about 10 days after the race occurs. The first race will cost \$1,000 per the fair racing sales agreement.

For transparency, Chair Ramirez wants to see all the numbers as soon as possible to know the purse from each race. Mr. Wells said they have to post the numbers each day as soon as they are known.

### **Paramedic/Ambulance requirements for Pima County Fair race dates**

Mike Weiss explained that we are up to code and have been inspected by ADG. He has worked with the County to figure out a route and signage for the ambulance in case of emergency.

The EMT and paramedics are on site to assist until the fire station ambulance arrives. Last year's delay occurred to the entrance via the main road so the new entrance will provide a better way in and out. The County has removed all locks to accommodate ease of access. Per statute the racing should cease until a new ambulance is on property should one be called away.

Chair Ramirez will talk to Greg Styles of ADG to figure out who will be staffing the onsite EMTs.

### **Establishing Bank Account for Pima County Fair Horse Racing Commission**

Chair Ramirez requested assistance from the County to set up a bank account for the Commission. It was determined that as a private LLC, the Fair Horse Racing Commission is able to establish a bank account on their own.

### **Election of PCFHRC Secretary**

Chair Ramirez explained that it was necessary to name a secretary for the license application. He would like to elect a secretary by the next meet. Ronny Ryan shared that he believes Supervisor Valadez will appoint someone from District 2 in the next two weeks, thus Chair Ramirez made a motion and Commissioner Ochoa seconded to wait until the next Commission meeting to name one. For now, Chair Ramirez offered to list himself as the Commission Secretary.

## **Membership with the Arizona Counties Racing Association (ACRA)**

Chair Ramirez will attend tomorrow's meeting and can give the Commission an update by the next meeting. He emphasized that Pima County needs to be involved to keep things going and volunteered to be the designated representative on behalf of the Commission.

Joann diFilippo followed this up with a request on behalf of the former Chair of ACRA, to have someone from the Commission join the recently formed legislative action committee of the ACRA, which has been very active in Phoenix. Chair Ramirez volunteered himself for the time being.

## **New Business**

Jaye Wells explained that he will be getting a million-dollar grant, the first quarter (\$250,000) to come by April 2017, to go towards operations and the construction of the new barns. The remaining three quarters will come in each successive year. He expressed his appreciation for the Market Foundation as they essentially gave the Pima County Board of Supervisors the financial confidence to move forward with this grant and associated projects. The bulk of the improvements are for horseracing, not soccer.

Mr. Wells is optimistic that the Rillito Foundation will eventually support itself, especially once night racing gets going. Fall of 2018 will see the first check (\$200,000) to the County. Last payment due Fall 2021, for \$300,000, which won't occur unless another contract extension is granted. This is giving them a chance to succeed which is what they have asked for. So far sales and sponsorships are strong.

## **Call to the Public**

The Commissioners were asked to conduct their contracts more publically. Chair Ramirez agreed that the next time there would be better communication but felt everything had to be done so quickly this time around due to the unfortunate passing of former Chair, Forrest Metz.

JoAnn diFilippo spoke from her experience at the County to ask the Commission to get copies of all contracts to ratify them so that they are officially public record. Chair Ramirez said he would add this topic to the next meeting's agenda as this is an important issue to address to keep the Commission going especially as it pertains to receiving state funding one day.

Per Chair Ramirez, Commission meetings will eventually be scheduled on a reoccurring date (tentatively the last Wednesday of the month). Since Tuesday the 28<sup>th</sup> of March is the last reporting day for the races, the Commission intends to meet on Wednesday, the 29<sup>th</sup> to debrief. However, in order for Jaye Wells to provide the Commissioners with promotional materials before the meet concludes, the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Adjournment**

Commissioner Echerivel made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Kelly seconded. The meeting adjourned at 6:24pm.

These minutes are respectfully submitted by,

Catherine Strickland  
Pima County Liaison