

TERM OF COMMISSION: June Session of the May Adjourned Term

PLACE OF MEETING: Boone County Fairgrounds

PRESENT WERE: Presiding Commissioner Don Stamper
District I Commissioner Karen M. Miller
District II Commissioner Linda Vogt
Deputy County Clerk Melanie Stapleton

The public hearing was called to order by the Presiding Commissioner at 7:00pm.

Subject: (2) Public Hearing on the proposed acquisition of the Boone County Fairgrounds by Boone County

Commissioner Stamper welcomed everyone to the second public hearing on the proposed purchase of the Boone County Fairgrounds.

Commissioner Stamper gave a brief history of the Fairgrounds and overview of the proposal for the purchase of the property (See Commission minutes June 21, 1999).

Commissioner Stamper invited anyone who wished to come forward and review the Cannon & Blaylock appraisal of the property. He asked that everyone be focused in their testimony and state whether they are for or against the purchase.

Fred Parry, 120 Meadow Lane thanked the County Commission for the opportunity to be a part of the forum. He stated that the information he received at the first public hearing was very valuable. He stated that almost everyone in this room shares a number of common goals regarding the future of the Boone County Fairgrounds: (1) That the Boone County Fair continue and prosper as a an event that celebrates the agricultural roots of the community, (2) That the Boone County Fair be held on the Boone County Fairgrounds, (3) The 214 acres are an asset to the County and should be protected and preserved for future recreational uses. He stated that this is an emotional issue, "however that it is about doing the right thing for the right people in the right manner."

Fred Parry stated that the issue/proposal has been handled very poorly by the County Commission. He stated that Commissioner Stamper did not make public his intention to purchase the Fairgrounds until May 25, 1999. He stated that the first opportunity for a public hearing was two nights ago in the Ashland Senior Center. He stated that the survey conducted by the Task Force revealed that only 14% of the out-County population would support the purchase. He stated that the survey was kept private for three months and the results were downplayed.

Fred Parry stated that he was inundated with calls of support when he began to question the County Commission's possible purchase of the Fairgrounds property. He stated that the County Commission was also inundated with calls of support when they announced their intention to purchase the Fairgrounds property. He stated that as elected officials, the County Commission must act on behalf of a divided community. He asked that the County Commission seriously consider the following requests: (1) Delay the decision for a minimum of 90 days in order to formulate an operational and financial plan to deliver the most desirable results for the citizens of Boone County and the future use of the property, (2) Offer First National Bank an earnest payment in exchange for the first right of refusal on the Fairgrounds property to remove some of the immediate pressure on the Fair Board and County Commission, (3) Order a buyer's appraisal for the property to give everyone a little peace of mind and show that this is a good investment of public dollars, (4) Establish a plan for the use of the Fairgrounds.

Kay K. Roberts, 9050 S Tomlin Hill apologized for not attending the meetings that were held by the Task Force. She stated that this is a very difficult issue that is "filled with dollars, legalities, and emotions." She stated that it is prudent to consider the purchase of the property as land is

fast being swallowed up in the County. She asked the following question: Why did the County Commission not plan public hearings on this issue 6-8 months ago?

Commissioner Vogt stated that the County Commission appointed a Task Force to review the issue. She stated that the Task Force held public meetings and requested public comment repeatedly. She stated that she did not see the need for a public hearing in light of those meetings and the recommendation from the Task Force.

Kay K. Roberts asked if any of those meetings were held in Hallsville or Ashland.

Commissioner Vogt stated that the public meetings were held in the County offices at the Fairgrounds.

Commissioner Stamper stated that it had been the intention of the County Commission to hold public hearings. He stated that this was at the same time that the Citizens for Good Government came forward to request public hearings.

Kay K. Roberts stated that "bond money is cheaper than bank money." She encouraged the County Commission to allow the public to vote on the purchase of the Fairgrounds as a bond issue.

Commissioner Stamper stated that the County Commission did not feel that they wanted to go to the taxpayers and ask them to fund this proposal. He stated that they felt by using Healthcare Profitshare Funds, they could accomplish the purchase without using additional tax funds, knowing that in the future that a use could come up that would require tax dollars.

Kay K. Roberts asked if the County Commission is seeking a second appraisal.

Commissioner Stamper stated that if the County Commission decides to move forward, it intends to seek an appraisal as is customary with any real estate purchase. He stated that the appraisal (that is available for review tonight) was performed by Blaylock & Associates in September of 1998 for First National Bank.

Kay K. Roberts stated that a public vote would reveal the will of the people and it should be left up to the Fair Board as to how to handle the debt load. She stated that she believed that everyone realized what an asset to the community the Fairgrounds are, however she does not feel that it is the responsibility of the County Commission to relieve the debt on the property. She asked if anyone asked First National Bank if they were willing to sell the note.

Commissioner Stamper stated that the County Commission has not discussed the possibility of selling the note with First National Bank. He stated that this could be a possibility, if the County Commission decides to proceed.

Kay K. Roberts asked if the meetings held by the Task Force were listed as public meetings.

Commissioner Stamper stated that they were.

Kay K. Roberts thanked the County Commission for their time.

Glenda Castrop, 9150 Owens School Rd asked if the Task Force was appointed by Roger Wilson and if he was the one to get it started.

Commissioner Stamper stated that Roger Wilson was appointed by the County Commission to act as chairman of the Task Force. He also noted that there were 18 members on the Task Force.

Glenda Castrop stated that the sheet in her possession stated there were 23 members.

Commissioner Stamper clarified that some of those were ex-officio members.

Glenda Castrop stated that 17 members were from Columbia, 1 from Centralia, 2 from Sturgeon, and 1 from Ashland. She stated that there were no members from Hallsville or Harrisburg. She

stated that she did not believe that the northern district of the County was represented on the Task Force.

Commissioner Stamper stated that if you look at the physical area or where the members actually live, there is a much better representation of the County.

Glenda Castrop stated that a number of the members represented certain entities within the County such as various school boards, Boone Electric Cooperative, the Fair Board, the Boone County Regional Sewer District, etc. She asked why there some of the meetings were not held in Centralia, Harrisburg or Hallsville.

Commissioner Stamper stated that he could not answer this question. He stated that this was a question for the Task Force.

Glenda Castrop asked why one of these public hearings was not held in the northern district.

Commissioner Stamper stated that the County Commission was also concerned about the size and location of the facility.

Glenda Castrop stated that the County does not need land. She stated that they “need people to run and to use the money that is paid in taxes.” She stated that numerous people gave interest free loans to the Fair Board. She stated that she did not feel that the public was getting the whole picture on subject. She stated that she believed that this situation “is payback time to help a friend to make sure that they get the money back that has been invested in the Fairgrounds.” She stated that she has checked into this and has information on it. She stated that she could understand why the Task Force recommended the purchase of the property considering who the members are. She stated that if it is so easy to make money off of the land, then the Fair Board should handle it. She stated that “the County is not in the business to buy real estate and the tax dollars could be better spent.”

Glenda Castrop stated that if the Healthcare ProfitShare funds were used for this purchase, then the money would not be available for future projects. She stated that the County did not need to buy the Fairgrounds because they are not in the Fair business. She stated that the property should be turned over to someone that could make money on it.

Robert Alderson, 19555 Hwy 63 (Manager of Boone Electric Cooperative) stated that he would have to discuss the status of the Boone County Fairgrounds lease at BEC’s annual meeting. He stated that he wanted to straighten out the questions on the utility bills and the lease of the facility, and state his personal opinion regarding the purchase. He stated that the annual bill for utilities for the entire 214 acres is about \$55,000. He stated that the annual, utility bill for the Coliseum is about \$30,000. He stated that comments have been made to the effect that the utility bills are too high. He stated that the Coliseum is 25,000 sq ft, heated and cool by a ground pump. He stated that there is another 60,000 sq ft behind a wall that also has heating and cooling equipment. He stated that the cost for this building is pretty reasonable. He stated that the utility bills could be lowered if the use in the Coliseum was cut down to minimal.

Robert Alderson stated that the BEC lease has been discussed in the connotation that it effects the value of the building. He stated that in 1992, BEC entered into a contract to contribute \$200,000 to the facility (\$50,000 for a ground source heat pump) and the remaining \$150,000 for a 50-year lease for the Coliseum for six days a year. He stated that there are 44 years left on the lease. He stated that he did not see how the lease effects the use of the building since it is not 365 days a year. He stated that if the facility is used for a different purpose, such as an ice rink or a broom factory, then the BEC lease would effect the value of the facility.

Robert Alderson stated he feels strongly that the institution of the County Fair should continue and that the acquisition of this facility plays an important role in the continuance of the County Fair in the future. He stated that a lot of the values in the community are rural values that teach people how to live, work together, and get along in the world. He stated that the County Fair instills those values and creates a vehicle for city and County people to come together. He stated that if the viability of this facility (Coliseum) is not maintained, then it would be hard to maintain the County Fair.

Robert Alderson stated that “twenty years from now, no one will care where the money came from, however, if the County does not acquire the property there will be bricks and mortar on the property.”

Erin Magruder stated that she is a resident of Harrisburg and a member of the Hallsville 4-H Go-Getters. She stated that she wanted to speak about the impact that the facility has on her life. She stated that without the Boone County Fair she would be a different person. She stated that she is a better citizen because of 4-H, but the end goal of 4-H is to compete at the County Fair. She stated that she feels sorry for those that are not able to participate in the activities. She stated that her entire group believes that the property should be retained to continue the Boone County Fair.

Charlie Christy, 4555 Lang Dr stated that he lives in the Hallsville School District and all of his children and grandchildren either attend or graduated from Hallsville schools. He stated that he believes that the County Commission has two members that are ex-business people and have business experience. He stated that the County should own the land. He stated people have no idea what this land will be worth or how it can be used in the future. He stated that “the County would be silly to not have public ownership of this land.” He stated that the County should move toward a purchase, not with reckless abandon but with a good plan.

Waldo Palmer, 414 Alexander Ave stated that the Columbia Library Board is looking for a facility to lease for 20 months. He stated that he suggested that the Boone County Fairgrounds be rented to the Columbia Library for 20 months. He stated that a lot of the youth that solicit the library are involved in activities at the Fairgrounds. He stated that he is not totally satisfied with the Fair Board, but majority rules. He stated that all of the Fair Board members were volunteers when he participated on the Fair Board. He stated that “rent helped to pay the bills back then.” He stated that “if the parents do not help to provide a decent place for their children’s activities, then they do not have anyone to blame but themselves.”

Waldo Palmer stated that this is not the first time that the County has been involved, done work or purchased property for youth groups. He stated that he was involved in the Pinnacles Youth Park project. He stated that the County loaned the organization \$8,000 as a downpayment for the property. He stated that the County Commission’s involvement and concern for youth “is not an overnight deal.” He stated that someone has to help take care of the youth. He stated that a large jail is being built to take care of the people that are in trouble. He stated that the youth groups are trying to keep people out of places like the jail. He stated that he wanted the County to purchase the land and keep it for the use of the citizens of Boone County.

Mike Flanagan, 4004 White Pine asked that “if a private business person owned all of this land and all of these facilities, and then entered into a lease agreement with BEC and the Fair Board and was losing all of this money a year operating the facility and the private business person proposed to the County that you have until June 30 to make a decision of how much to sell the land for. Would the three of you be going through the exact same decision-making process or would you look at it totally different?” He stated that he did not know if it was good or bad that the City of Columbia purchased the property on Clinkscapes (old Fairgrounds property), but eight years later the city is still trying to figure out what to do with it.

Commissioner Vogt stated that she did not know the answers to all of Mr. Flanagan’s questions, however the difference between private and public was that this property has served the youth of Boone County. She stated that should the property be purchased, the County Commission intends to continue to use it for the youth of Boone County, allow recreational endeavors (and any other public and private endeavors that can be accomplished), and BEC to hold their annual meeting here. She also noted that she is very supportive of 4-H and its activities at the Boone County Fair.

Commissioner Miller stated that an individual in private business does develop a business plan. She stated that in government however, “you have to take advantage of opportunities that come your way.” She stated that the County has one opportunity, and they are reviewing that opportunity to see if this land can be preserved for the youth of Boone County.

Commissioner Stamper stated that if this property were privately-owned, he did not know if the County Commission would engage in this in the same way that it has. He stated that it is sort of a rural code that an adjacent landowner is usually offered an opportunity to purchase land if it is going to be sold. He stated that the County has significant acreage that borders the Fairgrounds. He stated that there have been other times where this type of situation has occurred. He gave the example of the Lake of the Woods Golf Course.

Mike Stubbs, 4701 Oakview Dr stated that Commissioner Stamper pointed out that he was the one that brought this issue to the forefront last year (during his campaign for Presiding Commissioner). He stated that he brought the issue up not to win an election, but to support the youth. He stated there are two groups of people that are ignored in society: youth and seniors. He stated that it scares him to think of what kids of today are going through. He stated that “stopping a lot of the chaos and violence that is going on, starts with programs like 4-H, mentoring program, and volunteerism.” He stated that if the County loses the opportunity to purchase the land, then it has lost untold numbers of children in the community. He stated that if the County has the opportunity and the resources to buy the land (and he believes that both exist), then the time to purchase the property is now. He stated that the land value would only go up.

Mike Stubbs stated that he applauded all the projects that the funded by Healthcare Profitshare. He stated that he did not like to consider the ProfitShare funds as “healthcare money,” but rather as a business transaction.

Dr. Bob Kincaid, 1745 N Chapman Ln stated that he has practiced veterinary medicine for over thirty years in this community. He stated that 4-H is a great and priceless organization that needs to be preserved. He stated that anyplace that is available for people to get together and have shows should be preserved.

Dr. Bob Kincaid stated that the Boone County Fairgrounds and other facilities like it are the “meat department (that continues to lose money) of the youth grocery store of Boone County.” He stated that for years the Fair Board has run the Fairgrounds and tried to make money off of it. He asked “what good have they done this community?” He stated that everyone has profited from the loss of the Fair Board. He stated that he feels “it is high time that the citizens of Boone County stood up, shut up, and put up and let this thing be run like a business.” He stated that he would like to see the Fairgrounds run like a business and full 365 days a year. He stated that the big picture is the money that the Fairgrounds funnels into the community as a whole. He stated that this is a terrific investment and “we have not been getting behind it and playing our part.”

Betty Ruth Palmer, 904 Park DeVille Pl stated that her father, Waldo Palmer, spoke earlier. She stated that she could remember having to go along with her parents when they volunteered at the Boone County Fair. She stated that she could not see how land reproduces itself. She stated that land is a very scarce commodity. She stated that she also did not see how the County could pass up this opportunity. She stated that there are many uses for this property and she hoped that the County Commission would vote for the purchase of the property. She stated that all of the Task Force meetings were publicized because she read about them in the paper.

Otto Trachsel, 3702 Wayside Dr stated that he belonged to 4-H for thirteen and believes that it is a good organization. He asked if the County is utilizing to the best of its ability, the property that it currently owns in the area. He stated that there are a bunch of vacant fields with no ball fields or public use.

Ajay Turner, 7310 W Rogers Rd stated that he supports the County Commission and the possibility of a purchase. He stated that he is the only person in the room that would still support the County Commission if it came up with a plan wherein they had to “cough up a little operating money each year to make sure that the Boone County Fair operates.” He stated that the State of Missouri has to do that for the State Fair. He stated that it is important that the County have a place where people can congregate and have good family, wholesome fun. He stated that the goal is that this place be financially able to allow people to use it for the different recreational things that the public of Boone County deems fit.

Pat Ryan, 2600 Pebble Creek Ct stated that this is discussion about an opportunity to do something for the youth of this community. He stated that two weeks ago the city of Moberly

accepted bids on the Rockwell Park Addition. He stated that beside the normal people that are present when bids are accepted, there were 40-50 other people composed of little league teams, coaches, etc. that were wanting to know if they were really going to have the proposed site and when the league could get started. He stated that it will take eight months to build the project and it took 8-9 years to get to that point. He stated that this purchase would be for the youth of Boone County as the park in Moberly is for the youth of that community.

John Hyatt, 3422 Woodrail Terrace stated that he belongs to the Optimist' Club he stated that there all kinds of people that do a lot for the youth. He stated that most people thought that the County already owned the Fairgrounds. He stated that the Optimist' Club does support the possible purchase, but they questioned the method. He stated that they now wish the County Commission the best of luck.

Erman Call, 12355 N. Silverfork stated that he is against the purchase of the Fairgrounds for several reasons. He stated that considering the \$250,000 loss per year "it would take 7-8 years before the loss would eat the facility up." He stated that the bank would not be happy with that or very happy if he came to them and said "I want to buy this place" without a plan. He questioned the use of Healthcare ProfitShare funds for this purchase. He stated that he felt that the Healthcare ProfitShare funds were supposed to be used to address healthcare needs, like clinics etc.

Erman Call stated that he heard it mentioned that the County Commission "might shut the facility down once it is purchased." He stated that this would defeat the purpose of purchasing the facility for the youth. He stated that there are a lot of other things that go on at the Fairgrounds besides the Boone County Fair. He stated that if the facility is purchased, it would be stupid to shut it down. He stated that if purchased, the facility should be rented 365 days a year.

Dale Padit, 8200 N Hartley stated that he has a farm in the County and has daughters that participate in 4-H. He stated that this is one of the finest facilities in the State of Missouri. He stated that the County should keep the facility going and find a management team that can make a profit from it and still allow it to be rented affordably. He stated that they would be losing a great opportunity if they did not purchase this facility.

Vicki Russell, president of the Boone County Fair Board thanked everyone for coming and for the excellent input. She stated that a decision needed to be made quickly. She stated that the Fair Board has come to believe that their misfortune is a real opportunity for the County. She stated that she has tried to answer the following question: "is there any other way the County Commission could use the Healthcare ProfitShare funds to touch more residents, or serve more residents of Boone County?" She stated that she believes there is no other way. She stated that this facility serves more people from all age groups in the County than any other facility that she could imagine. She stated that the Fair Board hoped that the County Commission would consider that fact.

Vicki Russell stated that another question is: shall the County acquire the property or shall we see it go out of the realm of public use? She stated that if the property were to go out of the realm of public use, it would be highly unlikely that the property would ever be anything more than residential, commercial, or light industrial use. She stated that the Fair Board believes that the Fairgrounds is a special place that should be preserved for the future.

Commissioner Stamper recognized Otto Trachsel for additional comments.

Otto Trachsel asked the question: "Will the County Commission manage this property in a businesslike manner?" He stated that right now the condition of the courtrooms in the Courthouse is not good. He cited several examples of heating and cooling problems. He stated that there must be some kinds of problem funding the needed improvements for the HVAC system in the Courthouse.

Commissioner Stamper stated that there is no funding problem. He stated that the HVAC system in the Courthouse runs continuously by design. He stated that occasionally failures have occurred in different zones of the Courthouse that have required adjustment or repair.

Otto Trachsel stated that the system seems to be a waste of money. He stated that he feels that it should be redesigned.

Commissioner Vogt stated that she would like to address the Healthcare ProfitShare money, what it is, and how the County Commission has determined the use of those funds at this time:

The Healthcare ProfitShare money is 25% of the profit from your hospital, that comes back to you to be used for whatever purpose we decide we need to use it for. We have let that money accumulate in a fund. We cannot budget the money because we don't know how much it is going to be.

In my experience, it has been anywhere from \$0 to \$2.3 million. And so this is unbudgeted funds. We let it accumulate to around \$7 million. We looked at that [the funds] when the communities around us were asking us to support and help with projects. We made the determination that the money would be better used out in the population center, helping communities.

So we started dedicating the funds to projects in the communities like Community Centers, a track in Harrisburg, a community center in Hallsville, satellite offices along with a clinic in Centralia, sidewalks in Hartsburg and Rocheport, a track in Ashland, we paid for tornado, emergency sirens throughout the County, we have encumbered \$750,000 to work with the city of Columbia on new Health Department, supported the Peak Project, supported the Family Health Center. We have tried very hard to spread those funds throughout Boone County to help the community grow and in support of the people."

Things could change through the negotiation of the lease in 2003. If anyone has any other questions about how that money comes to the County or how the County Commission will spend it, give me a call. In my estimation of things the project (Fairgrounds) that the County Commission is looking at right now is no different than any of the other projects that the County Commission has funded with the Healthcare ProfitShare funds.

Commissioner Miller stated that she would like to clarify a couple of things. She stated that the Task Force survey only included the rural areas of Boone County and not the city of Columbia because the city was doing its own recreational survey. She stated that it was stated earlier that only 14% of the population supported what the County Commission is trying to do today. She stated that the question on the survey was:

What type of future ownership do you think would be best for the current Boone County Fairgrounds (mark one of the following options)

- (A) Boone County
- (B) Private sector developer
- (C) Joint venture between Boone County and the city of Columbia
- (D) Joint venture between Boone County and Private Sector
- (E) Joint venture between Fair Board and Boone County.

Commissioner Miller stated that 55% marked that Boone County should be involved in some capacity in the future ownership of the site. She stated that of that number, 31% said that a joint venture between Boone County and a Private sector developer would be best, 14% stated that sole ownership of the site by Boone County would be best. She stated that 6% expressed that a joint venture between Fair Board and Boone County would be best, while 4% said that a joint venture between Boone County and the city of Columbia would be best. She stated that overall 6% believed that a private developer alone would be best.

Commissioner Miller stated that if the Boone County Commission goes forward, the development would be a private/public partnership, which would pull in a majority of the funding to improve the facilities here. She stated that "it gets short-sighted when only a segment of the (survey) results are read."

Commissioner Miller also submitted two letters for the public record regarding this matter. One of the letters was from Tony Justin and Mike Dalton, both in support of the purchase. She stated that she also received a letter from a lady that stated that she was too afraid to call into the radio station today to comment. She stated that the lady's name is Edie Brent. She stated that Mrs. Brent belongs to the Community Church Quilters, which has 11 members. She stated that at the last meeting there were nine ladies in favor of the purchase of the Boone County Fairgrounds and two that were undecided.

Commissioner Stamper stated that earlier someone questioned the Boone County Commission’s authority to make this purchase. He stated that their authority was based on MO State Statute 64.325, which addresses the County authority to acquire recreational park land for said purposes as outlined. He also stated that the city of Hallsville received funds in the form of \$100,000 to acquire the Hallsville Fairgrounds. He reminded everyone that the County Commission is not proposing to be in the “Fair business.” He stated that “the County Commission has attempted to structure this arrangement so that the County does not have to increase taxes and so that the County Commission can acquire and operate the Fairgrounds out of existing revenues and generate moderate levels of revenue to support the upkeep of this facility during the transition period as we are preparing the masterplan.”

Commissioner Stamper thanked everyone for coming out. He stated that the final public hearing on this matter would be tomorrow night in the County Commission Chambers.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45pm.

Attest:

Don Stamper
Presiding Commissioner

Wendy S. Noren
Clerk of the County Commission

Karen M. Miller
District I Commissioner

Linda Vogt
District II Commissioner