

TERM OF COMMISSION: June Session of the May Adjourned Term

PLACE OF MEETING: Boone County Commission Chambers

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: (3) Public Hearing on the proposed acquisition of the Boone County Fairgrounds by Boone County**

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

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

Commissioner Vogt thanked everyone for coming and participating in the public hearing. She stated that this is "government at its best." She stated that it is wonderful when there are issues that people feel are important enough to come out and discuss.

Commissioner Vogt stated that a lot of comments have been made about the Task Force. She stated that the Task Force met every two weeks and worked very hard on these issues. She stated that not only were those meetings open, but the Task Force invited public comment.

Commissioner Vogt stated that the board members of the Task Force were: Roger Wilson, Darwin Hindman, Wendy S. Noren, Preston Bass, Lynn Berens, Hardeep Bhular, Jim De Young, Nonie Dudley, David Gill, Frank Glenn, Connie Grant, Tom Moran, Marie Pasley, Beulah Robb, David Ritchie, Simone Sorenson, Nick Wilson, Bondi Wood, and five advisors (Vicky Russell, Bob Alderson, Scott Angell, Stan Shawver, and Linda Sloan).

Commissioner Vogt stated that there was also a comment made that the northern part of the County was not well represented on the Task Force. She stated that there were nine members from the northern district and nine members from the southern district.

David Horner, 1904 Treemont Ct stated that he served on the County Commission from 1985-1988. He stated that he did not see it emphasized, until tonight, the amount of growth that is occurring in Boone County. He stated that Columbia alone is adding about 800 persons each year. He stated that the Columbia Public Schools is considering an additional school, the Boone County Jail is growing, and the Courthouse has doubled in size. He stated that this type of explosive growth puts a strain on any government unit. He stated that with this type of growth there would be a need for more land. He stated that they could either buy land now at a reasonable price or wait until later and buy land that is less desirable at an unreasonable price. He further stated that the County has, in the past, acquired land without a plan.

David Horner stated that he is not particularly enthusiastic about the use of hospital-generated funds for projects other than those that are health-related. He stated that this was his only reservation and he is strongly in support of the purchase of the land.

Dan Fischbach, 402 Himalayas Dr stated that the real question of whether this is an improper use of funds can be summoned up in two issues: (1) What funding is going to be used?, and (2) Is the price right? He stated that he asked two years ago, what procedures are in place to make sure that the money from the hospital lease (which most people concede was originally intended to be used for healthcare services) is truly spent for what the citizens of Boone County truly desire. He stated that he has concluded that there are no procedures in place. He stated that Healthcare ProfitShare funds are being used now, but down the road tax dollars would have to be spent.

Dan Fischbach stated that the second question is: Is the price right? He stated that if you look at the appraisal, a large portion of the property is tied up in buildings. He stated that if the County is going to make a capital investment in property, then the proper financial vehicle would be a revenue bond that has been voted on by the people.

Tom Schauwecker, 2606 Walter Court stated that he has had the pleasure of serving the citizens of Boone County as the County Assessor. He stated that he also serves as the vice-President of the Boone County Agricultural and Mechanical Society. He stated that there have been questions about loan guarantees. He stated that there has been one stockholder, who is also a board member who "has been willing to put his money where his mouth is." He stated that this stockholder has personally guaranteed a portion of the note. He stated that this gentleman does not want any adulation. He stated that this gentleman simply believes in preserving the agricultural heritage of Boone County. He stated that "if the County Commission does not vote to buy the Fairgrounds, then this gentleman will protect himself."

Richard Shanker, 602 S William asked: How close is the property to default and being sold on the Courthouse steps?

Commissioner Stamper stated that the Fair Board has publicly stated that if the County does not vote to buy the Fairgrounds, First National Bank will begin the proceedings the next day.

Richard Shanker: What is their interest or lien?

Commissioner Stamper stated that the notes held by First National Bank currently have a value of \$2.6 million.

Richard Shanker: So if we as the public went to the Courthouse steps, we would offer this amount and the bank would get it back?

Commissioner Stamper stated that it would take more than \$2.6 million because Boone Electric Cooperative has a note for \$241,000. He stated that the bank would propose to buy it at the Courthouse steps for the amount of the notes against it and if anyone wanted to offer more money than that, they would probably get it.

Larry Grossman, 3205 Westcreek Cir encouraged the Boone County Commission to make some alterations in their proposal. He also encouraged the County Commission to negotiate out of the Boone Electric Cooperative lease. He further noted that BEC has first position on the lease.

Commissioner Stamper stated for the public record that the \$2.6 million for the proposed purchase of the Fairgrounds was a figure reached by the County Commission and the staff at the Fairgrounds. He stated that the cost of operating the Fairgrounds is \$844 per day (in its current configuration).

Jane St John, 616 S Rollins St stated that she is a member of the Columbia Kennel Club. She stated that the Coliseum is an essential part of the Fairgrounds. She stated that the Columbia Kennel Club uses the facility one weekend a month for \$10,000 a day plus the RV parking fee. She stated that there is always something going on at the Fairgrounds. She stated that the Fairgrounds is similar to an exposition center. She stated that Boone Electric Cooperative paid money and installed the heat pump in exchange for their lease, therefore that lease should be honored.

Tim O'Connor, 505 Westmount stated that the Fairgrounds purchase is a good idea, however he does not like the idea of the Healthcare ProfitShare funds. He stated that as a pediatrician that has witnessed the shortage of space at Boone Hospital, he feels that some thought should be given to putting some of the Healthcare ProfitShare funds back into Boone Hospital.

Commissioner Stamper stated that if Boone County declined the Healthcare ProfitShare, the funds, then "it would only go to serve Barnes, Jewish, Christian, Inc.'s bottom line." He stated that if the money were donated for a capital improvement at Boone Hospital, then it would relieve BJC of the responsibility of having to fund that capital improvement.

Steve Scott, 201 Westwood stated that he supports acquiring the Fairgrounds. He stated that he does not see any sign that growth in Boone County is slowing down, therefore this property should be purchased and donated to public use. He stated that there are a lot of questions to be resolved, however he believes that this process will help to address those questions and result in the best decision being made.

Ken Midkiff, 1005 Belleview Ct stated that the subcommittee (of which he was a board member) of the Boone County Long Range Planning Committee was commissioned to review parks and recreation in the County. He stated that the subcommittee recommended that a Boone County Parks Board be established to receive and purchase real estate for a County Parks & Recreation system. He stated that the subcommittee believes that the purchase of the Fairgrounds is a good step toward establishing a comprehensive County Parks system. He stated that the subcommittee is a little concerned about the concept of "minimal use" of the Coliseum. He stated that the subcommittee believes that policies can be developed that would allow the Coliseum to pay its own way, while preventing such uses from competing with private enterprises. He encouraged the County Commission to work with the businesses that are concerned about competing uses to develop those policies and practices.

Tom Moran, 413 W Walnut St thanked Commissioner Vogt for her kind words about the Task Force. He stated that the citizens of Boone County were able to express their opinions about the purchase of the Fairgrounds through the Task Force. He stated that the Task Force voted (unanimously) for the purchase. He stated that he would like to see the property preserved as open space. He stated that he would "like to keep the land out of the hands of the greedy individuals that only want to turn a profit at the expense of the citizens of Boone County."

Stewart Foley, 1805 Chapelwood Rd stated that he currently sits on the board of the city of Columbia's Finance Advisory Committee and the Board of the Boone County Citizens for Good Government. He stated that the Boone County Citizens for Good Government is not opposed to the purchase of the Fairgrounds. He recommended that the County Commission ask the County Treasurer to produce a projected financial statement including utility costs and the projected income after the acquisition. He stated that the County should also consider the "lost revenue" (that could have been otherwise be invested) that will be spent on the purchase.

Craig Hurst, 2504 Mallard Ct stated that he is present tonight on behalf of youth sports. He stated that he is currently the president of the Youth Basketball Association and a former board member of the Columbia Diamond Council. He stated that the programs that he is involved in are not able to grow because of a lack of facilities. He stated that there are a lot of intelligent people that can solve the details of the acquisition. He stated that the Youth Basketball Association and Diamond Council would put all their effort into the efficient use of the Fairgrounds.

Amanda Jameson, 340 S Rangeline Rd stated that she is a representative of 4-H. She stated that the purpose of the Boone County Fairgrounds is the Fair. She stated that the Coliseum helps out a lot during the Fair. She stated that 4-H works hard all year in order to display their projects at the Fair. She stated that a lot of businessmen come to the Fair as well.

Walter Johnson, 503 Edgewood stated that he is not ecstatic about the source of funding for the purchase of the Fairgrounds. He stated that the funding is available however, and he could support the purchase of the Fairgrounds with Healthcare ProfitShare funds. He stated that a lot of people purchase lands without a plan and it often works out.

Greg Steinhoff, 5708 Sundance stated that he serves as a co-chair on the Mayors' Community Recreation Task Force for the city of Columbia. He stated that he is very involved as a Boone Hospital Board of Trustees member. He stated that the Boone County Fair is a very important part of Boone County that will continue. He asked though if "we would be here if the Fair Board had operated the Fairgrounds at a profit. . . and there was no debt?" He stated that this discussion is going on because the Fair Board operated at a loss and incurred debt. He stated that the County Commission now has to say "the Fair Board has gotten into this situation, . . . , how can we make this work out so it is a good deal for the citizens of Boone County (and take this off the hands of the Fair Board) to put it into the community and the future of Boone County." He

stated that if he were put in this position as a businessman he would ask himself: "Am I doing the most I can to make this a responsible purchase?"

Bob Bechtold, 512 W Rockcreek stated that he is concerned about the purchase of this property. He stated that he built the Exposition Center thirteen years ago. He stated that facilities like the Coliseum and the Exposition Center are rare. He stated that running one of these kinds of facilities is very difficult. He stated that he has been ensured that the intent in this purchase is not to compete with private business and he hopes the County Commission will honor that.

Commissioner Stamper asked Bob Bechtold to state his facility's level of booking.

Bob Bechtold stated that the facility is booked approximately 51 of out 52 weekends a year.

Bob Alderson, 19555 Hwy 63N stated that Boone Electric Cooperative was the first entity to contribute money for the Coliseum. He stated that there would be "practicality issues" to address if one were considering purchasing the surrounding property separate from the Coliseum. He stated that one of the issues is that the fact that the Coliseum sits in the middle of the property. He stated that another issue is that the heating and cooling system (ground source heat pump) includes five miles of underground pipe that loops around the ten-acre parking lot.

Mal Mayse, 20 E High Point Ln stated that there are a lot of vested interests in this issue. He stated that all the groups involved have very legitimate interests. He stated however that this process seems to be driven by a banking decision. He stated that he believes that the County Commission should formulate a plan of action for after the purchase. He urged the County Commission to consider the possibility of an option that would give at least a year of additional study time. He stated that there would be a way to structure that option so that if the County elected to purchase, then it would get credit toward the purchase. He stated that the option would be something that the County Commission would be benefited by having when making its final decision.

Betty Tice, 9646 Rte N stated that she is opposed to the purchase of the property. She stated that the basis of her opposition was that even if the Fairgrounds were taken to a minimal use, it would cost approximately \$300 a day for operational costs. She stated that she also did not feel it would be fair for the County to compete with legitimate private businesses.

Steven Willey, 209 Mumford Dr stated that this is a superior project that has a lot of potential. He stated that he is bothered by a couple of things: (1) The projects that were mentioned (as purchases that took place without a plan) were projects that did not involve any further obligations in the purchase. He stated that in this particular situation, "a purchase is being made and soon afterward you have to start writing checks for the maintenance of the property and making payments." He stated that the second thing is the idea of taking the Hospital profit dollars for this purchase. He stated that "if the path for this excellent goal were better known then the taxpayers of Boone County would feel a little better."

Steve Callis, 2508 Paris Rd thanked the County Commission and the Task Force for all of its hard work on this issue. He stated that he wanted everyone to remember that the Fair Board offered this property to the County first. He stated that if this property were listed as property for sale publicly, it would be purchased very quickly. He stated that the County would never have another opportunity to purchase this property for the citizens of Boone County.

Waldo Palmer, 414 Alexander Ave stated that if the County is not going to purchase the facility with the intention of making the most money that it can and competing to the best of its ability, then the County Commission should not purchase property.

Commissioner Miller clarified that the County would not purchase the property as a governmental entity managing the Fairgrounds in competition with other private businesses.

Waldo Palmer stated that he believed that the Boone County Agricultural and Mechanical Society should run the property.

Debbie Jameson, 340 S Rangeline Rd stated that she is representing Diamond Council and 4-H. She stated that Diamond Council would be willing to financially aid any (recreational) developments of this property because of the high demand for ballfields. She stated that she is also a 4-H leader. She stated that 4-H uses the Coliseum quite a bit. She stated that the Coliseum is very important to the Boone County Fair. She stated that if Boone County does acquire the Fairgrounds, she would like to see the County allow the Boone County Fair to use the facility free of charge.

Chuck Miller, 220 S Purdy Lane stated that he is a vocational agricultural advisor at Hickman High School. He stated that he is also a co-founder of Promo-Ag, an organization that uses the Fairgrounds a lot. He stated that this community has one of the largest vocational agriculture and Future Farmers of America programs in the state of MO. He stated that a lot of business people attend the Boone County fair.

Glenda Castrop, 915 Owen School Rd stated that she spoke at the public hearing held at the Fairgrounds last night. She stated that she knew that Hallsville received \$100,000 for the Hallsville Fairgrounds. She stated however that future projects similar to this one would not occur if the Healthcare ProfitShare Funds were spent for this purchase. She stated that the Boone County Fair is a community project, therefore the County should take the money that it has and purchase just the land.

Almeta Crayton, 409 Oak St (city of Columbia Councilperson) stated that she is concerned about the source of the funding for this purchase. She stated that she is concerned a resource will be taken away from providing healthcare in Columbia and Boone County. She stated that a lot of people "are coming off the welfare roll on July 1<sup>st</sup> who will not have healthcare." She asked the County Commission to think about the people that were not present in the room who would not have adequate healthcare. She stated that those people would continue to fall through the cracks as they have been. She stated that the Boone County Fair is a good thing, however everyone should have the opportunity to participate in it.

Wayne Powell, 709 West Blvd N stated that the Fairgrounds property (land surrounding) is very needed for the recreational activities of the area youth. He also noted that the Cosmopolitan Club (of which he was a member) did have a plan when they purchased Cosmo Park. He stated that a lot of area organizations donated money for that park. He stated that there should be a proposed budget and profit/loss figures before making a purchase of this kind. He stated that he did not know "if government had any business in business."

Jack Cruise, 228 N Cedar Lake Dr stated that he learned this evening that Boone Electric Cooperative has first position on the lease. He stated that the County does need the surrounding property, but not the Coliseum. He also stated that it would be a good idea to negotiate out of the lease with BEC. He stated that he also did not realize how many miles of pipe are attached to the heating and cooling system. He stated that if the Coliseum were to be sold, then an easement should be put in place to allow access to the other acreage to ensure that the Boone County Fair could be held. He stated that the County Commission "should make a plan before it makes a stand."

Vicky Russell thanked everyone for coming out and participating in the public hearings.

Steve Glass, stated that there was a lot of talk about this purchase benefiting the city of Columbia. He questioned why the city of Columbia was not involved in the discussion of the purchase. He stated that the Boone County Fair was "held on Clinkscales without all of these nice buildings."

Commissioner Stamper asked three times if anyone else would like to speak.

There was no one else that wished to give comments.

Commissioner Stamper closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Stamper stated that people seem to think "that by utilizing the Healthcare ProfitShare funds for the purchase, it would take funds away from healthcare." He stated that these proceeds were designed to come to the County in the form of two payments (1) Lease

payment-that is deposited in the General Revenue Fund and (2) ProfitShare-which is a calculation reached by Barnes, Jewish, Christian, Inc. after all capital investment have been made in the hospital, after which, the funds are divided (50% to BJC, 50% to Board of Trustees, and 25% to Boone County). He stated that over \$7 million has come to Boone County in the form of ProfitShare. He stated that this County Commission elected to use those resources for special projects.

Commissioner Stamper stated that it has been the goal of this County Commission not to require additional tax dollars for this acquisition. He stated that during Jack Blaylock's discussion with the County Commission earlier today, it was determined that the highest and best use of the facility would be a recreational.

Commissioner Stamper stated that the County Commission would likely acquire another appraisal on the property before any acquisition.

Commissioner Stamper stated that the County Commission believes that the Coliseum could have recreational use in the future. He stated that a masterplan could identify whether or not it has an applicable recreational use.

Commissioner Stamper stated that the County Commission has been considering a draft policy of a "no-compete clause." He stated that it is the belief of the County Commission that "if it is going to engage in this, it should clarify what its role is going to be."

Commissioner Stamper stated that there are some statutory limitations on the concept of "buying time." He stated that the County is limited to a \$10,000 contribution to the Fair. He stated that at this point the County Commission does not know that the legal implications of paying for a first right-of-refusal or of making an investment that would pay interest for a year.

Commissioner Stamper stated that he has been accused of a lot of things. He stated that this issue for him is about kids that need a place to recreate.

Commissioner Vogt stated she believes a majority of the people are not against this project, but rather have concerns about how the County Commission will go about the process. She stated that the County Commission is also concerned about this, "which is why we are working so hard on the issue." She stated that the County Commission would meet again on Tuesday, June 29<sup>th</sup> to discuss the matter further.

Commissioner Stamper thanked everyone for coming out.

The public hearing adjourned at 9:50pm.

Attest:

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Don Stamper  
Presiding Commissioner

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Wendy S. Noren  
Clerk of the County Commission

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Karen M. Miller  
District I Commissioner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Linda Vogt  
District II Commissioner