



## **Cumming Country Fair & Festival Advisory Board Meeting**

*Wednesday, October 24, 2018  
Cumming City Hall  
100 Main Street – Cumming GA 30040  
6:00 p.m.*

**The mission of the Cumming Fair Advisory Board is to serve in an advisory capacity to the governing authority of the City of Cumming.**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Call to Order:** The meeting of the Cumming Country Fair & Festival Advisory Board was called to order by President Michelle Daniels at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October, 24, 2018, with the following board members present: Board President Michelle Daniels, Board Secretary Mary Helen McGruder, Catherine Amos, Russ Sorrells, Eric Bennett, Kelly Lamb, Julie Tressler and Carrie Patterson. Mayor Troy Brumbalow, City Council Member Linda Ledbetter, City Administrator Phil Higgins, Fairgrounds Director Tracy Helms, Fairgrounds Event Coordinator Donna Cruse, and Public Information Assistant Crystal Ledford were also in attendance. Several Advisory Board members were absent.

**Welcome:** Mayor Troy Brumbalow briefly welcomed everyone and thanked the Fairgrounds staff for a “remarkable job” during the Oct. 4-14, 2018 fair, calling their work “top-notch.”

**2018 Fair & Festival Event Overview:** Fairgrounds Director Tracy Helms presented an overview of the 2018 fair, noting that it was “probably the biggest fair ever.” The fair’s success is heavily determined by weather conditions and Helms noted that every night, except one, experienced great weather. He said seven of the 11 days were record-setting days, based on revenue amounts. Previous records were set in 2016, and he noted several comparisons between the 2016 fair and the 2018 event: Gate revenues were up \$95,000 over 2016; sponsorships were up \$20,000; and food vendor revenues were up approximately 10 percent. Overall revenue from the 2016 fair was

approximately \$1.2 million, and Helms anticipates that the 2018 revenue total will be approximately \$1.3 million with expenses totaling about \$500,000. Attendance was not counted this year; however, based on a formula derived using various revenue as variables, it is estimated that approximate 219,000 people attended the fair this year.

**2018 Event Feedback & Discussion:** Several board members presented input they had received from other members of the public or observations they themselves made while attending the fair. Some members noted that they felt the Trace Adkins concert was a big hit with most patrons; others commented that they felt the midway rides seemed to be cleaner and in better condition this year than some past years, with the attendants (particularly those at rides for young children) to be helpful and friendly. Board members also said they loved the additional social media presence and promotions.

Some members said they had received some negative feedback regarding the lack of Native American performers in the Cherokee Indian Village. Helms said staff made the decision to not pay for hotel rooms for the performers this year as a way to save costs; therefore, the Native performers and educators opted to only participate on weekend days. Helms estimated that the reduction saved the Fairgrounds approximately \$12,000 to \$15,000.

Among other topics touched upon during the discussion: Possibly adjusting the Midway layout to allow for better line formation at rides during busy times; increased visibility and possible addition of wares sold at the Heritage Village; increased visibility for sponsor and vendor signage, particularly vendors located inside Horton Hall; possible addition of more law enforcement officers to better direct traffic and pedestrians coming into and out of the fair; possible increase in vendor passes; increased seating throughout the grounds with “bench sponsorships”; possible additions of online ticket sales, a fireworks night, and a “fair food competition” of some sort; additional advertising in state and national publications; and implementation of a policy regarding use of golf carts.

Mayor Brumbalow mentioned an issue with VIP seating during the Trace Adkins concert, in which a Fair Advisory Board member asked several members from a large sponsor organization to vacate seats in the VIP area to allow the member’s personal guests to sit in the area. Brumbalow said he was very unhappy about that situation, and noted that next year he would like to see the VIP seating area expanded and the perhaps selling some VIP tickets to the public as a revenue generator.

Brumbalow also briefly spoke to the board about future plans to construct a pedestrian bridge over Castleberry Road from the large parking lot to Ticket Booth C, which will eliminate traffic issues in that area. He said after this project is complete, he would also like to see the Heritage Village relocated to one central area next to the cotton gin, in the current handicapped parking lot, in order to make it more of a true “village.” He believes this would increase traffic to the historical displays during the fair, as well as allow for them to be more easily used and rented out for other events throughout the

year such as a Heritage Day or Christmas Village. Board members agreed, and also discussed limiting the Heritage Village demonstrations to weekends only during the fair.

**2019 Recommendations:** Secretary Mary Helen McGruder make a list of all the recommendations that the board would likely present to the Mayor and City Council for their consideration at a future work session:

- Implementation of a golf cart policy, which would limit golf cart use to fair workers carrying out tasks such as transporting ice, food and beverages, and picking up garbage.
- Adding more VIP seating during concerts and making some of those seats available for purchase by the public.
- Additional seating with possible bench sponsorships.
- Adding a fireworks night.
- Relocating the Heritage Village to one centralized area (currently the handicapped parking lot near Ticket Booth C) and adding “pioneer vendors” who would sell handcrafted items.
- Running the Heritage Village demonstrations during weekend hours only (Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays).
- Creating some type of competition highlighting all the different fair foods.
- Adding online sales of admission tickets.
- Increasing advertising in various state and national publications.

Board President Michelle Daniels will attend a future work session of the Mayor and City Council to present the recommendations and answer any questions.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m.