



MONTANA BOARD OF HORSE RACING

Minutes of Board Meeting: ZOOM CALL

Monday - February 15, 2021 – 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS ON ZOOM CALL:

Chairman: John Hayes, Great Falls
Member: Gary Koepplin, Florence
Member: Shawn Real Bird, Hardin
Executive Secretary: Tom Tucker, Corvallis

Member: Jody Smith, Miles City
Member: Barry Stang, Helena
Member: Ralph Young, Columbus

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Vice Chairman: Dale Mahlum, Missoula

PUBLIC ON ZOOM CALL:

Robert Tooke, Kayci Loftus, Sparky Kottke, Diane Kottke, Dan Fuchs, Raleigh Swensrud, Scott Powell, Jessica Blumberg, Tom ?, John Shepherd, Beth Deganhart, Neil Peterson, John Iverson, Jeff Franklin, Dr. Kelly Manzer, Mark Baker, Ronda Wiggers, one other unidentified person

CALLED TO ORDER:

Chairman John Hayes called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. He welcomed all those on the zoom call and explained how the meeting would work. The Chairman then asked for a roll call. All board members were on the zoom call except Vice Chairman Dale Mahlum. Minutes from the November 10, 2020 meeting were reviewed. Member Young moved to accept the minutes. Member Koepplin seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Third item on the agenda was a quick review of HB-214. Representative Anderson from Great Falls has done an excellent job presenting this bill, dealing with the distribution of Advance Deposit Wagering money to owners and breeders awards. It has passed the House and working its way through the Senate. No public comments were heard on this item.

Discussion on SB-189 (Historical Horse Racing machines) was next. Tom Tucker informed the group that the Governor's Office as well as the Director of Commerce requested that the Board of Horse Racing remain neutral. Members of the board then discussed why this would come from the Governor's Office when the board of horse racing has worked so hard to get the industry back up and going. A majority of the members felt the board needed to convey to the Governor's Office and the Department of Commerce the importance of getting new revenues in continuing the comeback of horse racing in the state. Jessica Blumberg, part of the legal team at the Department of Commerce, stated she would see how to approach these concerns with the Governor and Director. It was stated that the board serves as an appointment by the Governor, but members still were concerned that their work could not be completed without financial assistance like what SB-189 could provide.

In the public comment, Dan Fuchs mentioned that the board might want to take a straw vote and pass it along. Member Stang suggested a letter to the Governor and Director. Member Koepplin also stated that a conversation with the Director might help. Jessica Blumberg will be in touch with Tom Tucker and relay the information she finds out on how to proceed regarding this matter.

Special Note: Approximately a week after the February 15 zoom meeting, the Governor's Office as well as the Department of Commerce informed the board of horse racing that both the Governor's Office and the Department of Commerce would continue to be neutral on SB-189, however, the board of horse racing could now support it.

Agenda item 7 was discussion on LC-2291 Sports Wagering as proposed by the Coin Operators of Montana. Ronda Wiggers with the Coin Operators told the board that the LC-2291 still has not been introduced due to concerns in the language of the bill. They were working out details with the other groups that are involved. She mentioned that it was still a concern by their members that the board of horse racing would be supporting SB-189 and wanting to get money from LC-2291, the sports wagering bill. Member Jody Smith stated that it was disappointing for the board to be placed in the position of deciding when the board is trying so hard to revive the horse racing industry. Member Koepplin asked how the Governor's Office feels about the sports wagering bill. Until it gets introduced, that is hard to evaluate. Ronda Wiggers again stated that the money for horse racing was put in the sports wagering bill to show support for the industry. John Iverson added that from the stand point of tavern owners, the \$600,000 to the board of horse racing is not part of the contention they have with LC-2291, the sports wagering bill.

Member Ralph Young stated that without 25-30 days of racing in Montana, the industry will never come back to where it needs to be to sustain as well as entice people to get back into raising and racing horses. Additional revenues are critical to accomplishing this goal. Other members agreed.

Additional comments came from Scott Powell that wanted to thank the board for their hard work and that hopefully new revenues can be obtained.

Dan Fuchs mentioned that the hearing for SB-189 has been moved to Thursday.

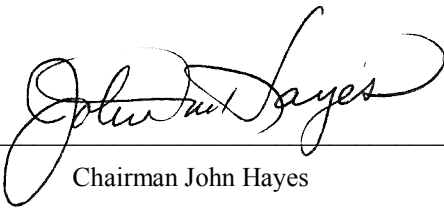
Special Note: The hearing for SB-189 before the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee is now scheduled for 9 a.m. on March 11th.

No old business was discussed.

No new business was discussed.

Member Young moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Koeplin seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 AM.


Chairman John Hayes

March 9, 2021

Date

