

Minnesota County Fair

News and Views

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President's Message

Fair season is now complete. I hope everyone did well at their fairs. I know that the heat and rain affected some of you, but overall most people still come out to be entertained and educated at the county fair. We also enjoyed the Minnesota State Fair which seemed to have another outstanding 12 days.

We are all excited about the news that the county fairs are recipients of Legacy Fund monies. The application for these grants can be found on the MN Dept. of Agriculture website and the MFCF website. We know there will be a lot of questions on this program but with the help of Emily Murphy from MN Dept. of AG and the Federation Board of Directors, we hope to make the application process as easy as possible. I want to stress that we use this money as wisely as possible to directly enhance arts access and education and to preserve and promote Minnesota's history and cultural heritage at our county fairs. We will be watched very closely and how we use these funds will dictate our funding in future years. We will be including several workshops on Legacy Funding at the convention in January.

The MFCF board is working hard to finalize the details of the annual convention in January. So, I hope you will mark January 13-15, 2012 on your calendar and plan to attend this informative and fun-filled weekend.

See you there,
Dan Grunhovd
MFCF President

Notes from the Secretary:

- Annual MFCF Convention January 13-15, 2012
Doubletree Hotel, Bloomington, MN
- E-Coli Workshop will be held Friday, January 13, 2012, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Hopefully we can achieve our goal of 100% of the counties participating, 37 counties participated in 2009.

Ag Societies Take Note: Open Meeting Law Applies to You

By Jennifer Wolf, MCIT Staff Counsel for Risk Control

A recent opinion (11-012) by the Minnesota Department of Administration, Information Policy Analysis Division (IPAD), includes county agricultural societies within the definition of “public body” under the Open Meeting Law, OML governs what actions by a public body must be taken pursuant to the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, Chap. 13D. Therefore, ag societies should now presume that they will be required to comply with open meeting requirements.

The Law

The purpose of OML is threefold. It prohibits actions from being taken at a secret meeting where it is impossible for the interested public to become fully informed concerning a public body’s decision or to detect improper influences. It assures the public’s right to be informed. It affords the public an opportunity to present its views to the public body.

The Open Meeting Law applies to:

- a state agency, board, commission or department when it is required or permitted by law to transact public business in a meeting.
- the governing body of any school district, unorganized territory, county, city, town or other public body.
- a committee, subcommittee, board, department of commission of a public body subject to the law.

The statute does not define “public body”. Courts have indicated that it is “the broadest expression for the category of government entities”. *Star Tribune Co. v. University of Minnesota Board of Regents*, 683 N. W.2d 274, 280 (Minn. 2004).

Minn. Stat. Ch. 38 authorizes the creation of county agricultural societies. Traditionally, these organizations formed as nonprofit corporations, which are private entities. Despite this fact, IPAD opined that the Dakota County Agricultural Board is an “other public body” as by the OML.

In reaching its conclusion, IPAD relied upon the fact that the ag society is linked to having a public purpose or connection, receives public monies, has eminent domain authority and a county may levy taxes specific for the ag society. Although this opinion was specific to the Dakota County Agricultural Board, the analysis would likely be applied equally to all county agricultural societies.

Such societies should familiarize themselves with the requirements of OML. The MCIT Resource Briefing “Minnesota Open Meeting Law” explains more about OML requirements. It is available at MCIT.org in the Resource Library.

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Learn More at Fair Convention

MCIT representatives will present key information about the Open Meeting Law and how county agricultural societies may be affected by the IPAD opinion at the Minnesota Federation of County Fairs convention Jan. 14 in Bloomington, Minn. MCIT’s educational session is open to all convention participants, and attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Individuals can find more information about the convention at MFCF.com/convention.htm.

Defining Leadership Qualities

On June 24, 2011, Larry Tande of Medford, Minnesota shared these words with members of the National Holstein Association as he retired from the presidency of that group. Larry has given us permission to share his words with you.

“Many of you have been members of boards or delegates to meetings of organizations, associations, or co-op boards. The dynamics of these groups, from my experience, are interesting.”

- “Invariably, one-third of the group is the ‘silent type,’ saying very little, if anything. Yet when they are called upon, they have very thoughtful contributions. Fifty percent contribute well thought out comments and have listening skills, being respectful for other comments. Ten percent talk too much and probably should increase their listening skills. Where are you?”
- “The board or committee room is the place for discussion and defining your position, not the hallway or the restroom in small groups. Compromise may be necessary for resolution. Support the majority when the decision is made.
- “Be respectful of other positions and values.
- “Be predictable; don’t ‘flip/flop’ based on the last person you talked to.
- “When assuming a leadership role as an officer or serving on a committee, follow through on meeting commitments and deadlines; be prepared.
- “Know what you don’t know’ as a board or committee member; this sounds funny, but think about it. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Seek out additional information on issues you are not familiar with or up to date on. Do your homework.
- “When determining your position on an issue, remember the member! What is best for the membership you represent? This at times may be different than what you personally feel; you are representing your membership.

Another fair season raps up in District 7 with the Lac Qui Parle Fair in Madison being the last in the State for the season. Fair weather was all over the page from perfect weather to very hot and rainy. As with all things the nicer the weather was the better life at the fair was with good weather making for some great fairs. I feel we are going to see a lot of changes in 2012 on the fair front with a lot of new ideas in the works with the new funding fairs will see. I would like to thank all the fairs that I attended for their great hospitality when I stopped during their fair. The fairs are always happy to show you their new additions to their grounds and tell how things are going for their fair.

District 7 had its Fall Meeting in Redwood Falls in mid-September with many of the fairs in the district attending. The fairs had a chance to exchange ideas that worked and didn't work this year for them. A number of speakers were on hand including Senator Dahms, Emily Murphy MDA and Dennis Baker of the MSF. The fairs were able to take a lot of great info back to their fair boards.

MFCF District 7

Steve Storck

Annual Convention January 13-15, 2012



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