

HB 2662 Testimony

The following testimony will be presented by James Fisher, Executive Director, Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation

Project Summary and Work for the 1861 Club

In 2022, the Foundation Board began discussions about how to create sources of revenue to support the operations of the Foundation. The objective is to provide a base source of revenue for the Foundation which will allow all net charitable funds raised by the Foundation to be dedicated to improving the Kansas State Fairgrounds and program funding for the Kansas State Fair. This discussion created a commitment from a small group of individuals to donate the charitable funds needed to the Foundation to build a new event venue on the Kansas State Fairgrounds. This venue would be operated and managed by the Foundation. During the Kansas State Fair, it would serve as a food, beverage, and entertainment venue. Non-fair, the venue will be available for rent for corporate events, private parties, weddings, etc., generating a base source of income for the Foundation and making more funds available for improvements to the Fairgrounds. This new event venue, currently being constructed, has been named the 1861 Club in recognition of the year Kansas became a state and is a venue that all Kansans and their guests are welcome to visit during the Kansas State Fair.

It is essential to understand that any project undertaken by the Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation to improve the Fairgrounds must first be approved by the Kansas State Fair board.

As we discuss the 1861 Club Project, it is important to realize that once it is completed, this project, like all Foundation projects, becomes the property of the Kansas State Fair.

What is the 1861 Club? It is a venue unlike any in the region and very needed in the community. With a tagline of "A Space as Grand as Your Dreams," it will be a beautiful venue for a wedding or corporate event. The 1861 Club will feature 30-foot-tall, peaked tongue and groove wood ceilings, a heavy timber laminate structure, and stone accents inside and out, with large windows for natural lighting. We invite you to check out the venue at www.1861Club.com

Work on the 1861 Club began in early 2022 with discussion by the Foundation Board and then presentations on the proposed project to the Kansas State Fair board at several of their board meetings throughout 2022. This project

would take an old, dilapidated maintenance storage building in the heart of the fairgrounds and turn the location into an income-generating venue source. Furthermore, it would be built with private funds to benefit the State Fair.

The KSF Board approved the Foundation's request to proceed with the project. A joint committee comprised of Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation and Kansas State Fair Board members were asked to review the project plans as developed.

In early 2023, the Foundation moved forward with developing the project's plans, drawings, and timeline. With a completion date of August 15, 2024, the venue will be ready to open for the 2024 Kansas State Fair. Pre-construction work that needed to be done on the Fairgrounds was identified. This included the installation of a new electric transformer to service this area of the fairgrounds, the moving of overhead power lines, and changes in other utilities.

The first building expense by the Foundation outside of the initial payment to the General Contractor was for the electric transformer purchased in May 2023. The old structure was demolished in July 2023, with dirt work done before the 2023 Fair. The project went dormant for the last week of August and through the Fair, with the next stage of construction starting right after the Fair. At this point, orders for all the project's major components have been placed by either the general contractor or the sub-contractors. The project is currently on schedule for an August 15 completion date.