

Additional Document for Agenda Item #16 for the meeting of February 10, 2026

GENERAL BUSINESS

16. Fairgrounds Beautification and Improvement Project Update with Board Direction on Lease Renegotiation
(County Administration / Planning, Land Management & Community Enhancement)

This update provides additional documentation received after the agenda was published on February 2, 2026.

This document distributed on February 9, 2026.

Miranda Muir, Executive Director
North Florida Fair Association, Inc.
441 Paul Russell Rd.
Tallahassee, FL 32301

February 6, 2026

Leon County Board of Commissioners
301 S. Monroe St., 5th Floor
Tallahassee, FL 30301

RE: Fairgrounds Lease Agenda Item 16, February 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the County Commission,
Thank you for the opportunity to submit this response for inclusion in the public record
regarding the agenda item related to the North Florida Fairgrounds lease.

The North Florida Fair Association respectfully offers the following information to provide historical context, operational clarity, and perspective as discussions continue regarding the Fairgrounds and any potential lease considerations.

Historical Background

The North Florida Fair Association purchased approximately 142 acres in 1949 to establish a permanent home for the North Florida Fair. In 1954, the Association deeded the land to Leon County *in trust*, with the clear intent that the County Commission would hold the property for its intended purpose: the preservation and operation of the Annual North Florida Fair.

Since that time, and with the cooperation and support of the Association, several parcels have been removed from the Fairgrounds to create additional County assets that benefit the broader community, including the UF/IFAS Extension Building and Gene Cox Stadium. These decisions were made in good faith and with the understanding that the Fairgrounds would remain a cohesive and viable site for the Fair and other large-scale annual events.

Currently, the North Florida Fair Association leases approximately 109 acres of the original property. A substantial portion of this acreage is essential to hosting and supporting major annual events such as the North Florida Fair and Market Days.

Stewardship, Operations, and Financial Responsibility

Over the past ten years, the North Florida Fair Association has invested more than **\$2 million** in capital improvements to the Fairgrounds. The Association is responsible for the

general upkeep and maintenance of the buildings and grounds, including payment of all electric and water utilities.

Day-to-day operations are managed by a full-time, dedicated staff. Each year, an additional temporary workforce of more than 100 individuals supports the Annual North Florida Fair. As employees of the Association, these individuals meticulously care for the property, with all operational and maintenance funding generated through the Association's own fundraising efforts.

The North Florida Fair Association is a **501(c)(3) nonprofit organization** that is entirely self-funded and receives **no cash funding** from Leon County or the City of Tallahassee.

Community and Regional Contributions

The North Florida Fair provides significant economic, educational, and cultural benefits to Tallahassee and the greater North Florida region. In addition to the annual Fair, the Association hosts year-round events that generate tourism, support local businesses, provide family-friendly recreation, and advance agricultural and educational initiatives—all while maintaining County-owned facilities at no cost to taxpayers.

A 2025 study by Johnson Consulting found that for every \$1 invested in fairgrounds, more than \$9 is generated in economic return. On average, over 29% of the U.S. population attends a fair each year—exceeding the combined attendance of Major League Baseball and the National Football League. According to the IAFE Impacts National Report Summary (September 2025), fairs in the Southeast generate a \$6.1 billion annual economic impact. The North Florida Fair Association is proud to contribute to and amplify that impact within our community.

Recent Proposals and Associated Concerns

The Association has participated in good-faith discussions with County leadership and Blueprint and has taken part in multiple workshops focused on potential beautification and improvements to the Fairgrounds. While recent proposals *could* function from a planning perspective, they offer little to no benefit to the North Florida Fair Association.

Proposed plans would eliminate the Association's access to and oversight of nearly **62 acres** of currently leased land, forcing popular annual events to become smaller and more constrained. At a time when attendance at these events is reaching all-time records, limiting available space appears counterproductive and inconsistent with supporting thriving community gatherings.

Additionally, the loss of acreage would hinder the Association's ability to host the Annual North Florida Fair at its current scale and restrict future growth. Proposals that include County or third-party oversight of off-season rentals—particularly within a proposed new

pavilion—would directly impact a critical non-fair revenue stream that supports Fair operations and ongoing facility maintenance.

Future Vision of the North Florida Fair Association

Prior to the Blueprint initiative, the Association was actively developing an internal master plan focused on long-term building and grounds improvements. This effort was paused to engage collaboratively in the Blueprint process. Future goals include expanded facilities, the ability to host large regional events, increased economic impact, enhanced educational programming, youth engagement, and broader community outreach.

While the North Florida Fair Association has recently undergone leadership changes, our voice remains strong and our vision bold. We continue working toward creating a vibrant meeting place woven into the fabric of the Southside community. In recent years, we have strengthened partnerships with organizations such as the South City Foundation, Second Harvest Food Bank, and One Blood Tallahassee. We also continue to provide educational scholarships to area students and prioritize employing local residents for seasonal positions rather than outsourcing traveling event corporations.

In 2026, the Association will again bring large regional events to Tallahassee, including the North Florida Classic Cluster Dog Show and the Big Bend Model Railroad Association Show, while supporting the development of new events such as the North Florida Renaissance Faire and the Fuji BJJ Tallahassee Spring Championship—a nationwide martial arts competition. By improving our facilities and grounds, we aim to attract large-scale events that draw diverse audiences and contribute significantly to Tallahassee's economic vitality and cultural identity.

The North Florida Fair Association is not only prepared, but excited, to expand its role in bringing vibrant, family-friendly events to South Monroe, supporting local businesses, strengthening community ties, and creating greater opportunities for youth and agricultural education.

Position on Lease Negotiations

At this time, the North Florida Fair Association does not see value in entering into lease negotiations based on the proposals presented and remains satisfied with the current lease arrangement. Additionally, the Association respectfully requests that the County Commission consider options that would allow the Association to regain possession of the land—formally recognizing the role it has played as steward and caretaker for more than 50 years and ensuring that the Fair, its history, and its commitment to the community continue for generations to come.

The North Florida Fair Association remains committed to transparency, collaboration, and the preservation of this important community asset. We appreciate your consideration and welcome continued dialogue that honors the original intent of the land donation and supports the long-term sustainability of the Fairgrounds.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Miranda Muir".

Miranda Muir
Executive Director
North Florida Fair Association, Inc.