

June 22, 2020

J-Bouldin West, LLC  
Alison LaFayne, Manager

To: City of Lone, Parks & Recreation Commission  
Jon Hanken, City Manager

Re: Charles Howard Equestrian Park

This report covers the Ed Hughes Memorial Arena (“Arena”) and the Charles Howard Stables (“Barn”)

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

- The Lone-Ed Hughes Arena FB page is managed daily, along with the calendar and event updates. The number of followers has significantly increased. The website [www.j-bouldinwest.com](http://www.j-bouldinwest.com) contains all the necessary forms for renters, day riders, camping permits as well as a link to Howard Park Ordinances.
- The daily ride fee remains at \$10 however, riders are now limited to two horses. Additional horses are \$5. Monthly memberships are available at \$90. I do not foresee changing given the demographic of riders using the Arena.
- Arena rental is set at \$500 for a one-day weekend event, \$450 for two and \$200 to \$250 for weekday/night. All rates are negotiable if renter has additional needs that produce income.

#### ARENA and EQUIPMENT

- Arena footing has significantly improved. Overall, the prior perception of unsafe footing appears resolved and consensus is riders are satisfied. Daily maintenance is required to maintain consistency and prep for different events. Grooming takes 1-2 hrs/Ground Rework (rip and cross rip) 3-4 depending on weather. Average monthly expense ranges from \$250 to \$450 dependent on current price of fuel. Expense includes fuel/oil/greasing on tractor, water truck, water truck pump and groomer.
- The Arena alley, holding pens and livestock run were heavily packed with layers of hay, manure, and shavings from end to end. In some areas, 10-14 inches deep with areas of thick mold. Using the tractor was not possible, which required hand raking. It took 4 months to reach the original alley floor. The area is kept cleared and cleaned.
- Most Arena panels had rusted wire; baling twine or zip ties fastened. All have been removed. New policy prohibits fastening of any material unless approved. A small number of panels have been unhinged and not rehinged. Two separated to far and cannot be reattached. These panels have been chained and locked to prevent further use and keep the structure of the fencing intact. Not all arena posts are cemented. Riders tied horses to these and in some areas, horse pulled back causing the section to bow out. These posts should be concreted in to prevent further movement.

- The roping boxes need new cushions. Current cushions are torn beyond repair. All other equipment has been cleaned and maintained to working order.
- Most panels remain in good condition, apart from the center bow gate and arena alley gate. The bow gate is bent due to individuals standing or swinging on feather end and the heaving alley gate has sagged down and is difficult to open. It needs a roller wheel for easier use.  
The 10 lightweight panels (not Arena panels) are all bent or damaged, but usable for creating a short fence line, blocking roping boxes or miscellaneous use. They cannot be used for horse enclosures.  
Chains were purchased for all gates and are set to be welded to prevent theft and ensure gates can be locked. New signs are located around the arena for parking, rules, and fire lanes. Additional signs are needed.
- The office has been cleaned and is in decent order. The upstairs ceiling has leakage and needs attention. The PA system is adequate. Adding a mixer has helped with the speaker static and wiring issues. Several microphones were located, but none in working condition. Two new microphones were purchased, one wireless.  
The exterior of the office is fair; however, it will not be long before additional siding is necessary due to woodpecker storage wars. The window screens were found buried under debris and shavings in a barn stall. The downstairs now has an additional door lock due to vandalism. The upstairs contains the Defibrillator brought by the Fire Department. Four fire extinguishers were purchased. Two for the office and two for the barn.
- The two set of bleachers under the arena are in good condition. The smaller wooden bleachers have been disassembled and reused back at the Barn and for 3-sided manure bins.
- A new 10-12 Tough Shed was purchased and placed inside the Arena. Plans are to use the shed as a concession stand/office. Purchase price was \$2900 installed.
- A portion of the exterior drainage pipes running from the roof of arena down to the ground need repair. New piping was purchased to route the downspouts to the ground drains however two of the ground drains are clogged completely. During heavy rain, water pools into the arena. I have not observed any roof leakage.
- The outlets and majority of Arena light are in good working condition. 10 interior roof lights need bulb replacement, but lighting is adequate. Laser lights were purchased for timed events and attached to ceiling beams with strong magnets.

#### SURROUNDING ARENA GROUNDS

- The area outside the Arena, i.e. hillside ditch on larger parking, tree areas and ditches were also covered with manure, hay, and shavings. In conversation with renters, they admitted it was common practice and at no time did they clean the arena ground using the manure dumpster. All areas are now clean and day riders and event renters use rakes and wheelbarrows. I have seen a significant increase in participation and respect for the Arena take place over the last 11 months and two volunteers have swapped arena usage for help with brush removal and tree limbs which is an ongoing daily process.

- The 2-YD dumpster is now locked to prevent public dumping. This was a huge problem occurring several times a week filling up the dumpster. I do continue to see it happen, but now over at the soccer field.
- The warm-up pen has been enlarged removing the large boulders, dead trees, and horse pens. Day riders were using the pens daily without payment or clean-up. The build-up over the bottom rail combined with wet soil rusted off portions of each panel. They have been moved to the Barn for use.
- The large fenced area to the left of the Arena was overgrown with brush and debris and a fire hazard. US Mine assisted in the removal. This area should be used for holding livestock or overnight horse pens.
- The drainage ditch running from the soccer field along the fence and around to the highway is completely overgrown causing minor flooding and subsequently after rainfall large amount of standing water. It needs to be dugout with a backhoe and maintained thereafter.

#### BARN

- The area surrounding the Barn needs a great deal of cleaning, weed/brush removal and has a large amount of trash and debris possibly left behind by previous tenants. The area closest to the Barn has been cleared, but the outer area has steel posted and stakes placed deep in the ground, old hot wire strings, large areas of broken glass and barbed wire buried in brush and overgrowth. Until I am certain I have located all the hazards, I ask riders NOT use the back portion and caution the public against using the hillside. Without fencing it is difficult to monitor.
- The interior of the Barn has improved immensely. It previously had layers of shaving, manure and trash piled high in every stall. The rafters contained 4 10 ft long lights piled on top of each other with heavy ballasts. Unfortunately, this was the home to a rather large rat population. Now all the stall walls on the right side are gone and two large openings made to each end. This area will be eventually filled with concrete to allow for better dust control, pest population and pests control.
- The stall walls on the left side of the barn have been lowered and removed to make larger stalls. The lumber taken down was then used to repair all remaining walls and the usable stall doors taken from the outside, placed on the inside flush with the current wall. This allows for openings into the new breezeway. Eventually the wide openings on both ends will have closing doors for winter months. All stalls have large runs outside the barn using the pens that were once located near the warm-up. To repair the panels, sleeves were placed over the rusted parts and each panel will be sprayed with rust resisted paint and cemented in for sturdiness. Nothing either at the Arena or the Barn is being disposed of if it can be used. I hope to retain as much history and integrity of the Barn as possible. I have received positive feedback from the community and requests to set a date for a barn raising party from family members who were instrumental in building the barn.

## CURRENT BUSINESS

I have spent most of my time in the last 12 months cleaning, clearing, and repairing the Equestrian Park. Four of those months, while not under contract I focused on the Arena, which in hindsight, my resources would have been better served had they gone to the Barn to provide a steady flow of income.

I had several discussions with large event producers, and all gave the same response regarding their reason as why they do not rent the Arena. Lack of amenities. Concessions, parking, bucking chutes and available livestock and overnight horse pens. Non-Equine producers have concerns over concessions and seating. These amenities, IF not considered or completed will keep the Arena in the lower income range with bookings to small producers and events.

With the past dry winter, day rider income decreased dramatically as riders who would normally come to a covered arena were able to continue use of their home arenas. I saw a small increase for a 3-week period during heavy rainfall.

With Covid requirements, all events canceled, and deposits returned. The Arena was closed for a period of two weeks and re-opened under County guidelines. Day use remains low, however small equine events are now being booked through September and new producers of cattle events are signing on for potential monthly bookings.

To date, management has not made a profit. All income has gone into daily maintenance, cleaning supplies, repairs, upgrades, administrative cost, and lease payments. The comparison to the prior tenant is not reasonable, considering the prior tenants had established horse training/selling and cattle business in existence prior too. Moving forward the ability to maintain the monthly \$1,000 lease payment will be difficult to achieve while trying to achieve growth of events and improvements to the facility.

## PLANS

- Restore Barn to full boarding potential; expected time frame had been October.
- Concessions/Horse & Livestock pens
- Clearing of hillside for obstacle tail course
- Concrete inside Arena to improve ADA access and dust control.
- Bucking chutes/bleachers

## NON-EQUINE EVENTS

- Movie night during the summer and early fall months. Tickets, concessions, and local vendors.
- Halloween theme to coincide with Preston Castle Tours
- A monthly Farmer's market in and outside Arena with a small petting zoo and local business free of charge.

## SUMMARY

Without amenities, revenue will remain substandard compared to other arenas. Without funding, this restricts the use to small events. My out of pocket hard cost expense on improvements is \$3700. Upgrades will appeal to producers that draw in a larger rental and ticketed events. Clements arena is a good comparison. They have a large un-covered arena, triple the bleacher seating, concessions, and chutes. They currently hold several large ticketed events per year. The Arena would draw those events over mainly because its covered. I believe the decision needs to be made on exactly what the expectation is going forward regarding the Equestrian Park. Keep it small and continue with current set-up or put in place a plan to build up the facility to allow for larger ticketed events both equine and non-equine related.

The past year has allowed me to have a better understanding of how the park itself is used by the public; leading me to request the current contract be revisited for change to several conditions. A few examples, the requirement to monitor public activities and report back to authorities; as well as the maintenance and expense responsibility of brush removal deemed to be a fire hazard and mowing of picnic area grounds used by the public. These areas appear to gray the area between independent contractor and employee and deterred nearly all insurance carries from coverage due to risk and increased premium rates.