

WICOMICO EQUESTRIAN CENTER

Winterplace Park Salisbury, Maryland

Mission Statement:

To foster and enhance community interest and knowledge
in equestrian activities.

Questions that we all may have, and answers that will give you more than you asked, and are subject to change:

1. Does WEC have a barn cleaning event to keep out the cobwebs and keep it squeaky clean? *The short answer: We do not have a specific cleaning program. The Board and our facility coordinator generally keep the office up to snuff, while our maintenance person keeps the stall area clean.*

We have a “full-time” maintenance person – Gary Adkins – who is a county Recreation & Parks employee. He reports to Mark Rickards, and then to Chuck Poole. I say “full-time” because he is here permanently, but we share him with Recreation & Parks. Gary does the grass cutting, weed control, trash detail, and a host of other activities to keep WEC running and keep it beautiful. The WEC budget includes a payment to Recreation & Parks for the portion of Gary’s salary and benefits which relate to his time spent at WEC. There are times when other employee’s help as well, particularly with weed control. Therefore, while the percentage assigned to WEC of Gary’s salary is not an exact science, we probably benefit more from the help of others not on our payroll than we realize.

The Board is charged with the development and operation of WEC. To achieve that, we run horse shows and other events to raise the needed funds. Recreation & Parks provides the oversight to help us reach our goals. They also handle the “heavy lifting” – routine maintenance, turf renovation, fence installation, and construction/remodeling projects.

Our facility coordinator is Ginny Morris. The board employs her, though also technically a Recreation & Parks employee. She is our liaison to the renters, runs the Open Rides, assists with shows, and otherwise works to develop WEC. She turns in her hours for time spent, and we have a budget based on prior years’ hours. We are looking for new opportunities for Ginny to utilize her skills and develop WEC.

A variety of other maintenance activities are completed by the board – such as painting the office, repairing jumps, and painting jumps. We encourage board

members to participate and welcome your input on needs. If you have an idea, let us know. If you are willing to head it up - even better.

2. What about a Halloween show at WEC? Maybe just a fun show, for all ages, costume classes, games that sort of thing. *We'd love to have an event like that.*

Now, the rest of the story. As noted, the Board runs several events to raise funds for WEC. We'd love to have more events – spread the budget needs, increase use of the facility, etc. What we need, whenever an event is added, is someone to lead it. Not solo, but definitely a leader. Rand, Ginny and Stanley manage our current horse shows. We used to have Savvy Tournaments but the attendance and other needs of that manager caused them to be dropped. Trina, Kelley Megee and Stanley handle most of our other fundraising (Uno's, Ad Book, Billboards). Everyone on the Board contributes. Those we have named do not have the time or energy to take on a new project, but the entire Board will support a new manager. Depending on the time of year, we may also be able to allocate time from our facility coordinator to assist.

A new event does not have to be a profit generator, just not a financial black hole. Take a look at our mission statement. If the event needs a little capital and serves a purpose - okay. If it can break even and is beneficial - good. If it can make a few dollars and be beneficial – great!

3. What about holding Pony Club testing there or maybe a Pony Club rally? *We'd love to have something like that. If a Board member has the expertise to run it, read above. If not, maybe a contact to a group that would rent WEC for such an event. We have always worked with new events to find a way to make them work the first time, then both sides can analyze what will be best to keep it going.*
4. Is there still a Fall Classic at WEC or was that replaced with another fall show? *The Fall Classic was dropped from our WEC event list. We looked at the shows we were running and wanted to keep the more profitable ones. At one point, we were running four shows, then we reduced that to three, with the fall one dropped as the least profitable. Then the June show was stretched to two shows on one weekend, at first for our 10th Anniversary but the idea stuck (we found it's less work for similar profit to run two shows on one weekend rather than two shows on two Saturdays). We also still have the show in May. In 2006, we decided, to let go of our July show, but later picked it up again when the renter for that date cancelled. For 2011, we are stretching that July show to a two day event. We would prefer to have renters run shows in place of ours as that generates rental revenue for WEC without stretching our manpower as much as when we ran the show.*

Since the inception of the Wicomico Equestrian Board, before we even landed at Winterplace Park, there has been a split in opinion as to the function of the board. On paper, we are an advisory board to the Wicomico Recreation Council.

In 21st century budgeting, we are also charged with making ends meet at WEC – from maintenance to the light bill. The split has come in how to achieve the financial needs. Some see us as strictly a management group. Under that model, rental of the facility would be our main income, supplemented with less physical events like the ad book. Others see us as a working board – providing labor for projects from maintenance to running shows. We try to strike a balance and hope we can attract both types of board members. We run shows to meet a large part of our budget, but we have other projects that are not as demanding. We are also starting to mature as an organization. Now that we have a track record with our income sources, we are looking for ways to reduce the drain on some of our board resources, while maintaining financial stability. One of those shifts was seen in 2007 with the hiring of jump crews. This reduced the physical load on some members (whether it was actually moving the jumps or shuttling an increasingly sparse pool of inmate laborers). While the profit margin was reduced slightly, the board resources are drawn on less and thus will be with us longer. Hopefully.

5. Could WEC entertain the idea of something like the horse expo at Timonium?
This question hits several key points. The first is the management/leader discussed above. The second ties into our mission statement of “fostering and enhancing” – thus it would be great to re-ignite our expo, if it does not become a financial drain. We did this with varying degrees of success for a few years. With the right leader, and the right vision, it could again be an event that was successful for WEC and the equine community.

The third is a look at where WEC fits into the equine world. This applies to expos, shows, and anything else we do. We do not want to limit our vision to Wicomico County (which is partly why we have board members from other counties, Virginia, and Delaware) but we must also look at demographics. We simply do not have the population to compete with the Horse Expo at Timonium on their level, but we could do an equal or better event on our scale. We cannot compete with Commonwealth Park or PG Equestrian Center for the number of horses drawn on a given show date, but we can run shows that, entry for entry, are better in several measures (the beauty of our grass footing and well decorated jump courses being just the start). When we were considering a physical expansion that would have created a greater financial need for WEC, one of our former board members summed it up very well when she asked, “Whom are we doing this for?” Some of the members of our board answer this question differently. One view is that if we build it they will come, with more dollars for our coffers. Another view is that if we build it they may not come and we will be strapped for funds. Another view is that we are probably the finest small equestrian center within a large geographic region (dividing the world into just small and large) and that we can continue to be the finest small equestrian center, with planned growth, without taxing our board too much and without pricing ourselves out of reach of our local equestrians. Where WEC will fit is for our Board to decide as we make any decision to change our events or our facility.

6. Are there Open Rides in the fall? *There are not. We have gone back and forth on our Open Rides. When WEC first opened, we did only three or four a year. Attendance was very good at each, so we had beneficial use of the grounds and the “crowd” was a good learning experience for young horses. Then we got up to three evenings of Open Rides – Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. We found the attendance on any given evening did not warrant the time for a Board member or the facility coordinator to be here. Since 2007, we have Tuesday evening rides, which were moderately attended. Those are now only once a month, but can be increased if warranted by attendance.*

Why Tuesday? Most of our income is from shows – rentals or ours – and the set up for those begins on Wednesday. It was easier to be consistent week after week rather than another night that would not be consistent. We also have done grass ring schooling, for a small fee, when the jumps are set and there is not a show the following week. By using Tuesday, we could then move the jumps before we killed too much grass.

We’ve had some discussion about doing some weekend days as well. We always look at other schedules (equine events and Winterplace Park events) to reduce conflicts, and we consider the Parks Department needs to renovate our turf and due other maintenance. We will probably due a Saturday in the spring this year.