

NCHA Town Hall Meetings Foster Transparency

The second of three springtime National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) Town Hall meetings was held April 11 at the Will Rogers Memorial Complex during the NCHA Super Stakes. NCHA Executive Director Jim Bret Campbell hosted the meeting, which followed on the heels of a similar session at the NCHA Eastern National Championships in Jackson, Mississippi. A third meeting was planned for the NCHA Western National Championships in Denver.

"It's important to inform our members where the association is and where we currently stand," Campbell said. "We want to be sure that we give members the opportunity to know what's going on, especially with regard to major projects, to make sure that we are being perfectly transparent."

Some of the major initiatives Campbell covered during the 90 minute-long meeting were the information technology (IT) upgrades currently underway and the status of an ongoing governance review.

The IT initiative centers around the creation of a new database, nicknamed "Hub," to replace the NCHA's AS/400 system. More than 78,000 horse records, 75,000 member records and 807,000 competition records are stored on the outdated AS/400.

"We were about one circuit breaker going out from losing the whole thing when I walked into the building," Campbell reported. "Today, I can accurately report we have all of the data housed in off-site servers. We are in a much better place."

In addition to streamlining database management and improving functionality for members, the IT upgrade is also expected to allow the NCHA to pursue fresh marketing efforts. Campbell used the recently concluded Professional Golfers' Association of America Masters tournament website and smartphone app as an example of the spectator-friendly technological advances the NCHA hopes to make in the future.

"We are on time, we are on schedule and we are on budget," Campbell emphasized. "By Dec. 31 of this year, we will have completed this project with the initial investment. We've done what we've said we were going to do."

A review of the NCHA's governance is continuing under the guidance of a task force. Industry best practices are being studied and the association's current structure

Stacy Pigott



NCHA Executive Director Jim Bret Campbell addressed a small but engaged crowd at a Town Hall meeting during the NCHA Super Stakes.

is being reviewed to come up with a plan of action for the future.

Campbell also reviewed some numbers and trends that the association is focusing on for the future. Membership revenue is trending downward, and the number of NCHA affiliates is shrinking. Less than 10 years ago, there were 138 affiliates. In 2015, there were 103. Campbell paid particular attention to two other numbers that are dropping – the number of horses that won money and the entries at the regional affiliate championship shows.

"From an overall health standpoint, this is what we need to concentrate on," Campbell said, explaining that while entries at the NCHA's Triple Crown shows are up, it is a result of the same people entering more

classes, rather than a greater number of people showing. "When you take out the unduplicated competitors, what we see is the same people are showing more. We've got to have an emphasis on bringing new people in. The health of this association has to be in Florida and Washington and Idaho and Arizona and other places other than Fort Worth, Texas. That takes a community, all working and doing our part to help it happen."

Several members commented on the decline of entries at the Eastern and Western National Championship shows. Some felt shows would be better served by reinstating the qualification requirements. Otherwise, the true weekend warrior is forced to compete against limited-age horses, which some say has caused the decline in entries.

While the attendance in Fort Worth was small, they were engaged.

"They have definitely generated some good conversations," Campbell said of the first two Town Hall meetings. "I think going into the convention, we have the opportunity to really start looking forward and thinking about ways that we can improve the association. My challenge to all of our committee and our leadership is to be more forward thinking. We need to be thinking about what we can bring more people in instead of replacing them out." —S. Pigott

Four Facilities Apply to Host 2017 NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity

The National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA) has taken the next step toward selecting the host facility for the 2017 NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity, closing the request for proposal (RFP) and beginning the evaluation process after receiving bids from four locations.

In December 2015, the NRCHA announced it was seeking a community partner to host the 2017 Snaffle Bit Futurity, the association's largest premier event. More than a dozen facilities made initial contact after the public RFP announcement.

In the final reckoning, four facilities submitted a proposal by the March 1 deadline, detailing suitability and interest in hosting the Snaffle Bit Futurity. Those facilities are located in Denver;

Fort Worth, Texas; Reno, Nevada; and Scottsdale, Arizona. The NRCHA Board of Directors received the quartet of applications at its March 25 meeting in Las Vegas.

The NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity RFP outlined specific selection criteria, including: facility location and amenities; availability of incentive and sponsorship money; and reasonable access to cattle.

Over the next several months, the NRCHA board of directors will compile a detailed comparison of all four proposals, with the tentative goal of making a final decision and public announcement following its June meeting in Paso Robles, California.

"Our goal has always been to make the best choice for everyone involved – the competitor owners, sponsors and spectators," said NRCHA President Todd Bergen. "The board of directors is going forward with a detailed and careful process to ensure the host facility for the 2017 Snaffle Bit Futurity will provide a great experience." ★