

North Dakota Racing Commission Meeting
North Dakota State Capitol, Peace Garden Room
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck, ND
Thursday, January 29, 2026 – 10:30 a.m., Central Time

Dial-in

1-701- 328-0950, Meeting ID: 425442298#

or via Teams

Meeting ID: 260 597 523 783 61, Passcode: Se3dT7Zn

Minutes

Call to Order: Chairman Tracy Hanson called the meeting to order at 10:45 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Jack Schulz, Commissioner Shadd Piehl, Commissioner Mike Schmitz, Executive Director Bruce Johnson, Administrative Officer Gail Allensworth, and Legal Counsel William Woodworth

On the Phone: Chairman Tracy Hanson, and Commissioner Jessica Benson

Others Present: Jim Pettie, Zac Hoffner, Robbie Wilson, John Bubel, Leigh Backhaus, Scott Horst, Hugh Drexler, Jay Alsop, Leon Glasser, and Kenny Asplin

Others On the Phone: J. Curtis Linnell, Doug DeMontigny, William Alempijevic, and Joe Carr

AGENDA

1. **Approval of Minutes** – November 20, 2025, meeting

2. **Financial Updates**
 - a. Promotion Fund
 - b. Purse Fund
 - c. Breeders Fund
 - d. General Fund

3. **2025 Grant Reports**
 - a. ORDA
 - b. HRND
 - c. NDTA
 - d. NDQHRA
4. **2026 Promotion & Purse Fund Requests**
 - a. Conditions for Promotion & Purse Fund Requests
 - b. ORDA (Chippewa Downs)
 - c. HRND (North Dakota Horse Park)
 - d. North Dakota Thoroughbred Association
 - e. North Dakota Quarter Horse Racing Association
5. **2026 Jockey Incentive Grant**
 - a. ORDA (Chippewa Downs)
 - b. HRND (North Dakota Horse Park)
6. **Breeders Fund Report**
 - a. In-State Awards
 - b. Out-of-State Awards
7. **Marketing & Advertising Update**
 - a. 2026 Focus & Cost
 - b. Zac Hoffner Presentation
8. **Changes for 2026 Live Race Meets**
 - a. Updated Trainer & Jockey Tests
 - b. Urine Testing of All Winning Runners
 - Additional Costs
 - Upgraded Security
 - c. Alcohol & Drug Testing of Jockeys, Gate Crew & Others
 - Calculated Approach
 - Industrial Labs
9. **Thoroughbred Racing Protective Bureau**
 - a. Rebuilding NDRC/TRPB Relationship
 - b. Memorandum of Understanding
 - c. Presentation (TRPB)
10. **Next Meeting Dates and Locations**
 - a. May 21, 2026, meeting in Belcourt at the Derrick Dixon Event Center
 - b. September 17, 2026, meeting in Bismarck at the State Capitol
 - c. November 19, 2026, meeting in Bismarck at the State Capitol
11. **Any other business which may properly come before the Commission**
12. **Adjournment**

1. Approval of Minutes – November 20, 2025, meeting

Previously, all Commissioners had received a copy of the minutes to review.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schulz and seconded by Commissioner Schmitz to accept the minutes of November 20, 2025, as presented. All Commissioners voted aye and hearing no negative vote the motion passed.

2. Financial Updates

- a. Promotion Fund
- b. Purse Fund
- c. Breeders Fund
- d. General Fund

Executive Director Johnson provided an update to the Commissioners on all the Commission funds. The January 1 balances from all funds from 2023 – 2026, as well as the current balances were provided.

No motions needed.

3. 2025 Grant Reports

- a. ORDA
- b. HRND
- c. NDTA
- d. NDQHRA

Executive Director reviewed the grant requests from 2025.

No motions needed.

4. 2026 Promotion & Purse Fund Requests

- a. Conditions for Promotion & Purse Fund Requests
 - b. ORDA (Chippewa Downs)
 - c. HRND (North Dakota Horse Park)
 - d. North Dakota Thoroughbred Association
 - e. North Dakota Quarter Horse Racing Association
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- a. Conditions for Promotion & Purse Fund Requests

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Piehl to approve the conditions form for promotion and purse fund requests. Schmitz – Y, Piehl – Y, Hanson – Y, Schulz – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

c. HRND (North Dakota Horse Park)

Executive Director Johnson stated that HRND requested \$196,000 from the Purse Fund. The recommendation was \$140,000.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Benson to go with the Director's recommendation of \$140,000 from the Purse Fund to HRND. Schmitz – Y, Benson – Y, Hanson – Y, Schulz – Y, and Piehl – Y. Motion passed.

b. ORDA (Chippewa Downs)

Executive Director Johnson stated that ORDA requested \$200,000 from the Purse Fund. The recommendation was \$140,000.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Schulz to go with the Director's recommendation of \$140,000 from the Purse Fund for ORDA. Schmitz – Y, Schulz – Y, Hanson – Y, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

- d. North Dakota Thoroughbred Association
- e. North Dakota Quarter Horse Racing Association

Executive Director Johnson stated that the NDTA requested \$40,000 from the Purse Fund and the NDQHRA requested \$50,000 from the Purse Fund. The recommendation was for \$20,000 each for the NDTA and the NDQHRA.

Scott Horst, President of the NDTA, and Leon Glasser, President of the NDQHRA, both stated that they would match the funds.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Schulz to go with the Director's recommendation of \$20,000 from the Purse Fund to the NDTA and \$20,000 from the Purse Fund to the NDQHRA. Schmitz – Y, Schulz – Y, Hanson – Y, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

c. HRND (North Dakota Horse Park)

Executive Director Johnson stated that HRND requested \$200,000 from the Promotion Fund. The recommendation was \$180,000.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Chairman Hanson to go with the Director's recommendation of \$180,000 from the Promotion Fund to HRND. Schmitz – Y, Hanson – Y, Schulz – Y, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

b. ORDA (Chippewa Downs)

Executive Director stated that ORDA requested \$200,000 from the Promotion Fund. The recommendation was \$180,000.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Schulz to go with the Director's recommendation of \$180,000 from the Promotion Fund for ORDA. Schmitz – Y, Schulz – Y, Hanson – Y, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

e. North Dakota Quarter Horse Racing Association

Executive Director stated that the NDQHRA requested \$2,500 from the Promotion Fund for website enhancement and the horsemen's awards banquet.

Scott Horst, President of the NDTA, stated that they would like to retract their Promotion Fund request and said that Leon Glasser, President of the NDQHRA discussed it and they both would like to combine into just one award.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Schulz to go with the recommendation of \$5,000 from the Promotion Fund to the NDQHRA for a horsemen's banquet. Schmitz – Y, Schulz – Y, Hanson – Y, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

c. HRND (North Dakota Horse Park)

Executive Director Johnson stated that HRND requested \$25,000 from the Promotion Fund for the creation of an open stakes race for both Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horses.

Commissioner Schulz stated that he is against taking money out of the Promotion Fund for this.

No motions were made.

b. ORDA (Chippewa Downs)

Executive Director Johnson stated that ORDA requested \$25,000 from the Promotion Fund for a horsemen's incentive.

A motion was made by Chairman Hanson and seconded by Commissioner Schulz to approve \$25,000 from the Promotion Fund to ORDA for a horsemen's incentive. Hanson – Y, Schulz – Y, Schmitz – N, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

c. HRND (North Dakota Horse Park)

Executive Director stated that HRND requested \$10,000 from the Promotion Fund for the rental of a video screen for the infield. HRND would pay the other \$10,000.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schulz and seconded by Commissioner Benson to approve \$10,000 from the Promotion Fund to HRND for the rental of a video screen for the infield. Schulz – Y, Benson – Y, Hanson – Y, Piehl – Y, and Schmitz - abstained. Motion passed.

5. 2026 Jockey Incentive Grant

- a. ORDA (Chippewa Downs)
- b. HRND (North Dakota Horse Park)

b. HRND (North Dakota Horse Park)

Executive Director stated that HRND requested \$12,000 from the Promotion Fund for a jockey incentive. The recommendation was \$12,000.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Schulz to approve \$12,000 from the Promotion Fund to HRND for the jockey incentive. Schmitz – Y, Schulz – Y, Hanson – Y, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

a. ORDA (Chippewa Downs)

Executive Director Johnson stated that ORDA requested \$12,000 from the Promotion Fund for a jockey incentive. The recommendation was \$12,000.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Schulz to approve \$12,000 from the Promotion Fund to ORDA for the jockey incentive. Schmitz – Y, Schulz – Y, Hanson – Y, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

Executive Director Johnson asked Chairman Hanson to move up item #9 to be heard next.

9. Thoroughbred Racing Protective Bureau

- a. Rebuilding NDRC/TRPB Relationship
- b. Memorandum of Understanding
- c. Presentation (TRPB)

Executive Director Johnson introduced J. Curtis Linnell from the Thoroughbred Racing Protective Bureau. Mr. Linnell gave a presentation about the TRPB. The basis for the memorandum of understanding (consulting agreement) was explained.

Executive Director Johnson emphasized the importance of the memorandum of understanding agreement with the TRPB and asked for its approval. The fee is \$1,500 per month and would be payable from the Promotion Fund.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Schulz to approve \$18,000 per year from the Promotion Fund to the TRPB. Schmitz – Y, Schulz – Y, Hanson – Y, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

6. Breeders Fund Report

- a. In-State Awards
- b. Out-of-State Awards

Executive Director Johnson summarized the Breed Fund regarding the in-state and out-of-state awards that were paid out or are in the process of being paid out for 2025.

No motions needed.

7. **Marketing & Advertising Update**

- a. 2026 Focus & Cost
- b. Zac Hoffner Presentation

Executive Director Johnson introduced Zac Hoffner from WDAY-TV, who provided a marketing and advertising proposal for 2026. The Commissioners asked questions which Mr. Hoffner answered. The cost for the WDAY proposal is \$36,484.

Legal Counsel William Woodworth advised the Commission to be careful and said that the Commission should only approve the budget and then go through the procurement process.

A motion was made by Chairman Hanson and seconded by Commissioner Benson to approve a budget of \$36,484 from the Promotion Fund to the marketing and advertising campaign. Hanson – Y, Benson – Y, Piehl – Y, Schulz – Y, and Schmitz – Y. Motion passed.

8. **Changes for 2026 Live Race Meets**

- a. Updated Trainer & Jockey Tests
 - b. Urine Testing of All Winning Runners
 - Additional Costs
 - Upgraded Security
 - c. Alcohol & Drug Testing of Jockeys, Gate Crew & Others
 - Calculated Approach
 - Industrial Labs
- a. Updated Trainer & Jockey Tests

Executive Director Johnson advised the Commissioners that he along with the State Steward updated the trainer test and jockey test.

No motions needed.

- b. Urine Testing of All Winning Runners
 - Additional Costs
 - Upgraded Security

Executive Director Johnson stated that during discussions at the horsemen's meeting that adding urine testing of horses had been requested. The additional cost for the urine testing for Industrial Labs would be approximately \$8,000 more.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schulz and seconded by Commissioner Schmitz to approve urine testing of horses at the upcoming race meets and the additional cost for Industrial Labs. Schulz – Y, Schmitz – Y, Hanson – Y, Piehl – Y, and Benson – Y. Motion passed.

- c. Alcohol & Drug Testing of Jockeys, Gate Crew & Others
 - Calculated Approach
 - Industrial Labs

Executive Director Johnson explained that alcohol and drug testing may be expanded during this year's race meets.

No motions needed.

10. Next Meeting Dates and Locations

- a. May 21, 2026, meeting in Belcourt at the Derrick Dixon Event Center
- b. September 17, 2026, meeting in Bismarck at the State Capitol
- c. November 19, 2026, meeting in Bismarck at the State Capitol

11. Any other business which may properly come before the Commission

- Leigh Backhaus had some items: 1) is an ambulance needed during training times; 2) who owns the racetrack equipment; 3) do the licensed ADW's have agreements with charities that aren't horse related; 4) can the promotion fund help with OTB's; 5) what is the plan for the next Legislative session.
- Scott Horst asked about the following: 1) bute limits; 2) security at the racetracks; 3) will the grant award checks be coming out sooner; 4) condition books & breed association contributions not being clear; 5) Friday night racing; 6) legislative session plans.
- Leon Glasser thinks there should be spot checking of farms.
- Commissioner Piel – can there be a subcommittee to work on some of these items?

12. Adjournment

A motion was made by Commissioner Schmitz and seconded by Commissioner Schulz to adjourn the meeting. All voted aye and hearing no negative vote the motion passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:19 p.m.