

*Mission- To promote the diverse agricultural and cultural heritage of Marion County through active participation of its citizens.*

**Marion County Fair Board Monthly Meeting**

Board of Commissioners' Board Room

February 4, 2026 5:30 PM

**Meeting Convened:** 5:34 PM

**I. Introductions/Attendance:**

**Members:** Joe Billington, Dana Castano, Brandi Crandall, Amy Goulter-Allen, Shannon Gubbels, Greg Martin, Pam Zielinski

**Staff:** Chip Bury, Denise Clark, Laura McClellan, Sarah Coutley

**Guests:** Monica Baker, FFA; Jill Ingalls, Ingalls & Associates; Melanie McCabe, 4H; Jeff Simons, Key Volunteer applicant

**II. Public Comments-** None

**III. Approval of January 7, 2026 Summary Notes.** Pam made a motion to approve the meeting summary notes; Amy seconded. Motion passed.

**IV. Financial Report-** Dana Castano

The question was raised about the administrative charges being at 78% of the budgeted amount. Denise will look into it. Also, why there was a highlighted \$0 amount in liability insurance premiums. Answer- Denise said she had asked Eric about that. He said it had to do with an automatic highlight if he enters anything in a cell. He had put a figure in there mistakenly and then removed it.

Greg made a motion to approve the financial report as presented; Amy seconded. Motion passed.

**V. 4H/FFA Reports**

4H- Melanie

The beef weigh-in will be at noon on Sunday, February 8. Currently there are 38 kids and 47 animals planning to participate in the fair, which is an increase over last year. They are continuing to work on the video project. New student 4H enrollment is due April 1; for returning members it is January 31.

FFA- Monica

Speaking contests will be occurring Friday in Silverton.

**VI. Items of Special Interest**

OFEA Conference Basket- Greg Martin

Greg asked if we could provide a "Made in Marion" basket for the upcoming OFEA conference auction. She said that Ashley, from her office, would enjoy putting one together. Amy moved to approve budgeting \$200 towards making a basket for the conference with the money coming out of the "fair board and staff conferences" line item; Greg seconded. Motion passed.

Free Entry Passes/Credentials Policy Review- Denise Clark

Denise went over the policy and pointed out several items that needed updating. This policy originated in 2011; a lot has changed. Denise will bring the changes back to the next fair board meeting with track changes reflected.

#### VII. **Ingalls' Report-** Jill Ingalls

Jill said she had been watching for follow-up communication from the state fair meeting. At the January 9 meeting they submitted the work order which included the barn pens' layout plan. She has not heard back from the state, so she's reached out again to Darrel.

State fair has indicated how they would like the livestock pens setup for their purposes. In that way the pens would stay in place between our fair and the state fair. Melanie thinks she could adapt to make a lot of their pen requests work.

Chip asked if it would help if we sent them a letter to get them to be more responsive. Jill said not at this time as she'd like to give them more time to respond.

Melanie said she will set up an appointment with Scott to go over the state fair's layout needs next week.

#### Contracts:

- Scott has been working on the security RFP. There was a protest, so we are going back out again with a new RFP. The new one will include some cash handling tasks. Brandi wants to look at the RFP particulars for the cash handling assistance we are recommending; she suggests Dana review it also.
- Krista is also working on a portable sanitation RFP.
- Jill has requested the janitorial agreement.

Jill was asked about finding a second big name entertainment act. She responded that Casey Donahew is a "low-end national act." We want to pair him with another act if possible for Saturday night like we did last year with Ned Ledoux and Drake Milligan. She said they originally had an act in mind, however that act raised their prices. Pat is seeking another list of possible acts.

#### VIII. **February Strategic Plan Items**

*2.2.4 Explore other venues (library/mall displays, chamber press outlets, Saturday Market, First Wednesday, Iris Festival, etc.)* Jill said that these are good community connections. If a fair board member is involved, they can help with getting the information to the groups.

*2.2.5 Target chamber newsletter articles-* We want to get the message out to enter the fair and talk about the exhibitor handbook. The Chamber of Commerce sends out monthly newsletters.

*2.2.6 Create activities that draw cross-cultural participants-* Jill said that we have focused on family day that attracts multi-cultural populations and have done the Hispanic translations of our day sheets. There isn't a plan to do anything different at this time. She said we should talk about this

early on, at the annual retreat, to determine what the fair board would like to do with this. She feels to really make a difference, it will need substantial funding behind it.

3.2.9 *Present fair layout (including booths) to fair board.* Denise said that this has stayed relatively the same over the last couple of years. Jill said we may add more food booths. She said the layout changes depending on the attractions we bring in; but we have a basic site plan that doesn't change much.

4.3.4 *Update MOU with public competitions' animal groups (pygmy goats, llamas, mini herefords, etc.)* Shannon said to remove the pygmy goats listing as they aren't participating anymore. She'd also like Krista to send her any MOU's she needs to review.

#### IX. **Other**

Chip mentioned the March 26 work session with the BOC. He said we need to highlight our financial situation. If the BOC wants the same quality fair, they might have to contribute financially. The second thing to address is the state fair agreement and encouraging the BOC to be involved with that process.

Shannon expressed concern about the state fair's projected future rent costs. She said that we are not in a position to sustain that.

Other counties are hurting. After the 2026 fair, Polk County is closing their fairgrounds due to the high cost of trying to address the structural issues that need repair. They may be looking for a new home.

Jill expressed that she is not concerned about the fair's financials and doesn't think we need to seek assistance from the BOC. She said we had a "bad year" that this happens to fairs. There is a cycle of fairs, they go "up and down." She feels there are a lot of things to do to "bring the fair back around" and said, "We will ride this cycle and have a better year." We can tell the BOC we will be more cautious, reduce risks, increase revenue to turn the fair around. We do need to tell the BOC that they are needed to intervene for us with the state fair.

Brandi does not want to approach the BOC to contribute funds to the fair. She said that we've done that in the past and it's not pleasant. She feels that we are still in a position to cover all of our expenses. She feels that the BOC should be aware of the "hurdles we have in front of us." She said we shouldn't "paint it that we are on a downward trend."

Chip said we are developing a memo that goes with the work session that Shannon needs to sign off on.

Shannon said that we should accentuate the positives at the work session like the number of kids that had a successful fair.

Greg feels that the audience for Honor Day increases each year.

Everyone was encouraged to attend the work session.

Shannon asked Denise to check with the BOC to see if they realized the work session is scheduled during spring break. She would hate to see the date changed again as people need to schedule the time off from work ahead of time.

Amy said that she will be meeting with the public competition (PC) superintendents soon. She said they will be reviewing the exhibitor handbook for any needed changes. She said there will be no “sheep to shall” demonstration this year.

Denise said we will need to identify the Lego contest themes. The Hobbies superintendent is Heidi DeCoster; Amy will check with her.

Denise said that before Rebecca left she had suggested that we should continue paying prize money for the Marionberry pie contest which was previously paid for out of the BOC office. Denise said there is probably enough money in the PC petty cash account. This money is used for PC supplies and judges’ payments. The fair board agreed to pay for it. The amount paid is the same as the Dairy Women’s cheesecake contest- 1<sup>st</sup> \$50, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$25, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$15. It was suggested to increase the dollar amount. It was decided to have it remain the same for this year.

Chip asked about the status of the intercept survey. Jill responded that she will meet with Melanie to see if Melanie’s team can assist with conducting the survey.

**X. Meeting Adjourned: 6:45 PM**

**Zoom Chat**

01:18:48	Dana Castano:	Not involved in any conversations before
01:19:10	Dana Castano:	Brandi would have the best input
01:19:16	Dana Castano:	on what is needed in the contract
01:19:53	Dana Castano:	<i>Thumbs up</i>
01:42:13	Dana Castano:	That doesn't seem like enough
01:45:21	Dana Castano:	Thanks, byw