

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

August 6, 2025

Meeting Convened: 6:12 PM

I. Call to Order/Introductions

In Attendance

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

Key Volunteers: Rebecca Kauffman

Staff: Chip Bury, Community Services Economic Development Manager; Denise Clark; Kelli Weese, Community Services Department Director; William White, Risk Manager

Guests: Jill and Scott Ingalls, Ingalls and Associates; Melanie McCabe, 4H

Denise introduced Chip Bury, the new Community Services Economic Development Manager. She indicated that he will be her supervisor now instead of Kelli. Chip said he was happy to be here, that he has just come back to the states after being out of the country for 35 years working overseas.

II. Public Comments- None

III. Approval of July 9, 2025 Meeting Summary Notes- Brandi made a motion to accept the notes; Amy seconded. Motion passed.

IV. Financial Report- Denise

Denise indicated that the document before them is a "work in progress" as there are still a lot of accounts payables/receivables occurring. She has identified some line items that are over budget. She and Jill are working closely together to resolve this.

Brandi said that Universal Forest Products may consider making an in-kind donation of shavings; however, the fair would be responsible for the delivery to the fairgrounds. Denise said that there is currently an email thread with fair managers who are currently discussing free haul-out from organizers such as composters and nurseries. Scott asked Brandi to send him the Universal Forest Products contact information.

It was identified that Strolling Entertainment is also over budget. Jill explained that additional funds can come out of the "arena event" line item as that money did not end up being utilized.

Jill has several budget change adjustment forms that will be submitted at next month's fair board meeting.

It was noted that the revenue interest earnings are way up; over \$10,000 than projected. Denise noted that she checked the figure with Finance as it seemed too good to be true. They confirmed the figure is accurate.

Greg made a motion to accept the budget report as presented as a “snapshot in time” knowing that it will change; Dana seconded. Motion passed.

Security Budget Request- Jill

Jill said that the security line item is \$3,262 over budget. The remedy is to reduce the ambulance service line as that came in under budget as did gate ticket takers. The remainder (\$2858.43) can come out of carryover. She said she is hesitant to take money out of carryover when she knows there are other items in the budget that are going to come in under budget.

Amy made a motion to approve the security budget change request- reducing the ambulance service line item by \$68 and reducing the gate ticket takers line item by \$335.57. The remainder (\$2858.43) to come from carryover; Dana seconded. Motion passed.

Fair Foundation Premium Payouts- Denise

Denise said that at last month’s fair board meeting the board approved up to \$7,000 be paid out in premium money per the Fair Foundation’s (FF) request that we do a match with their funds for premiums. The FF suggested that there might be a total of \$14,000 needed this year. It turned out that the total payout was \$11,802 which was \$9808 for 4H and \$1994 for FFA. Doing a match, the fair board budget paid \$4904 in 4H premiums and \$997 in FFA premiums. She said that the FF was generous this year in doing a “match” for the FFA premiums. Previously, they have not done a match on the FFA premiums. Instead of the potential \$2,000 needed for FFA premium money as we’ve expected in the past, we paid \$997 by sharing that cost.

V. 4H/FFA Reports

4H- Melanie said that she has been out of the office a lot this past month. They are currently doing post fair “clean-up”. All of the judges have been paid. They will be having a superintendents’ meeting soon and will be receiving fair feedback.

She will also get the post fair report to Denise.

The Jr. Market Auction sales came in at \$1.2 million. These are preliminary numbers as the figure doesn’t include on-line “add-ons.” Prices were down overall; there were more small animals. She said that the prices have been so high in the past, it “was bound to happen.”

No FFA report as no representative was present.

VI. Items of Special Interest

Refund Requests

The River Church has requested a refund of \$1545 for the total amount of commercial booth fees they paid as they were asked to leave the event due to rule infractions. Amy made a motion to refund The River Church 50% of the commercial vendor fees paid which amounts to \$772. 50; Pam seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Oregon Dept. of Human Services, Silvia Buter, has requested a refund of their total booth fees (\$165.) The fair board determined their non-refundable fee is \$82.50 (50% of the total fees). Of the remainder they are eligible

for 40%; that figure is \$33. Amy made a motion to refund the Department of Human Services \$33; Brandi seconded. Motion passed.

Attendance Numbers- Brandi

Thursday was a free day. She said she received security reports that included clicker counts identifying the number of the general public attending the fair. These figures did not include those with a wristband or some other credential. They also provided counts for Gold, Gray, and Green gates.

Jill noted that the Green gate had problems as they were either letting everyone in indiscriminately or sending them away to enter at other gates. She was called several times to the gate to clarify for security who to let in.

Brandi said the total attendance on Thursday (all clickers) was 8,489 people. Removing the counts for gray and gold gates would come to 7,416. She said that there could be some isolated vendors in that number. Thursday was free and cooler in temperature. Friday (no 4H or vendors) 2,287 paid entries at the gate, does not include on-line pre-sales. Other paid gate figures- Saturday 2,922, Sunday 915. There was \$9,000 in pre-sales on-line through Afton Ticketing. Brandi said that the free day on Thursday was very popular.

It was asked how these numbers compare to previous years. Brandi did not have that information available.

It was asked, "Can't we just count the scans at the gate to get the attendance numbers?" Answer- sometimes scanners don't pick up an entry either due to user error or technology challenges with the scanning device.

Using the Afton data, Jill said they analyze the daily and hourly scans.

Clickers may not be accurate as a fairgoer can come in, leave, and come back and be counted twice.

Brandi can pull scans and bring the numbers back to the next meeting.

Denise asked that she be sent the security report Brandi is referencing and also any attendance numbers Brandi has.

Brandi would like to sit down with Jill to come up with the numbers from the Afton reports. Jill said we can pull a report on presales scanned and not scanned (those that didn't end up coming through the gates. She said that there are a lot of variables to calculating the numbers.

Brandi said the on-line pre-sales would make a difference of 1400 people; we just don't know what days they attended.

Shannon asked that the attendance numbers be added to next month's agenda.

Public Competitions' Update- Rebecca

Rebecca distributed a handout containing Public Competitions (PC) data. She said it's really hard to have comparable data over the years.

- Identified the number of registrants per date
- Number of entries (including "no-shows")

- 676 items (projects) this year compared to 465 last year
- We have around 200-300 exhibitors each year.
- We pay youth premiums to around 100-120 kids receiving a blue, red, or white ribbon. Rebecca thanked the Fair Foundation and Pam for sitting at a table distributing the money post fair.
- Leave on-line registration open later produces fewer walk-in registrations during in-take; there were only about 60 this year.
- However, leaving on-line registration open later brings challenges with the development of the exhibitor entry tags. They are being printed late, and items can be missed. If registration is closed earlier, Denise's staff have more time to have the correct tags ready.

Marionberry Pie Contest

Rebecca noted that the Marionberry pie contest started out with just one or two participants/pies and says we are now up to 5-6 pies being entered. The board of commissioners judge the pie. This year the media showcased the event. Jill noted there was a "nice spread" in the Salem Reporter about this, which included photos. Rebecca feels it should be funded as it is performing well. She suggests the fair board fund it out of their budget as the cost is less than \$100.

Coloring Contest

Rebecca feels that the coloring contest is worth continuing. Although there are no entry tags generated for participants, they are learning the registration process in ShoWorks. This captures their email address even though the projects are judged. We can then send an email blast out of the ShoWorks data. Participants do receive free entry to the fair. There were 66 participants last year and 116 this year. Hopefully, they are also submitting other projects and that it generates future entries.

The ShoWorks on-line registration opening date doesn't seem to make a difference in terms of how many total entries are received. The opening date has ranged from March 27 to May 1. There is a rush of entries in June.

It was suggested to email out a notice on June 1 to "get your entries in." Jill feels that the early opening prompts people to get going earlier to "prep their projects."

Denise asked Rebecca when she recommended closing on-line entries. Answer- one to two days before the tags are needed, like the Friday before fair week.

Rebecca suggests finding volunteers to prep the tags- tear the printed tags apart on the perforations, add strings, stamp "youth" on youth tags, and alphabetize in a box to be taken to in-take. This would take the burden off Denise's staff.

She also suggests having an intern that can drive entries and promote Public Competitions.

Chip suggests this data be given to the media for post fair advertising. Denise said that periodically a newspaper will reach out for such data, but not very often.

We include statistics such as this in our post fair work session the fair board holds with the Board of Commissioners.

Jill said that the Statesman Journal and the Salem Reporter focused more on the fair this year. She thinks perhaps the “Influencers” she engaged this year may have made the difference.

Rebecca is stepping down from being in charge of public competitions. She mentioned that we are short on superintendents, and she can’t carry the burden of responsibility for three departments. Kudos were given to Rebecca for what a great job she has done.

Sponsorship Commission Fees- Jill

Jill said that sponsorship commission fees have been discussed previously but it wasn’t communicated well. She and Denise have had a recent conversation about this, and she wants to clarify the situation.

The Ingalls are paid for sponsorship on a percentage basis on “the value of the package.” With the advent of fair picnics, these include “specialized inventory,” the costs incurred in hosting the picnic at the fair. Ingalls originally took these costs out of the sponsorship and were paid on the net brought into the fair. She said industry standard for sponsorships is to be paid on the gross. She said that the fair board adding the “cost of sponsorship” line item to the budget document was done to address this. She is proposing that the fair board pay the Ingalls on the gross amount a sponsorship package brings in, not on the net.

The question was raised as to what kind of fiscal impact this would have.

Kelli expressed that she would hate to see the fair board get into a position where the fair ends up paying for the sponsorship if there was too much cost associated with the sponsorship. She feels, “We lose the impetus when paying on the gross and not the net. A person could charge for the \$20,000 gross sponsorship and not be concerned about the costs incurred with the sponsorship obligations.” She did remark that she did not think the Ingalls would operate in this way.

Shannon would like to see the exact numbers as to what the increase would cost.

Jill said that historically, they started charging on the net because they wanted to be “flexible and fluid” as the package changed over time. An example would be the organization requests more carnival tickets than originally promised, in which case the cost (or inventory needed) increases.

Shannon said she would like more information and asked that this be added to next month’s meeting agenda.

2025 Fair Recap

Denise distributed a copy of the suggestions for improvement that were brought into the fair office during the fair.

Additional Ideas:

- Have new fair board shirts with members’ names embroidered on them. It was said that not everyone wears the shirts as they can be too hot to wear; maybe have sweatshirts instead. Jill said that the shirts can be made out of any type of fabric including a cooler, breathable, fabric. It was suggested to add the purchase of fair board shirts to the fair board retreat.

- Members were asked to review their calendars to identify a Saturday in November that works for everyone for holding the annual retreat.
- Shannon noted that larger fans are needed for moving air in the barns; perhaps use more swamp coolers. Brandi said at the Yamhill County Fair swamp coolers were used and it didn't make any difference for cooling the barns down. It was suggested to budget for purchasing fans.
- Drains were clogged in the barns. Jill suggests that if something isn't working correctly to take pictures of it. In the future, when working with the state fair personnel on barns set-up, we can go through a checklist and reference problems such as this. She said that in The Woods, it is never ready for the fair, that she has to bring in her own people to clean it up. Jill suggested that the barns folks come up with a bulleted list. Jill can then take it to state fair personnel next year to ensure things are ready at fair time.
- Shannon was disappointed with the new state fair personnel; she thought things would be better this year, but it wasn't.
- Rebecca suggested having a portable office construction trailer to be used as the fair office. The log cabin is just too hot for staff and others to work in. Jill said that she spoke with the grange personnel who came into the log cabin this year. They are interested in refurbishing the building; perhaps that will make a positive difference.

Shannon told everyone to email any additional improvement ideas to Denise.

VII. August Strategic Plan Items

- 3.2.2 *Evaluation of contracts- identify which contractors are eligible for renewal. Determine which services should be competitively solicited before the following year's fair.* The security and carnival contracts end before next year's fair. With the carnival we may do a one-year extension.
- 4.6.4 *Hold an August fair recap meeting to address the positive and negative components of the most recent fair.- Done*
- 5.2.4 *Review Management Agreement every 5 yrs. (Next is November of 2027.)*

VIII. Other- None

IX. Meeting Adjourned: 7:45 PM