

Marion County Fair Board

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

Fair Board Retreat

Dylan Wells' home- 10408 Crosby Rd N Woodburn, OR 97071

November 5, 2017 10:00 AM

In Attendance

Board Members: Heidi DeCoster, Shannon Gubbels, Nathan Leao, Dylan Wells, Pam Zielinski, and Joel Conder (present for part of the meeting)

Staff: Denise Clark, Tamra Goettsch

Guests: Jill and Scott Ingalls (present for part of the meeting)

Performance Evaluations of Fair Contractors

For the first time, the fair board instituted an evaluation process for the event coordination, marketing, booking agent, electronic ticket taking, and security contracts. The evaluation draft comments were presented to the Fair Board for additional feedback and approval. The specific contracts evaluated are essential, service-based contracts that give focus and direction to the fair board and impact the fair's budget. The evaluation's purpose is to give feedback from the fair board to the contractors on contractual expectations.

A. Event Coordination Contract

Denise is to inform Sarah Spinks to add to the Event Coordination contract that new fair booth layouts are due in February. (This is already a Strategic Plan item.)

More fair signage is needed, specifically signage directing fairgoers to the commercial building. Also needed is an explanation for fairgoers as to what the electronic signs/charging stations do so they can be better utilized.

Other:

- Scott will be encouraged to stay in the designated smoking areas when smoking. (Have larger signs indicating the smoking areas.)
- Address safe driving concerns; speeding golf carts.
- Good communication is needed between Jill, Scott, and board members as to how to resolve commercial vendor issues in order that everyone is on the same page.
- If folks have interest in changing any aspects regarding expectations of the Event Coordinator, the contract can easily be modified, changing the language within.
- Ingalls submitted the Fair Master Plan binder last week. This was a requirement of the contract.

B. Marketing

- The sponsorship reports can be improved; help the reader with understanding the sheets and the entry codes.
- Improve the development of a marketing plan; include how to improve social media use. County staff members have been looking at the use of dollars; they recommend that more money be put into social media, diversify the marketing plan, and stretch the dollars to reach a larger audience.

- The Marketing Plan should include identifying what content is put on the website and the timeliness of content being taken down.
- Finding a professional photographer is the responsibility of the marketing/event coordination contractor. The 2017 fair did not have a professional photographer and the pictures taken were not of good quality.

Note: Jill and Scott Ingalls joined the meeting.

C. Booking Agent

We are planning to continue with the same contractor for the booking agent (Romeo Entertainment's Eric Marcuse). Tamra had a 1/1 conversation with Eric at the recent Oregon Fairs Association (OFA) conference in Albany. She told him that this performance review was occurring and that there was room for improvement. (She also told him that a list of potential artists was needed soon, per the contract. The fair board received an email of Big Name Acts lists.)

It was suggested to add to the contract that the booking agent needs to work with the fair board's point person in obtaining sponsors for catering ahead of time.

It is important that negotiations are made on behalf of the fair board (not on the artist's behalf.) Also, any items struck from the contract will not be paid for in the future.

Tamra spoke with the State Fair CEO regarding Eric's performance. He highly recommended Eric saying he is one of the "best in the business." Tamra endeavors to do a better job of communicating with Eric.

When Tamra and Eric talked, he expressed that he is used to working with a whole team, verses just one person. (Jill noted that we do have an entertainment subcommittee that can work with Eric, if desired.)

It's important to have a signed contract before advertising a big name act. When advertising without a contract, it's done in "good faith;" however, it's risky as unforeseen problems could arise.

Add to Brandi's responsibilities- big name artist merchandise tent tracking of sales, being present at the table when sales are occurring.

Good communication needs to happen between Eric and the fair office personnel. Last year there was a lot of confusion regarding VIP credentials. Eric needs to inform the acts that no additional last minute lists will be accepted.

D. Performance Evaluations- Security and Ticketing

Leaky gates (people slipping through without credentials and other non-paid entry) are security's responsibility.

Ingalls expect to receive from security a staff schedule, a DPSST identified staff list, and an emergency management and communication plan. It was suggested that security needs to be passionate about taking on the Emergency Plan components and contributing to the emergency plan meeting held just prior to fair.

The current security contract is being canceled and the responsibilities for security and ticketing are being split up into two different RFPs.

Sarah is meeting with the current security contractor to review the evaluation.

E. Performance Evaluations- Afton Tickets

An upcoming challenge that affects the ticket selling process is OSU extension has indicated that 4H cannot maintain/staff a county-fund cash box. In the past they have collected funds that are turned over to the fair. For the 2018 fair, when 4H sells gate entry tickets, collects stall or camping fees, sells carnival tickets, etc., they will only be able to take credit card payments. Customers can also pay on-line. The county will be looking at exploring the options.

Final statement and project revenue report (them figuring out what we owe them) was not received. However, the payment method has changed this year; need contract language adjustment to reflect this.

Post event report not summarized, instead we receive an Excel spread sheet that requires Daniel Adatto and Sarah Spinks to manipulate the data.

Note: Joel Conder joined the meeting

Items of Special Interest:

Shannon made a motion to approve the October 4, 2017 Meeting Summary Notes; Heidi seconded. Motion passed.

Dylan reported that at the recent OFA conference, the Marion County Fair received two awards: Outstanding Fair Website and Outstanding Youth Project (for the STEAM activities). OFA award trophies will be brought back to the office. Denise will prepare the paperwork to bring the information before the Board of Commissioners. It was suggested that the same nominations be submitted to the upcoming Oregon Fairs Events and Activities conference.

- Those who attended the OFA conference were Dylan, Heidi, Bry, Tamra and Denise.
- Most fairs had a positive fair year except for Benton County, which had excessive heat days. The state fair also had to contend with the heat and smoke from forest fires.
- Dylan talked to both Eric Marcuse of Romeo Entertainment and Jake Schmitt of Afton Tickets. Afton is considering developing an “app” that can provide real time gate and revenue numbers.
- Washington County is reaching out to the urban population with Pinterest contests.
- A lot of fairs are moving to ShoWorks; however, not everyone is doing on-line registration.
- Fairs are moving away from rodeos as they are not the draw they once were.
- Some fairs spend over \$30,000 on the market auction.
- It was shared with state fair personnel that we have a gate leakage problem and that fairgoers want clean and updated facilities.
- It was suggested that we have a “tacky bar” or “dive bar” and that we bring it up at the upcoming BOC work session.

The fair’s emergency plan can be improved. Tamra indicated that county departments are working on Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) that would be used during an emergency. Tamra would like to see a similar plan developed for the fair. Jill indicated that Linn County Fair has a good, in-depth emergency plan, which includes staff being assigned to make announcements and a place for announcements to be posted for quick reference, in addition to other detailed activities.

Make the beer garden more substantial; perhaps have two. Place one in the natural resources area. Fairs are seeing increased revenue due to alcohol sales. It was suggested having wristbands indicating who is of legal age to be drinking.

At some fairs, open class judges and superintendents are paid for their services. Judges can get anywhere from \$35-\$100 and reimbursed for mileage. An OFA participant is willing to send a list of qualified judges out to anyone interested.

There will not be a 2018 OFA conference; instead the next one will be January of 2019 to be held at the Salem Convention Center.

It was expressed that the organizers currently responsible for the OFA conference don't seem to be running it as efficiently as those previously.

2017 Post Fair Notes Review:

- The 2016 suggested changes to the market auction area (aisles opened up; bleachers on three sides) were not made.
- Will have Melanie speak to the pig superintendent (Justin) about the width of the pig pen aisles.
- Still having trouble with the coordination of the veteran's event. Jill is willing to be the future coordinator.
- Sunday activities are coming together; however, more lead time is needed. Jill will request commitments earlier.

Suggestions for 2018:

- The racing pigs provider said that they had a great time at our fair. They are willing to help with media day and with a tie-in to the Harley Hogs (motorcycles) event.
- The teen idol winners and the best of the county open class contestants, all did a roll-up to the state fair.
- A Karaoke event is worth exploring for our fair.
- Perhaps have a music school produce the talent show.
- Add more key volunteers; strengthen the leadership deeper to reach established goals. Work with Mary Grim to advertise the year-round volunteer opportunities.

Election of Officers:

Shannon made a motion to keep the officers' slate as is- Dylan for Chair, Heidi for Vice Chair, and Brandi for Treasurer; Heidi seconded. Motion passed.

Grill off:

- Dylan indicated that Nathan wants to continue the grill-off event. (*Nathan had to leave the meeting prior to this discussion.*) The money required would remain the same; \$750 is listed for the budgeted item.
- Mike Adams (Adam's Rib) has expressed interest in doing a commercial BBQ grill-off event. This would include bringing in additional food vendors. It was suggested that Denise schedule a meeting with Nathan, Mike Adams, and the Ingalls.
- The question was raised as to how the grill-off contributes to the fair. It is not a "draw" for additional fairgoers.
- What is the end goal of the event? Answer- it's another competition that we can offer the community.
- Perhaps have participants pay an entry fee; the event has gone over budget the last few years.
- In the distant past, the cost for the event was not high due to the meat being donated by the Oregon Poultry Association and Painted Hills Beef.
- The event used to be a roll-up to the state fair.
- Joel said he is willing to help Nathan with the event.

2018 Proposed Budget:

The money for the Fair Program Coordinator (Denise's position) will not be included in the 2018 fair budget. The \$50,000 allotted from the county's general fund is now listed as revenue only. The rising costs of Denise's position outpaced the fair's available revenue. Tamra negotiated with the county and the position will be covered completely by another part of the department's overall budget. Only the cost of the fair temp hires, at fair time, will come out of the fair budget. Denise's responsibilities will still include her assignment to the fair. Denise's Full Time Equivalent (FTE), the amount of time she works, has also increased from 80% to 90%. It was suggested an inquiry be done on how much money other counties contribute for fair staffing.

Other Items-

- It is not known at this time what the Fair Foundation will be contributing to the coming fair.
- Investigation is underway as to whether Garten Services qualify as a Qualified Rehab Facility (QRF) or if we need to go out for a Request for Proposals (RFP.)
- Have Sarah Spinks and Daniel Adatto present their social media ideas to the Ingalls.
- Questions arose as to the origin of the \$424.45 in Catering (VIP & Operations) as this was believed to have been covered by sponsors. *(This has since been identified as reimbursement to Joel Conder for "Catering -Band and staff." This will be moved to that line item.)*
- For next year's big name entertainment transportation, Tamra/Denise will explore getting a van from the county's car pool.
- The cost of the fair continues to increase; there is only \$15,000 left in contingency. We will need \$40,000 for the 2019 rent of the fairgrounds. Focused effort is needed to increase sponsorships and doing fundraisers. Perhaps the lodging, BBQ grill off meat, catering, etc. all can be sponsored.
- More conversation is needed with state fair about trade opportunities for upcoming year's rental of the grounds.

Heidi made a motion to accept the proposed 2018 budget; Joel seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Big Name Acts Discussion- Joel

Tracy Byrd is no longer a viable option for coming to our fair. Also, the Marshall Tucker Band hasn't been getting good reviews. However, Clark County had him this past August and had a good result.

Eric Marcuse is seeking a short list of preferred entertainers from the fair board.

It was suggested having a retro act, like a cover band, for Friday night.

Review of meeting ground rules; member roles and responsibilities; and review of subcommittee structure all will be carried over to the next meeting, December 6th.

Meeting Adjourned: 3:30 PM.