

## Marion County Fair Board

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

### Annual Retreat

Oregon Farm Bureau, 1320 Capitol St NE #200 Salem OR  
November 24, 2019 1:00-5:00 PM

#### In Attendance

**Board Members Present:** Mike Adams, Joel Conder, Brandi Crandall, Shannon Gubbels, Ken Outfleet, Pam Zielinski

**Key Volunteer:** Amy Goulter-Allen, FFA

**Guests:** Jill & Scott Ingalls, Ingalls & Associates

**Staff:** Denise Clark, Tamra Goettsch, Community Services Department Director

#### 1. Welcome

Joel indicated that Tamra would be facilitating the meeting.

#### 2. What does a successful fair look like?

- Entertainment
- Family; free family activities
- Kids and animals
- Growth in participation, attendance, etc.
- Community
- Fun times
- Making memories
- Traditions
- Food
- Safe
- Community Support
- Carnival
- Attractions
- Value
- Beer Garden
- Competitions, public participation
- Market auction
- Sponsors and corporate volunteers

Retreat objectives- What does each day look like? How do we make the fair successful? What attractions will draw people through the gates?

**3. Agenda Review-** Nothing was added.

#### 4. Fair Data Review

Denise presented charts and graphs of data she collected covering the fair years 2009-2019. The numbers compare the dollars invested in big name entertainment (national music acts) and general fair activities (petting zoo, animal exhibits, rodeo, etc.) with the associated gate and food revenue numbers. This is represented by totals for the fair year and also broken down by individual days. Members were encouraged to review the data and see if anything “jumped out at them;” did the data assist them in coming to any conclusions?

Jill noted that these numbers show the “tangibles;” however there are “intangibles” that haven’t been recorded. These intangibles can be the reputation of an artist and whether they are known; there is peer pressure- Fear of Missing Out (FOMO); the weather; also what other artists are playing in the area around the same time as our fair? Also, what is the economy doing? When do people get paid in relation to when the fair is held? There are competing interests and events for local dollars; people are selective as to where they spend their money.

What the Data Tells Us:

- We are slowly increasing revenue each year.
- Food revenue is consistent; around 50% of gate.

- It was suggested a committee be developed to decipher the data; to look at the benchmarks based on the data.

Attendance Discussion:

- The millennials aren't coming out as much as Boomers; we are not hitting the mark for that demographic. The millennials consider who they want to be seen with; they are impacted by social media.
- Market to our target audience.
- Millennials have families now; make a relaxed and fun family atmosphere such as a corn hole tournament they can participate in with a beer in hand. Set something similar to the "Yard" food trucks.
- Concentrate on the "community" part of the fair and provide more interactive activities.
- Tastes drive our success.
- Have events such as a soccer tournament; ag Olympics; spam cook-off; tractor pull; cross-fit competition. (Tournament participants, especially adults, often bring their own food in, come and participate and leave; they don't tend to spend additional time at the fair.)
- How do we keep people engaged?
- Provide more information as to what is going on; have a "voice of the fair" mobile emcee.
- Turn each day of the fair into an event.
- Have STEAM ambassadors- people in lab coats with information encouraging people to participate.
- Fair board member image- have fair board members wearing a board member shirt each day. People can then identify who to ask for information.

**5. What's Working, Should be Added, Needs Improvement?**

Jill noted that one common difficulty, overall, is people power. An example-last year the performing arts committee was willing to coordinate talent on the stage but it was difficult getting them all together to plan the production of it. STEAM events first started with a large planning committee.

Innovative	Difficult	Profitable
Cat/Pape Simulator- practice driving a tractor	Coordination of community (local) performances happening throughout the fair.	Create an Activity Hub: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold interactive activities (such as corn hole tourney) in one location and list times of the events in the program</li> <li>• Set up a committee</li> </ul>
Barns- Have announcements; educational/hands-on agri-related activities; have themes for club decorations; demonstrations on how to show animals	Change rodeo- move to Friday; expand events; include mutton busting and other community participation events.	Educate the community regarding 4H/FFA opportunities to increase participation.
Mobile Memories- film/interview fair goers; use for next day's blast; give coupons to people who participate	Spend less money on acts for Friday; use local acts.	Have cross cultural entertainment and food on Sunday; draw from different cultures- Latino, Russian, German, etc. Hold a quinceanera fashion show.
Live emcee, use sound system to promote activities going on at the fair.	Increase "Community Space"- get each Marion County City involved at the fair. Connect with Neighborhood Associations.	"Show up for a cause" have local groups/organizations such as "Wake the World" come in and hold a gathering, focusing on a cause.

Increase marketing through 4H families; have a competition on how many guests come to their club area. Have a "People's Choice" award for club areas.	Hold a movie night at the fair.	Increase corporate picnics (the business is sold a package which gets all of their employees into the fair.) They are required to use fair food vendors.
Intercept: walk-arounds; STEAM costume characters; Marion Berry; animal people; fair posters	Dog Activities- encourage dog owners to bring their dog to the fair: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pretty/Ugliest dog contest</li> <li>• Dog fashion show; dogs on parade</li> <li>• Breed dog show- move from Woodburn to the fair</li> <li>• Link dog activities with Rescue Row; invite rescues to coffee to encourage their participation</li> </ul>	Hold a free fair: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze in advance; consider the costs/savings.</li> <li>• Trial for one year</li> <li>• Have free admission on one day</li> <li>• Reduce the price of gate entry</li> <li>• Deep discounts for gate entry pre-sales</li> </ul>

**Volunteers:**

- Get new community members involved.
- Find volunteers who have a vested interest; example- the owner of the music store coordinating talent on the stage.
- Every time we have a new volunteer coordinator there is a communication lapse; it is challenging for our volunteers.
- It was suggested that every year, all fair board members should recruit one person to help with the fair.

**How do we improve the individual days of the fair?**

- Jill would like to see committees established to identify and coordinate events.
- Senior Day needs a retirement center coordinator that identifies, and promotes, activities for seniors.
- Saturday and Sunday are working; Thursday is a challenge. Friday need improvements, it doesn't have its own identity. Have something free on Friday.

Jill participated in a webinar "Infusing the New;" it suggested "new twists on old ideas." Suggestions included focusing on anniversaries of events such as Woodstock's 50th, or the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. This can help with daily themes such as "Flash back Friday." You can make this an annual event. Stress the importance of relevance; don't use cartoon animals for graphics.

If picking an era for Friday such as the 60's, 70's, or 80's, have a culmination musical act (tribute or cover band) that coordinates with that era.

(Definitions- A "Tribute Band" tries to imitate the original band in sound, look and style. The "Cover Band" is just a band that does different "covers" of other's songs.)

- Have a dance teach
- Air guitar competition
- Maker space- tie die activity

**Big Name Entertainment**

Joel said that there is a big name act opportunity in which a decision needs to be made quickly. Randy Houser is a country artist that is being routed this way during our fair time. Instead of his usual \$75,000, we could get him for \$40,000 on Friday night only.

## Discussion:

Will this be an act that will have long term impacts or is this is a one-time decision? Should we do this versus putting money towards bringing lots of activities in to compliment the fair? What effect does Randy Houser have on the other days of the fair? How much can ride on the name? Need to have a strategy for advanced on-line ticket sales. How do you get fairgoers to come back to the fair again if they just came the one time because they were Randy Houser fans?

- Bringing big name entertainers in can help move a fair to the top. However, music festivals are folding, what does that say about bringing artists in?
- We need to have a focus or target, and that is why we theme things; Scott is willing to move more money into marketing.
- Market Saturday at the Friday concert to get more people to come the next day.
- Have Randy Houser on Friday, have a tribute band on Saturday.
- Tributes are doing well with the younger generation as they don't want to see the old folks up there singing.
- We probably will not be able to get more money from the BOC for entertainment.
- Jill noted that if we have Randy Houser come, we won't put so much energy into a "Flashback Friday" concept.
- Jill does her research on an act, looking at Instagram and Facebook followers and what the media is saying about the various acts. Randy is known more for the "party" and college drinking crowd; he does sell a lot of beer.
- Perhaps have an elite seating area, that is out of the way, that doesn't make other fair goers mad.

Pam made a motion to submit a \$40,000 offer for Randy Houser; Mike seconded the motion. Motion passed. Joel said we should get a response within 10 days.

Ken would like to see the acts spend more time on the grounds with sponsors. It was suggested that we need to get more sponsors involved with the big name act "meet and greets." Ingalls said that the sponsors that want to participate do so.

## 6. Budget Review- Moved to next meeting due to time constraints.

The next fair board meeting will be held December 10 at 5:30 PM in the Commissioners' Board Room.

Jill noted that she is hearing from sponsors that they expect to be impacted by the new state tax measure on income coming in January. The sponsorship dollars may be lower for the coming fair.

## 7. Elections

Ken made a motion to elect the officers listed on the ballots- Mike Adams as Chair, Shannon Gubbels as Vice Chair, and Brandi Crandall as Treasurer. Shannon seconded the motion. Motion passed.

## 8. Monthly Strategic Plan Review

It was decided to move the following items to the December meeting- 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 1.2.9, 2.1.1

1.2.7 *Determine fair hours.* Will remain the same

2.1.7 *Develop press release topics and times lines.* On-going; Jill works with Jolene Kelley out of the BOC office.

3.1.3 *Seek "Waste Less" proposals.* See below Garten 2019 Report discussion.

3.1.4 *Identify the person responsible for exhibit hall logistics, stage, and commercial vendors.* Remove from SP as has been established; responsibilities lie between staff, board member, and the event coordinator.

3.1.6 *Update flow chart of board members' responsibilities including back-ups.* Move to January's meeting.

4.1.3 *Discuss whether the fair should feature a "big name act".* Done for now. Move to September

4.6.4 *Discuss continuing events such as the “Woods”, Pretty Baby Contest, Real Heroes, Grill-off, etc.* All will be kept with the exception of the pretty baby contest; this will be discontinued. We might have a pretty dog contest instead.

5.1.3 *Election of Officers.* Done

5.2.5 *Review the Strategic Plan.* Done.

Amy asked to move 4.3.3 *“Discuss any needed changes for 4H/FFA”* from May to March; fair board agreed.

Shannon made a motion to accept the strategic plan changes (shown in red font) in the existing strategic plan document and also to accept today’s decisions to move or remove items. Pam seconded the motion. Motion passed.

## **9. Items of Special Interest**

### a. Garten 2019 Fair Report-

The “Waste Less” Report (previously called “Zero Waste”) was distributed for review. Denise indicated that she questioned the cost remaining the same when the provider is no longer sorting trash to the degree that they previously did due to the changes in China taking US recycled materials. Perhaps the cost was associated with the staffing of recycling stations and the education of our fair goers. Board members questioned whether the educational component at the stations actually occurred as no one witnessed it. (They were present however, at the picnics.) Environmental Services confirmed that they will provide the grant money again for the 2020 fair but will be re-evaluating after that. (We would need to pay the janitorial crew to do garbage if we don’t use Garten’s services.)

b. Carnival RFP process. The Contracts’ Coordinator, Krista Ulm, supplied a synopsis document. There was only one responder, Funtastic. Jill says that they are one of the top three carnivals in Oregon. If we choose to go a different direction, once off of a vendor’s schedule, it’s hard to get back on. A price escalation clause was expected to have been included in the contract, however it was omitted. Jill said that we will negotiate the cost increase before the next fair. Jill felt that last year’s carnival was much improved after feedback was given them on what needed to be improved from the previous fair. Denise noted that the performance evaluations make a difference in how our contractors operate; it gives them objective feedback of areas needing improvement.

c. The January meeting will be held January 8. Shannon (vice chair) will run the meeting as Mike will be out of town that date.

## **10. Meeting Adjourned: 5:00 PM.**