

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

**Marion County Fair Board  
Special Virtual Meeting  
November 14, 2022 6:00 PM**

**In Attendance**

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

**Key Volunteer:** Colleen Busch, Amy Goulter-Allen, Lesley Johnson

**Staff:** Denise Clark; Kelli Weese, Community Services Manager

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

**Meeting Convened:** 6:03 PM

- I. Call to Order/Introductions**
- II. Public Comments- None**
- III. State Fair 4<sup>th</sup> of July Event Proposal**

Denise introduced the topic; the Ingalls, Kelli Weese, and herself met with the state fair(SF) per their request to discuss the possibility of holding a 2023 4<sup>th</sup> of July event at the fairgrounds two days prior to the Marion County fair (MCF) being held. The City of Salem has asked the fairgrounds to host this as they are looking for a new venue to hold this annual event which includes fireworks, music, food booths and other activities. (The event was previously held at the Salem riverfront.)

In the meeting we indicated that we would take their proposal back to the MCF board for a response. The SF is requesting a response ASAP. The purpose of today's meeting is to accomplish two things- provide a response to the SF on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event and determine if we will hold a 3 or 4 day fair with the fair 4<sup>th</sup> of July event implications.

Jill noted the following regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event:

- MCF will already be on the grounds setting up.
- The SF would use areas we would not be using such as the pavilion and the horse stadium.
- The event may include food vendors, possibly a concert, rodeo, or *cirque du soleil* type activity.
- SF wants to be a good partner of the City of Salem and also is looking to make some revenue off of the event.

- SF proposes bringing in Funtastic Shows to provide a carnival for this one-day event with MCF receiving all the revenue from the carnival. (The carnival could, or could not, come; Kim was indifferent as to whether the carnival was at the event.)
- SF believes set-up for the event would not be a problem and they would only need a one-day turnaround time to break it all down before our event two days later. (The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is on a Tuesday this year.) Jill said, “Operationally, we can make it work.”

Shannon asked why the carnival is now available when previously they had indicated that they weren’t available for our fair on Thursday, necessitating us to hold a 3-day fair.

Jill responded that Funtastic would be doing a 4<sup>th</sup> of July event somewhere in the state which is why they would have a hard time getting to our event on time. Jill and Scott both have had phone conversations with Funtastic and have confirmed that they are available for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event. The owner said that he would prefer to do the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event and then leave until our fair began. He prefers us doing a 3-day fair as he would save money if he had a “down day,” not having to pay a crew to operate the rides.

Jill feels that the proposal could be a “win-win” with our making some revenue off the carnival and SF making their own revenue with activities. However, she cautioned, we need to be clear in our expectations. She would like to see us participate in cross promotion. Next year the 4<sup>th</sup> of July lands differently; the two events will be a week apart with the SF putting on a big event one week before our fair. If their event includes big name concerts and other fair type events, it puts pressure on the MCF.

Their event may affect our sponsors. The SF can use leverage such as adding more value to the sponsorship, offering them two events, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and the state fair in August. Our sponsors are dedicated to us, but they also want to work with the SF. This would force us to move fast, be aggressive, and be upfront as much as possible with our sponsors.

It is known in the industry to not hold Interim events, similar to your event, on the same grounds within a 30-day window of your fair.

Jill said that the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event may impact the fair’s revenue and sponsorship/marketing may be more expensive.

It was noted that the SF will go ahead with the event, whether we want them to or not; we can instill benchmarks to review it in a year, identifying the impacts on the fair.

We will suggest that the SF not do any activities that are similar to what will be offered at our fair.

Denise suggested such an event close to our fair could “siphon off” revenue from our carnival and food booth receipts. Jill responded that they probably would not offer as much food as we do, having only their on-site concessionaire with food trucks.

The event would create a new level of competition for the MCF; it would not complement our event.

Denise suggested that there would be a limited amount of carnival revenue received from this small of an event (10,000 attendees.) Response- Funtastic thinks that it would be worth their while.

Brandi responded that she is concerned about a conflict of interest. She proposes we respond to the proposal with, "Yes, we understand you are going to do this, however, moving forward we would like the opportunity to review the impact on us for subsequent fairs." The impact of such an event is long term.

Jill suggested that as a fair, we have the opportunity to identify what we might want to put in the amphitheater or the pavilion for our purposes; maybe ask for first right of refusal.

#### **IV. Holding a 3 or 4-day Fair in 2023**

Because the 4<sup>th</sup> of July lands in the middle of the week (Tuesday), it would be easier to hold a 3-day fair.

It was suggested that we can't let Funtastic's participation in our fair "drive" whether we have a 3 or 4 day fair.

The Marion County Fair's contract with Funtastic does indicate that Funtastic will provide carnival services for a 4-day fair.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July event will not be a conflict with the load-in of 4H/FFA animals. The students will be moving in on Monday. Animals will move-in and be shown on Wednesday. Static projects will come in on Monday or Wednesday. There will be no animals on the grounds Tuesday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

We did indicate in the meeting with the SF that the buildings we utilized needed to be clear for our early set-up.

Brandi wants to get back to a 4-day fair but does not feel that this is the year to do so. She feels that with the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, landing so close to our event, this will cause vendors difficulty in getting from other events to our fair. Also, families with 4<sup>th</sup> of July vacations plans will be impacted; she wonders if people/vendors will have time to get in and set-up.

SF will be moving out on Wednesday; we'll be setting up our tents and lights while they are moving out.

Joel said we need to think "bigger." This event concept is coming from the governor and the Oregon State Legislature indicating that they'd like to see more events held at the state fairgrounds. He said that this is bigger than "the little fair."

Jill encouraged "you need to protect your fair." Perhaps you negotiate with the SF in the future with, "You reduced our revenue with holding this event, maybe you can reduce our rent."

The days and times we need to setup our fair needs to be captured in our agreement going forward. Denise said that she and Kelli have been making notes on the specifics needing to be contained in the agreement.

Denise said in the past we have worked closely with our event rep, Wayne Peterson of the SF. We have had verbal agreements as to what we are planning on doing, and when. Now that Wayne has retired, some of those known agreements may be lost.

Denise noted that we do have practices in place to effectively communicate with SF. Our move-in/out times are captured in the work orders we submit. The department director and Jill meet with SF in the fall to discuss the next fair's expectations including move-in and move-out dates. (This meeting should happen in September or October.) Jill said that those items are agreed upon in a face-to-face meeting. Recently the SF booked Columbia Hall during our set-up unbeknownst to us; we weren't aware of this until the decorator came into set-up. The barns meeting happens in the spring. Throughout the calendar year county fair personnel sit down with SF personnel three different times before the fair, the last being the work order meeting in June.

Brandi asked Kelli to craft a response to SF indicating that MCF requests the right to review revenue impacts for this event for the 2024 MCF.

Jill said that there is an old law on the books that says you can't hold an event, which includes fair-like activities, too close to a county fair as it competes with the fair.

Brandi feels that SF needs to be a good partner, as well as us, as we've been a long-standing customer of theirs.

Joel says the riverfront 4<sup>th</sup> of July event over the years has always had a concert, food vendors, and a carnival. This event has been going on a long time; the only change is in the venue- holding it at the fairgrounds.

Jill said that they try to work with local event promoters, having conversations with them as to what events are happening, and when. As members of Travel Salem, they all try to work together to identify where there might be event conflicts.

Joel feels that the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event could impact MCF positively with cross-promotions.

Denise said that Kim, of SF, had indicated that they would work with us on promotions. Jill said she'd like to meet with Royal Media, SF's promoters.

Joel noted that having a 4-day fair would help in doing an "apples to apples" comparison for future decisions.

Joel suggested that our response to the SF should include examples of what they might do that does not have a fair look to it such as "don't set up a midway" or emphasize "celebrating the nation's independence." It was suggested to have a strong emphasis on the theme (4<sup>th</sup> of July) like have military-type activities.

The Salem Rodeo will be occurring a couple of weeks after our fair. The St. Paul and Molalla rodeos are held on the same weekend as the MCF; there are no cowboys available that weekend.

Brandi made a motion to draft a response to the SF with the specific bullet points discussed; Ken seconded.

Discussion:

- Joel asked that the draft be run by the fair board first before it is sent out.
- Amy suggested that we add to the letter that we need to have free access to the grounds.

Motion approved to have staff draft the letter.

Pam made a motion to hold a 4-day fair; Shannon seconded the motion. Motion passed. (Brandi opposed the motion.)

County staff will also draft a letter to the carnival provider indicating that the MCF would like to hold a 4-day fair.

Jill noted that she is not under contract currently with MCF. She doesn't mind participating in these virtual meetings however, she doesn't have liability insurance until she has a contract.

It was asked will the carnival go back to providing ride discounts to 4H/FFA? Answer- doubtful, most carnivals are trying to get away from providing discounts.

**V. Meeting adjourned: 7:19 PM**