

*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 3, 2022 5:30 PM

In Attendance

Board Members In-person: Mike Adams, Shannon Gubbels

By Zoom: Joel Conder, Brandi Crandall, Ken Outfleet, Pam Zielinski

Key Volunteers by Zoom: Colleen Busch

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

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

I. Call to Order; Meeting Convened: 5:42 PM

II. Public Comments

III. Approval of July 7, 2022 Meeting Summary Notes. Ken made a motion to accept the meeting summary notes; Shannon seconded. Motion passed.

IV. 4H/FFA Report

4H- Melanie McCabe:

The Junior Market Auction had a record year with sales over \$1,000,049. There was a large number of new buyers. It was suggested that the new start time of 1:00 PM may be a positive move. The auction went from 1-6 PM; in the past it has gotten over late in the evening like 11 PM. The sound system blew out as it got too hot and they had to quickly find a back-up system. There were some complaints as to the volume being too loud.

There were not many complaints overall this year, campers located out by the back fence complained that local citizens were jumping the fence to get into the fair for free.

Melanie said that paying FFA premiums on site at fair time is working well.

Shannon said that there were some gray gate complaints about the gate not being open this year as it has been in the past.

V. Financial Report- Tamra Goettsch

Tamra presented a quick overview on a draft document; it was not the final/completed budget document. She is including everything from last fiscal year through today.

Gate Revenue- There has been no Children of Promise money transfer, there will be no foster family or county employee ticket revenue.

Revenue is approximately \$396,068 for this year's fair.

Gate receipts is currently at \$109,000; we conservatively budgeted \$40,000.

Ingalls said that the sponsor fees are expected to be around \$115,000- \$120,000; we budgeted \$60,000.

Tamra said that once “year-end” closes August 12, she’ll update these numbers. She hopes to have the final numbers ready for the September fair board meeting.

Jill indicated that there are still some outstanding media bills. Tamra would like to receive the invoices ASAP.

The carnival fees came in at over \$48,00, our best year was last year at \$72,000. However, in past years we’ve received \$14-17,000 in revenue.

There are no changes to the Administration budget.

The food vendor revenue should come in at around \$43,000; we budgeted \$25,000.

Sunday was a “home run” attendance wise.

Gate receipts in cash alone was \$48,000 this year.

The fair board will not be approving the fair board report in this meeting as only a rough draft was presented.

VI. Items of Special Interest

Hively Complaint

Denise brought forth Doug Hively’s concerns about his booth location this year. He sent a few emails asking for the board to make “restitution” for his inconvenience as the set-up was not what he expected. (Doug was not able to be present in person at the fair this year due to health issues. He had a person run his booth in his place.)

Jill said that Doug usually has customer access to his booth with windows open on both sides of the booth. However, this year this was changed due to having to accommodate power and water needs of all the extra commercial vendors we had participating this year.

Brandi noted that his booth did well this year. It was comparable to what he did last year, and much more than he did in a regular fair year, the last being 2019.

The fair board decided to respond to him that after looking at the numbers, it did not appear that his location setup inhibited his sales. We will assure him that should he participate next year, we will give him a location in which he can work out of both windows. Denise will draft a letter to Doug, Brandi as Treasurer, will be the signatory.

Refund Requests

Denise presented the refund requests that came in. One being that the public competition tickets, they were issued for submitting a project for the fair, were rejected at the gate and they had to pay to enter. The fair board agreed to refund the \$18 requested.

The second request was from a citizen indicating that after pre-purchasing fair tickets, the individual was sick with COVID at fair time and couldn't attend. The requester wanted a refund of the purchase amount. Ken made a motion to give comp tickets for next year's fair; Brandi seconded the motion. Motion passed. (Shannon opposed the motion noting that in the past, we have not refunded to others that ended up not coming to the fair for one reason or another.) Jill will look-up the number of tickets purchased to determine how many to comp and will generate some tickets.

It was noted that we need to have Afton remove the start date of the event off the tickets as it confuses people (including gate personnel) thinking that the ticket is only good for the first day of the fair. It was suggested that the tickets have only the fair year printed on them.

Management Review- Tamra Goettsch

This agreement between the fair board and the county allows the county to provide services to the fair board since the fair board is directed by statute to run the fair. It is to be reviewed every five years.

Brandi asked about the possibility of moving the budget outside of county control. Tamra answered yes that the fair board could open a bank account and a board member could put together the budget document. The county could print out the reports generated from the general ledger and send them as an Excel document for manual input into the document. (A non-county employee cannot have access to the county's general ledger.) Anyone can be allowed to build the document from reports we send them. The management agreement would not need to be changing to reflect this.

Joel noted that when he was Treasurer, as an employee of the county, he would sit with a county commissioner at the end of each month. They were able to put the budget document together in 2-3 hours.

Brandi said an advantage would be to make more real time changes as it is presented at board meetings. She is willing to have future conversations with Tamra about this.

Brandi made a motion to approve the management agreement going forward as it is; Shannon seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Reappointment Policy- Tamra Goettsch

This policy was drafted to set a process for addressing board member changes or member vacancies. The Board of Commissioners (BOC) wants to be involved in the discussion for filling open spots. We are to bring the information to them for discussion. After each fair, we need to review all those appointments that need reappointing and if recruitment is needed, get that done by January 1. It would be helpful to have all slots filled by the November Fair Board retreat planning meeting to have everyone on board for the coming fair. The key volunteers are considered first in filling a board vacancy. The BOC has recently changed the reappointment procedures, members must now re-submit an application. We are working with the county volunteer coordinator, Sherry Lintner, to ensure we are adhering to the newest BOC requirements.

Denise has reached out to those that are up for re-appointment, some have responded, but not all. Those up for reappointment are members Mark and Joel, and Key Volunteers Colleen, Heidi, Lesley and Rebecca. Tamra

asked that those that haven't responded yet to let staff know within the week as we need to start putting things in place by the end of the week.

Colleen said she is interested in being re-appointed.

Brandi made a motion to approve the Marion County Fair Board Members and Key Volunteers Reappointment Policy/Procedures document; Shannon seconded. Motion passed.

Brandi also made a motion that if all current members, and key volunteers, want to be re-appointed, that the board moves forward with the recommendation for re-appointment. If a member/key volunteer does not want to be re-appointed, the board will move forward with the process stated in the policy; Pam seconded the motion. Motion passed.

2019 Entertainment Investment Impact Summary- Mike Adams

Mike said that he requested Denise put this on the meeting's agenda to revisit the findings of the previous study done on entertainment costs and the correlation with gate entry and food sales.

Jill gave "kudos" to Denise for all the work she put in on the documents. She said it captured the data up to 2019. She said that it's interesting to see what was discussed in 2019. It is important to remember the "intangibles," like what else is going on in the world, what artist is popular at the time, did we hit the right demographics?, etc. She said, "The trend and messaging is that big name investment does not directly relate to an increase in sales other than it may cause a peak in the gate." She'd like to see years 2021 and 2022 added to the list.

Jill noted that we haven't done big name acts in the previous two years, and we had COVID; still lots of people attended the fair.

Jill would like to see beer trends added into the mix; sometimes increased beer sales can correlate with an artist.

What we did accomplish this year is that the attendees came early and stayed all day spending their money. People aren't deciding to come to the fair just because of the special act. We didn't see a spark in attendance in the evening due to an act that evening.

Shannon suggested that with COVID fears going away, perhaps people will go back to the practice of coming to the fair to see an artist. Response- selling the fair on all that it has to offer in general brings a solid following. The acts this year weren't a draw, but we still had strong attendance. Jill said that we won't let our guard down because of the change in COVID.

The newsletter and social media were effective. We have gotten the newsletter into 10,000 households now. We need that strong base.

The time to bring in a big name act is when the fair is "so healthy" that we want to give that gift to our fair goers. We do need to start advertising in September.

Joel said that he strongly disagrees. He said that he spent all day at two fairs this summer and he saw the spark in attendance in the evening when Casey and the Sunshine Band came to the Lane County Fair and Sarah Evans to the Linn County Fair.

Jill responded that the successful fairs have the dollars to bring those big names in. The Marion County Fair needs to re-build its base; the big name alone, is not going to bring the fair goers. Bringing on a big name act needs to be an “add on” to already strong day programming.

Jill said that Breeland brought some of the urban dwellers from the Portland and Vancouver areas to the fair. She said that Frank Ray didn’t “bring it like we thought he might.”

Shannon said if going with more affordable acts, we need to use local people with a following like Ben Rhue. She also said that the younger folks like Zach Bryan.

Joel said that there were only 240 people in the seats at the main stage during the Breeland concert. Jill said counting seats doesn’t account for those that weren’t sitting in the area but are milling around and still experiencing the concert. She noted she spent \$1500 on princesses for Sunday, and there wasn’t a spot left in the main stage seating. She said you have to determine “the benchmarks.”

Brandi feels “we are missing the point.” She said that not once has our gate entrance tickets covered the cost of our big name entertainment. We need to be bringing someone in to compliment the fair experience. We had a performer (Breeland) who has worked with some giant acts and was recently on the ACM awards; he made some good memories for those who interacted with him in the Woods. She’s not hearing “don’t do big name entertainment.” Instead, she said we have to look at what we are, “Our fair can’t bring in Casey and the Sunshine Band for \$150,000.”

Jill agreed saying that we have to manage our expectations; we can’t afford a \$150,000 act. She suggested, “Let’s be really good at what we are strong in. You hire the act to compliment the fair. You don’t need to dangle the artist to try to get them to come to the fair.”

Tamra said marketing ahead of time, and getting the information out, is making a difference along with social media. The marketing is changing our fair. We are lessening our costs on street signs and banners, things we leaned on in the past. The county wouldn’t allow us to do this type of marketing in the past, but now with new information, it’s become acceptable.

Jill said we can’t be “down for a couple of months” she suggested that we have to be advertising the fair early, being way ahead, starting soon.

Denise was glad to see such great growth in the Hispanic population attending the fair. Others agreed and noted this was especially so on Sunday. Enlace (a Hispanic dance and music club) was excited to be part of the fair this year. They participated on Sunday and did a great job. This non-profit is working to help connect the English as a second language folks with businesses in the community.

Sponsor Revenue Over the Years- Tamra Goettsch

Tamra indicated that she had asked Denise to provide data on the sponsorship revenue over the years. She said the chart shows that there has been nice, steady growth upwards in our sponsorship dollars. Our community is coming alongside us and partnering with the fair.

Review of the 2022 Fair- Tamra Goettsch

What went right:

- Load-out went much smoother; there were only a few who walked their animals and supplies out early.
- Janitorial was so much better this year.
- The walkaround entertainment was good.
- 4H exhibits in Columbia Hall went well; it makes 4H more connected to the fair. They don't want to go back to the 4H auditorium.
 - They were able to add some nice touches to make it more attractive.
 - Having the clips for photos went better.
 - Volunteers like the air conditioned building.
- Brandi- Afton as a ticket provider, is "amazing." Katie does a great job.
- Sara Coutley, Volunteer Coordinator, did a good job. Many volunteers succumbed to COVID and weren't available to work their assigned shift.
- Shannon said it was positive being able to show animals without fairgoers present on Thursday because of safety concerns moving the animals to, and from, show pens.

What can be improved:

- Garbage in the barns was a mess; there was a large overflow of trash. Tamra said that there was a Garten employee who was trying to interpret the contract themselves that caused this problem. We need to hold a meeting with Garten in the future.
- Dumpsters are needed outside in the camping areas.
- Improve the looks of the blue gate. State fair needs to be working harder on improving that area. (The flower baskets went missing as rumor went around that they were free for the taking.)
- Gate inconsistencies with security- there were some communication issues, supervisors not always communicating well; guards were "winging it."
- The armored car increased cost was expensive. We need to improve the safe (which is small) and the money handling process; perhaps the county can purchase something. We need to improve the system. The safe itself is small.
 - "Trekking" across the grounds from Jackman Long to blue gate to move money is tiresome; have a more centralized location.
 - Jill said that state fair has other potential locations; there are rooms that people don't know about.
 - Maybe put an alarm on the safe as they do with ATMs.

- Tamra said that Sunday is the costliest day for the armored car service; perhaps we can store the money on site. We can explore this more in the future.

- We may be required to rent more equipment (tables/chairs) as the state fair is running out of items; they are getting old and breaking. We may have to add this as a budget line item.
- STEAM Quest needs volunteers to make it successful.
- Tamra would like to see more businesses providing volunteers; maybe this coincides with sponsorship. Banks and hospitals are good for this. Commercial sponsors are trying to get their employees to be good stewards in the community, they want to “activate their employees.”

VII. Ingalls Reports:

Ingalls are in the process of handling invoices and working on sponsor gifts.

VIII. Strategic Plan Items- August

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.

Denise indicated the Krista Ulm gave her the report of RFP’s that are coming to an end:

Expiring 9/30/22: Event Coordinator Marketing Coordinator Security	Expiring 12/30/22: Ticket Takers/Sellers (Security Company)	Expiring 10/31/22: Electronic Ticketing Service (Afton)
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Carnival has one more year on their contract; need to be thinking about how they will impact the next year’s fair.

4.6.4 Hold an August fair recap meeting to address the positive and negative components of the most recent fair.- Doing so currently.

Have a 3 or 4 day fair needs to be on an upcoming fair board meeting agenda. In 2023, having just two days between the 4th of July and the start of our fair will be problematic. With the compact fair, we are making the same amount of revenue without expending as much money.

Security is having difficulty finding workers.

Get an early start:

- We need to get security, supports and big-name entertainment in place early.
- Need clarity with the state fair as to when we can be the sole renter of the grounds; they can’t have quinceañeras occurring on the grounds the day before fair public competitions in-take.
- It is hard to control when the infrastructure gets put in place when service providers are coming from other locations. The stage and tents timing was “dicey” this year.
- Start earlier in selecting food and commercial vendors.

State fair always asks us to set up the animal pens like they need them set up. However, we have different needs than the state fair as they don't show all the animals at once like we do. State fair needs to communicate with us which pens we don't need to break down; pens that can be used for their purposes.

4.6.5 *Members to submit their fair event attendance numbers at August recap meeting if have not already done so.* Denise indicated that this was for things like the car show, BBQ grill off, and other special events. She recommends that this item be removed from the Strategic Plan as Afton is now tracking such attendance. The fair board agreed to have it removed.

5.2.4 *Review Management Agreement every 5 years. (next Sept. 2022)-* Doing currently.

IX. Other:

The Volunteer Appreciation BBQ will be held August 17 at 6:00 PM. It will be held at Mike Adams' venue. He'd like to see as many fair board members, and key volunteers, attend as possible to show their appreciation to the volunteers. There will be food, fun, and games. Invitations have gone out to all volunteers and board participants. Please RSVP as soon as possible.

Adjourned: 7:39 Pm.