

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

January 3, 2024 5:30 PM

Meeting Convened: 5:30 PM

Denise requested, and was granted, adding "Fair Board Retreat Update" to the agenda under Items of Special Interest.

I. Call to Order/Introductions

In Attendance

Board Members: Shannon Gubbels, Amy Goulter-Allen, Pam Zielinski

Key Volunteers: Greg Martin, Rebecca Turner

Guests: Joseph Billington, Dana Castano, Brandi Crandall, Jill Ingalls, Cody Walterman

Staff: Denise Clark, Sarah Coutley, Chris Eppley, Kelli Weese

II. Public Comments- None

III. Approval of December 6, 2023 Meeting Summary Notes- Amy made a motion to approve the meeting summary notes; Pam seconded. Motion passed.

IV. 4H/FFA Reports

4H- Returning 4H members' sign-up is due January 8th.

FFA- Joseph Billington- Nothing new to report.

V. Financial Report- Denise Clark

The 2024 budget document is in a new format. Changes included:

- Denise and Jill worked together to identify items that needed to be moved to better organize like items under one category. These items are highlighted in blue.
- The yellow highlighted items are those that are expected to be covered by Fair Foundation contributions to the fair. This is to clarify that the fair board budget does not intend to pay for that particular item. The money will come out of the fair budget only if the Fair Foundation chooses not to support the fair in that way.
- A new addition is each line item will have its own identifying number. The problem has been that an account number will have several items broken down under it with each of those items having a specific dollar amount associated with it. To better code invoices so that they are associated with the correct line item, individual numbers have now been placed next to an item description. Ingalls will now code an invoice with an account

number such as 525925 followed by the identified item number; for example, 525925-1 or 525925-2. In the past identifying where a charge should land has taken much time and energy interpreting, and clarifying with the Ingalls, where something should be reflected.

Pam motioned to approve the Financial Report as presented; Amy seconded. Motion Passed.

VI. Items of Special Interest

Big Name Entertainment Update- Amy Goulter-Allen

The Eli Young Band (a country act) has been confirmed for Friday night. We don't have a Saturday night act identified yet. It was asked if we will have a second country act on Saturday night? Answer- yes; Saturday is Ag Day which includes the market auction. Those attendees are a target audience and so we want a country act on Saturday night.

Commercial Vendor Booth Prices- Jill Ingalls

Jill indicated that she and Denise researched other fairs' booth prices. She distributed a spreadsheet with the results. She narrowed the figures down to the fairs that were closest in size and similarity to the Marion County Fair. She included the lowest and highest prices of booths, the number of people that came through the gates, and the number of days a fair was held. The fair closest to our size is Benton County Fair. The average of the lowest priced booth is \$375; the average of the highest priced booth- \$467.

It was suggested that we change the prices for the 2024 fair to \$300 for inside/inline booths and \$400 for outside/inline booths, with an additional \$75 fee for a corner booth. (These figures are for the total run of the fair, not a daily fee.) It was also suggested that due to the average of all fairs' booth prices being \$375 and \$467, we incrementally increase the booth price, raising it again in 2025.

Denise noted that following the pandemic we decreased our indoor booth prices making all the booths (inline and corners) just \$275. In 2023 the inside booth fees were \$275 for in-line booths and \$325 for inside corner booths.

Chris noted that when considering raising prices, the Board of Commissioners (BOC) might express concern as to why we are increasing rates when we have a large amount of money in reserve. Answer- we want to start reducing the general fund monies given for the event in order that we can eventually be self-sustaining. The "carryover" listed in the budget document is "seed money" for the next fair; the "reserve" is for future rent of the grounds. We have trade value through the 2026 fair; we will start making rent payments for the 2027 fair. We also need money in reserve should we have a bad fair- rained out, pandemic, natural disaster, etc. Recently our expenses have been much higher than projected; we've had to make budget adjustments as we go.

Jill noted that if our fair guests end up having to pay for parking due to the new state fair policies, we will need to reduce our gate entry rates which will decrease our revenue.

Amy made a motion to increase the commercial booth rates to \$300 for an inside/inline booth and \$400 for an outside/inline booth with an additional \$75 charged for corner booths; Pam seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Stage, Lights, Sound RFP Review Committee- Denise Clark

Krista Ulm (Contracts Coordinator) is asking who is interested in being on the Stage, Lights, Sound 2024 RFP review committee? Those interested were Jill and Scott, Pat Wood, Dana, Amy, Greg and Brandi.

Members expressed concern that we are late in the season for getting this done. Also, it was noted that there are less providers of this service available because of the pandemic's impact. Last year we just went with the best quote and did not do an RFP. It was asked if we could do that again.

Denise was tasked with finding out the status of the RFP; has it been posted and when are the submissions due? If hasn't been published, the fair board would like to do quotes again because of the late date. *(It has since been determined that it hadn't been published; we will go with the quote process.)*

New Member Appointment Update- Denise Clark

The fair board's recommendation to appoint Brandi, Greg, and Dana went before the BOC at Management Update this past Tuesday, January 2. The BOC said "yes" to all of the recommendations. It now goes to a regular Wednesday board session in which the BOC will formally appoint the member. This is scheduled for January 17; all applicants are invited to attend. If no one attends, it will put on "consent" on the agenda. If someone attends, it will go on as an "action" item. Greg said he plans on attending.

Fair Retreat Update- Denise Clark

Sam Skillern, of Salem Leadership Foundation, and his associate, are willing to facilitate our fair board retreat for the figure of \$85/hour. In coordinating their availability and Shannon's schedule, we've narrowed it down to February 17 from 8 AM-1 PM. Denise said she's heard back from most fair board partners that they are available that day/time. Amy made a motion to approve having Sam Skillern facilitate the retreat on February 17 from 8 AM-1 PM; Pam seconded the motion. Motion passed. *(Denise is working on making arrangements for the retreat location.)*

VII. February Strategic Plan Items

1.2.8 *Review theme days (Honor Day, Ag Day, and Family Day)*- Jill said we will stay with these identified days. Friday does not have a name yet. Honor Day incorporates the veterans' and the BOC's interests; Saturday is Agriculture Day and Sunday is Family Day. The associated programming seems to be working well.

2.1.2 *Build on broad-based and segmented marketing approach (TV, radio, internet/social networking, newspaper ads, yard/field signs, banners, etc.)* Jill said that they are continually adjusting what they do to reach the majority of people. Most advertising has moved to digital. They do very limited TV. They are looking at "X" (formerly known as Twitter). They plan to build on what has been successful thus far.

2.1.5a *Vote on fair theme (if applicable)*- Moved this item to the retreat.

3.2.5 *Identify and coordinate ground crews to do set-up and takedown*- This is done by the Community Services Director reaching out to the Sheriff's Office. Chris indicated that he would do this tomorrow.

4.1.2 *Work with event coordinator on potential entertainment and attractions as a draw for fair attendance*
Jill said that she mixes-up static attractions and stage entertainment. She looks for new, fresh ideas for the fair. She hopes to bring some ideas to the February 17 retreat. The Source Management (Pat and Tammy) are helping by looking for new acts for us.

It was asked if there is a conflict of interest when Source Management finds acts for us, providing an act which is part of their own organization. Jill responded that Source Management does have many acts signed on with them, but they don't only send us their acts. We don't pay them to help us find acts, they are just willing to help us. When she says to them, "I need this kind of act," they are willing to go and find it. They are currently at the Western Fairs conference and being exposed to a lot of new acts. If they offer something up, and Jill says we need something different, then they go and look for that. Jill also reaches out to entertainers herself. She said we don't pay Source Management, the act's contract is with the fair, not with them.

4.2.1 *Identify Performing Arts Coordinator for community stage*- Jill said that she has been trying to do this for years. However, when reaching out to a school or program, the organizer is willing to provide their own students, but not necessarily coordinate other community members performing on the stage.

There is a new process this year for local performers to reach out to the fair. Jill produced a performer application and posted it on the fair's web page. The applicant is to complete it and return to Ingalls and Associates. They will screen for potential acts. Jill would like to have two applications posted- one for professional acts, and one for the act willing to perform for free. She hopes a fair board partner will take on this area of responsibility as has been done in the past.

4.2.2 *Contract with sound and lights contractor*- Discussed earlier in the meeting.

4.6.1 *Coordinate dog related activities (flyball, Rescue Row, K-9 demos, etc.)*- Jill indicated that Flyball wants to return. Chris Eppley will check with the dog shelter to determine their interest in working with the fair.

4.7.1 *Develop veteran's recognition program with community-based coordinator*. Greg is working on the veterans' recognition. Jill says she'd like to review what the Real Heroes area looks like; they are currently in a prime location. Some participate all four days of the fair and some just one day; they like to be able to come and go.

4.7.2 *Convene STEAM partners to organize and develop STEAM projects*. Jill felt that the STEAM professors worked out well last year; she wants to build on that for the coming year. STEAM is an easy area to get sponsored.

VIII. **Other:**

Kelli reminded folks that we still have an open fair board member position and that we could use more key volunteers. She encouraged everyone to pass the word. Jill will post it on Facebook and Instagram.

Greg asked the status of filling the Saturday night act slot. Jill responded that Pat (Source Management) will reach out to us in the next couple of days when he gets back from the conference.

Amy asked Jill if we could purchase a photo banner backdrop for kids' and their animals' photographs. We discussed this last year, and agreed to it, but it never came to fruition. Jill agreed that this was needed and noted that there is a "photo wall" concept that she recently saw; it may be an even better option. She and Amy will work together on this.

Kelli suggested having something similar (a photograph backdrop) for family day. Last year, she saw many families taking photos with Darth Vader, the walk-a-round act. It was suggested to place something near the Dairy Women's booth where people spend a lot of time standing in line.

Sarah noted that the walk-a-round acts use a room in the floral building for their preparation. She suggested maybe placing a photo banner in that area. Jill responded that there may be a change to how the floral building is utilized. She suggested that the board member, or key volunteer, who operates as the "community stage helper" could also assist with this.

Meeting Adjourned: 6:32 PM