

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

**Marion County Fair Board  
Annual Retreat**  
Board of Commissioners' Board Room  
December 7, 2022 5:30 PM

(This retreat meeting was rescheduled from November 12 due to member scheduling conflicts.)

**In Attendance**

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

**Key Volunteer:** Colleen Busch, Amy Goulter-Allen, Rebecca Turner

**Staff:** Denise Clark; Kelli Weese; Sarah Coutley, Fair Volunteer Coordinator

**Guests:** Jill and Scott Ingalls, Ingalls & Associates; Becky Delurey new member nominee; Greg Martin, new key volunteer nominee

**Meeting Convened:** 5:10 PM

**Welcome and Introductions-** Mike Adams, Kelli Weese

Mike welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for their contribution to the fair. He said that he looked forward to working with everyone on the upcoming fair.

Kelli said that county staff really appreciate what everyone gives to the fair, that the fair is successful due to having "a good solid foundation." The purpose of this retreat is to walk away with plans for the 2023 fair.

Everyone introduced themselves noting how long they've been on the fair board and the roles they play.

**Approval of 2022 Meeting Summary Notes-** Sept. 20, Sept. 26, Oct. 5, and Nov 14. Colleen noted that she was present in the October 5 meeting, her name was omitted from the notes. Shannon made a motion to approve all of the summary notes with the correction of Colleen's name being added to those present in the October 5 meeting notes; Ken Seconded the motion. Motion passed. *(Rebecca had indicated earlier to Denise that she was not present in the November 14 meeting; Denise had made that correction.)*

**Election of Officers**

Mike Adams was nominated for Chair, Ken Outfleet and Shannon Gubbels nominated for vice chair; Brandi Crandall was nominated for Treasurer. Ken indicated that he is waiting to hear from his work as to whether he can be present at the 2023 fair or if he will need to be in Kentucky to conduct trainings again this year.

The voting resulted in Mike being elected as Chair, Shannon for Vice Chair, and Brandi as Treasurer.

#### **Acceptance of 2022 Contractor Performance Reviews- Denise**

Denise said that she's compiled the scores for each contractor reviews that she received back from folks. (If only one review was received, as was the case with the carnival, a final score was not given, as this was too small a sample.) Denise indicated that she had emailed the numbers out to folks earlier for review and approval. Ken made a motion to accept the final scores as presented and give approval for Denise to proceed with sending the results out to the contractors; Shannon seconded the motion. Motion passed.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> of July Event- Kelli**

Kelli indicated that she had received a response back from Kim, of state fair, regarding the letter sent on behalf of the fair board responding to their announcement of holding a 4<sup>th</sup> of July event on the fairgrounds two days prior to our fair. We need to accept that this is going to happen. Hopefully there will be good cross-promotions between this event and our fair. In subsequent years when the event is a week apart from our event, this will be more challenging. We are asking to review the events' impact after our 2023 fair is held.

Kim's response included that there would be no rental price break for our fair. Our letter did not request that; it is unknown why she mentioned that.

Our letter did indicate that we welcomed the carnival being at the event and generating revenue for us.

Mark questioned why fireworks being held in the 80 or 90's was brought up in Kim's response to us. Answer- she is implying that the event has happened before on the grounds and there were no problems with it.

It was asked whether the ecological impact would always exist at the riverfront or was there a possibility the event would be moved back to that location in the future. It is unknown; the City of Salem has reached out to the state fairgrounds to make this happen and the state fairgrounds needs the revenue. Will we always be at the mercy of the state and city's partnership.

This event will most likely affect our gate, attendance and revenue.

Our goal is to make both organizations (the state fair and the county fair) successful. We will continue to work with Kim.

Brandi noted that we were quoted \$40,000 as a "concession" for future fair rental rates in the state fair's response letter. She questions how is this a concession? Joel gave some history of how we reached the dollar figure. The rent had gotten up to \$80,000 at one point in time. With a former director we settled on a rate of \$10,000 a day for four days. Joel was heavily involved in developing the paving trade for rent that was developed. Brandi said that's not a concession if it's our going rental rate. (We are paid up through 2026 for rental fees.)

Jill said that we need to work with the state fair to “re-define” when we move in. We will work together with the state to clearly define the time frames and all the stages of move-in. She said that the county fair is different than the typical event that rents their grounds.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July event hasn’t been “super successful” for the city.

They will be having “fair like” activities which we requested they not do in our letter to them. They now have signed a \$150,000 artist for a concert at the event.

Jill is concerned about sponsorship. She said that Kim will be better able to leverage two events, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the state fair, with sponsors. This will split the market as far as us reaching out to some of the same sponsors. We share approximately 50% of our sponsors with the state fair.

It was suggested to give the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event attendees a discount to come to our fair. Jill will be meeting with the event organizers to discuss the possibilities.

Jill promised that the Ingalls and Associates will “protect the fair as best they can.”

#### Fair Board Outside Meeting Attendance

Joel expressed concern that there were no fair board members in attendance at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July meeting with the state fair. Joel said he was “blindsided” when he received a call from someone asking his opinion on the issue.

It was noted that the meeting was called on short notice by state fair requesting the event coordinator and a county person of authority come to a meeting. (Jill, Kelli, and Denise attended the meeting.) They were not told on the outset what the agenda for the meeting was. No action was taken in the meeting; instead, it was a listen and learn opportunity. State fair was told that all the information given would be taken back to the fair board for a response ASAP.

Denise said that in the past, the director of the department (Tamra Goettsch) has been the one to meet with state fair to negotiate terms of the county fair’s use of the ground’s agreement; it was logical that a person in authority (now Kelli Weese) attend this particular meeting.

It was noted that these folks have been given the authority to represent the fair board in meetings such as this.

Brandi feels the fair board was properly informed, and in a timely manner, as to what occurred in the meeting. She asked Joel if this was a matter of trust, was he concerned that accurate information wouldn’t be brought back to the board? She also questioned whether a fair board member being present would have made a difference in the outcome of the meeting.

It was suggested that for any future meetings, the chair or vice chair, should be notified for possible participation if they are available.

Pam expressed that it’s a matter of having information available immediately.

On another note, Mike said he was told we have a “dysfunctional” fair board. He questions how we could be considered “dysfunctional” if we have unanimous “yays” on all of our voting indicating that the fair board is in agreement on most things. He suggests the Board of Commissioners (BOC) look at the voting records. Mike would like to know what information they are receiving that they label us “dysfunctional.”

We haven’t had a commissioner present at our fair board meetings to know that we aren’t dysfunctional.

Brandi expressed concern that there is communication going on with the BOC outside of our fair board meetings; she doesn’t know what is going on. She noted that this is the first time in the 10 years that she’s been on the board that the BOC is feeling negative towards the fair board. It can’t be due to our revenue as we are doing well. She said this is embarrassing to hear this kind of talk about the fair board.

Mike said that if someone has a problem with someone or something, please bring it to the fair board for discussion.

Ken said that the BOC needs to “call out” the issue to the fair board.

Shannon said she’d like it to be reiterated to the BOC that we’d like them to attend these meetings.

Rebecca feels we should get “tangible feedback” on the issue from the BOC; what would they like to see improved? She said that there has been no formal response to the fair board’s request to have them attend this retreat.

#### **Strategic Plan- Denise**

Denise gave information on the purpose of the strategic plan:

- It was developed in 2005 by Commissioner Carlson
- There are approximately 93 identified tasks
- It guides the process and identifies the person responsible for a task
- Monthly tasks and timelines are set in order that everything gets done in time for fair
- It’s a flexible, or “living” document as things are edited, added or deleted throughout the year as needed.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities- Jill**

Jill said that she and Denise have been working on updating/identifying the roles and responsibilities of all fair partners. As far as fair board partner assignments, this will take some in-depth work. She suggests bringing this back at a later date as tonight’s agenda needs to focus on 2023 fair planning. Mark proposed this be moved to next month’s agenda.

Jill shared an organizational flow chart that she and Denise have developed. The flow chart shows how the fair board functions. She wanted to provide it for our new members to inform them.

Joel suggested that the flow chart should include the topmost layer indicating that it is the citizens of Marion County who are in charge of the fair.

After further discussion, it was decided to have the fair board's mission listed at the top of the page; below that the citizens of Marion County, below that the BOC, and below that the fair board.

## **Budget Report**

### 2022 Final Budget Document- Brandi

Brandi noted that not all revenue (transfer of dollars) has been received, however they are promised. (*Denise has initiated the transfer paperwork; it is in process.*) Once received, the fair should show around an \$18,000 profit for the 2022 fair. The carryover will increase to around \$554,000.

Ken made a motion to accept the Financial Report as presented; Shannon seconded. Motion passed.

### 2023 Proposed Budget- Kelli

Kelli reminded folks that we intentionally choose to be "super conservative" on our revenue projections each year. The 2023 budget proposal shows a deficit of \$275,000 but that's only because of our conservative approach. Historically, we come out in the black with the revenue coming in stronger than projected each year. She feels that this is good budgeting policy. She is using the lowest revenue figure we've seen in the last five years for the 2023 figures. She is proposing the \$275,000 figure should we get rained out or some other impact that negatively affects our bottom line. We most likely will end up in the black. She said that this is the philosophy of budgeted versus the reality what the unknown might bring.

Brandi reminded folks that many of the listed expenses get covered by in-kind. However, should a particular sponsorship not come through, we plan for "heavy on expenses." Even though we have something listed as a budget item, that doesn't mean we have to spend it. We might only spend a partial amount of it. She encouraged, "We can also pull back where needed as we go along."

Mark asked what "carryover" means. Answer- this is contingency money available should we come in under budget on any given year.

Shannon asked Jill what the forecast is in looking at future fairs/festivals and the economy. Jill responded that she doesn't know. However, most people in the industry are "cautiously optimistic;" yes, things are more expensive, but people aren't slowing down.

Scott noted that fuel costs are affecting sponsors; banking and real estate were hit hard last year. He feels this year is the "scariest" yet as far as unknowns. Housing costs, home loans/mortgages, rental costs, gas, and food are all going up.

The Ingalls will watch the trajectory of events that are occurring right now. They also consider the data coming out of international festivals.

Prices for artists are "skyrocketing."

It was asked if the budget will be appropriate considering the impact of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event on our fair. Answer- we hope so.

We need to keep in mind Oregon Measure 112, the recently voted on “slavery” or “involuntary servitude” measure. Utilizing those incarcerated to do work might affect whether we have the Marion County Sheriff’s office crews. Perhaps the “volunteer” component will make it possible. Jill will come up with a cost figure should we not have a crew and have to pay for the labor being done. The labor includes set-up and take-down of fair structures including the fair office.

### **Big Name Entertainment- Joel**

Country artist, Aaron Watson, is our Saturday night act for the coming fair. The cost is \$30,000 as was his price for last year when he canceled on us. The contract is currently going through county processes of review and obtaining signatures.

Entertainment discussion included:

- Acts are going fast; the entertainment committee members need to act quickly.
- Would like to see the Friday night genre be a crossover act for youth; the Hispanic Selina act has been suggested. We need to focus on marketing to the younger generation for Friday night.
- Classic rock doesn’t fit the demographics of our fair. Perhaps have a local band or a rock/pop group that reaches the younger audience.
- Shannon asked about Zach Bryan’s availability. Answer- he’s not being routed on the west coast in July.

Ken made a motion to accept the proposed 2023 budget; Mark seconded the motion.\*

Motion discussion:

- It’s a fluid budget that fluctuates throughout the year via budget change request forms. This allows for it starting with a negative balance of \$275,000.
- Do we bring in a \$20,000-\$30,000 act or a \$40,000 act?
- Friday night needs to be a “step-up” from the local band level.
- We shouldn’t go with a big expenditure if we are going to be up against the 4<sup>th</sup> of July concert event and its unknown impact.

Joel said that he will work with Pat, the talent buyer, contacting him tomorrow. He hopes to get something going in the next 24 hours. He said he would cc everyone on this.

\*The motion that was on the table, acceptance of the 2023 Budget Proposal, passed.

### **2023 Messaging and Marketing- Jill**

- We have been using the *Made in Marion* theme and logo for the last 4-5 years; this has been positive.
- Sunday (Family Day) has had programming with a heavy Hispanic emphasis. Jill would like to give Enlace (an organization) more leeway to build the Hispanic base. Jill said, “He’s trying to bridge a gap.” We also

need to be reaching out to others like the Russian and German populations. She's looking to continually improve Sunday.

- Saturday is Ag/country day.
- Thursday is Honor Day.
- We've had success targeting the Hispanic population through social media; COVID also helped in increasing our attendance.

Ken will work on getting the army national guard to participate again; they may have more time as recruitment is not going well. He said he'll start promoting Thursday (Honor Day) again.

Becky suggested that instead of "Teen Day," have a "Future Day" or something similar for Friday's theme to acknowledge the up-and-coming generation. Jill liked this direction and said we could have something "ethereal" like having "really cool drones" or something. Scott said that history shows that when you label a day by an age demographics (teen day, senior day, etc.) you alienate many people as they won't attend the fair on that particular day if it's not their own demographics.

#### Other Ideas:

- The Disney princesses are a real hit to fairgoers.
- Have walkaround acts all 4 days; we may need to increase that budget.
- Hold exhibition sports games at the fair. Have uniforms or team mascots like Benny the OSU beaver, that we have regularly.
- Maybe have stilt walkers again.
- Continue attractions like Puzzlemania, Alaskan Racing Pigs, and Pirate's Parrots
- Need to find a maker/taker type project in which you build something at the fair that you can take home.
- Mike said he's been approached by a Kansas City BBQ competition organizer for having a competition at our fair; he will look into it further.
- Ken is working on a sponsor for the car show.
- Jill will start working on getting quotes, and contracts for these attractions.
- Shannon would like to see the animal show (hands-on animals petting zoo type activity) occur again like was done in 2021. It was suggested to reach out to other counties to see if they want to sponsor something like that. We could tap into Corban University's ag program to assist; they could provide college students to be "Ag Ambassadors."
- Will be looking for something to fill Saturday night in the arena.

#### Other:

Amy asked if the fair board could "ban" someone from the fair. There is an FFA parent who is disruptive and belittles other students. Answer- No, we cannot "ban" someone from entering the grounds. It was suggested that FFA take care of it internally.

Cascade FFA alumni would like to know if they could have a Thursday night BBQ at the fair in which they charge a fee. Answer- No, we cannot accommodate charging for an event within our event.

Amy announced that she is no longer the FFA advisor at Stayton High.

Mike asked if we had resolved what we do with dogs on the fairgrounds. Answer- we have a policy that was reviewed and updated in October. Justine Flora, the county's Risk Manager, came to the fair board meeting to give input on this. *(Denise updated the policy accordingly at that time. She will re-send the document out to everyone.)*

**Meeting Adjourned: 8:33 PM**