

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

**Marion County Fair Board
Annual Retreat**
Oregon Farm Bureau Building and by Zoom
November 6, 2021 9:00 AM

In Attendance

Board Members: Mike Adams, Mark Banick, Joel Conder (by Zoom), Brandi Crandall, Shannon Gubbels, Ken Outfleet, Pam Zielinski

Key Volunteers: Lesley Johnson, Rebecca Turner

Guests: Jill & Scott Ingalls, Ingalls & Associates; Patrick Wood (by Zoom)

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

Meeting Convened: 9:22 AM

2021 Take-a-Ways- The Two Most Important Things from Last Year's Fair (Participants' Ideas):

- We have the ability to “fly by the seat of our pants”
- Develop “What If” scenarios- make committees
- Have a barn full of animals; include an animal educator/ambassador to answer questions. Have a representative of each animal species all in one pen, similar to what a petting zoo looks like.
- Have an educator/ambassador to answer questions in the public competitions area.
- Provide more help with on-line purchasing to drive people to that option.
- Market the dog contests better to increase participation.
- Increase public competition participation through activities like a pie eating contest.
- Have a back-up plan for all health and safety issues including excessive heat.
- The number of emergency vehicles moving on/off the grounds effortlessly.
- Designate areas that each member is responsible for; provide them a gate key for handling evacuations at all exits.
- Local entertainment did well; it appeared we didn't need big name entertainment to attract fairgoers.
- Provide a “check-in” for fairgoers belongings such as coats and “toys.”
- Have a “Voice of the Fair” for passing along activity information; could utilize a Karaoke machine “blasting” out of the back of a pickup.
- Expand the guests stay through two meals.
- Maintain last year's momentum. Pre-sales were a plus.
- Have more activities in Columbia Hall. Cross promote fair events; mini staging- fancy car pointing to the car show. Include 4H activities such as the cake walk, fashion show, etc.

Mile High View

New attendees were generated by pre-sales and marketing.

Complaints came mostly from loyal attendees, not the new attendees. The new people had lower expectations of our fair; the loyal attendees struggled with the increased numbers and having to wait in lines.

Have to balance that “sweet spot” (due to COVID) with the increased marketing. There was a big return on Hispanic marketing.

The fair exit survey, done a couple of years ago, indicated that people love the animals, the small size of the fair, and fair food. We have more interactive things to do than larger fairs.

Rob Rhew, of Funtastic Carnivals, provides us good feedback. This past fair he recommended not selling carnival wristbands; wristbands would have made more congestion at the rides.

With on-line sales, fairgoers felt they had more cash to spend at the fair.

Be more aggressive with social media content building; spotlight animals.

Challenges:

1. Restore the fair for the loyal attendees.
2. Retain the new attendees.
3. Enhance Made in Marion (inclusion, celebrate culture)

Anchors and Sacred Cows

Anchors/Constants- 4H/FFA animals and staff, public competitions, carnival, stage, attractions in place all days such as Pirates’ Parrots; commercial and food vendors, Real Heroes, free parking, The Woods

Special Events/Activities are specific time related events such as the car show, rodeo, Chamber Greeters, BBQ grill off, etc.

- The Ambassador/Educator piece needs to be explored; this touches every anchor. What are the key components to this? What are their identified jobs? Have the person wear a physical identifier such as a t-shirt or a hat.
- Fair Board members should have identifiable clothing.
- Allow area uniqueness.
- Have specialists in their area of the fair; they should also have knowledge of other fair areas. This would not be structured, instead more “organic.”
- In the barns have static demos; this will supplement student engagement with fairgoers. Have a person with a microphone in the barns saying what’s going on and “if you have questions, see....” Set up sub committees for each area.
- Be more inclusive- Made in Marion; bring in more cultures, sections of society.
- When all the areas of the fair are combined, we have 50 hours as potential educational opportunities.
- We can request more carnival rides, up to 17 per our contract. We only had 14 last year due to staffing issues.

Public Competitions (PC):

- Public feedback included have more PC classes and categories. (Note- we limited them intentionally this year due to COVID.)
- Reach out to specific cultures; this is a way to grow the public's involvement in the fair.
- Have more demonstrations and contests like pie eating.
- Improve special contests coordination to align with all scheduled events.
- Invite representatives from the community to sponsor or prepare a display, celebrate history.
- Have World Beat involved with our fair; bring some of their dancers.
- "Spruce up" the display structures/cases. (Not all state fair displays are available to us; the nicer ones were purchased by State Fair's Creative Living Department and are not available.)
- Have a community group volunteer to help improve the displays.
- To better engage the community, reach out to local commodities such as the Marionberry growers. Go to organizational meetings. Place posters in local kitchen stores and venues such as the Konditorei cake shop.
- Social media outreach- start early rolling out content and educating.
- Better signage as to how to exhibit at the fair; on-grounds marketing- "how to" signs directing them to the website.
- Budget more money for advertising.

PC has two main components- static and live contests (pie, cheesecake, Lego, etc.) Demonstrations are a part of special events and activities; this would include the ambassador component.

Special Events and Activities:

Car Show- include new participants such as bikers or Model A enthusiasts. Have the car show evolve over multiple days; different types of vehicles on different days.

Place Real Heroes near the poultry building; they need to be close to a gate for easy entrance/exit.

Hold the Veterans' Commemoration opening ceremony.

Attractions

- Reptile exhibit
- Barnyard Adventures (Canby FFA has a farm trailer; provides "kids teaching kids.")
- Puzzlemania
- Real Heroes- reach out to the Vietnam Memorial folks; firemen do a kid's activity.
- BBQ Grill-off
- Rodeo type activity such as a mutton busting or team penning/roping event
- Mechanical tiny trucks in the stadium on Saturday night
- Pickle ball, soccer tournament, disc golf, and corn hole events all need a person from the community to organize the event.
- Mechanical bull in The Woods.
- Hold company picnics
- Sunday services; bring in cultural celebration pieces. (State fair does a "take over" on one of their event days.)
- Think "inclusion" for all four days

- Local talent encouraged to come in for various contests
- Stage “take-over” by the local performing arts group has worked out well

Big Name Entertainment (BNE):

Questions to Ponder:

- Do we need BNE?
- Do we want the feature in our fair?
- Is the purpose to give the gift of entertainment to the community?
- What do we want out of our stages?
- Can we better manage these resources?

Discussion:

- We’re not going to be the fair that has the reputation of having a nationally recognized act every night.
- It’s not a draw, it’s just added value to our fair.
- Do we keep increasing our budget for entertainment each year? It doesn’t seem to be increasing our revenue as we increase our investment. Balance the investment with the reward.
- We want BNE but we want to keep the cost manageable so that it’s not “driving” the fair.
- There is not a direct correlation between the dollar amount invested and a return on investment to the fair when looking at the data.
- It was asked if our fair suffers competing with the state fair’s BNE? Answer- no, it’s more competition with all the other event’s occurring in the area during our fair time.
- The design of the entertainment package (the act and other events happening that day) is important.
- We need to look at the value of what we do with every component of our fair. Does BNE compliment what we do?

Source Management Input- Pat Wood

- Our fair’s country packages have done well and they can impact “uptick” in food and beverage sales.
- Marion County Fair has a reputation as a “class event.”
- The right act on Saturday night can do well.
- Consider high-end tribute acts to fill the gaps; 70-80’s rock acts sparks good memories for people.
- Put 75% of the entertainment budget towards Saturday night and 25% for higher-end tributes- bands like Journey, Queen, Michael Jackson.
- Consider the secondary stage with local entertainment; programming is important.
- Spend wisely and follow the mission of the fair; make informed decisions.
- Not all of the available money has to be spent.
- There are lots of routing opportunities; isolated dates (or fly dates) are becoming the norm again; artists want to get back to work and are willing to negotiate price.

Entertainment Data Analysis- Tamra

Tamra presented data analysis that Joel had requested regarding the paving trade for state fairgrounds rent to assist in purchasing BNE. A review of the revenue generated and material costs since 2014 was presented.

- We have spent \$155,457 for paving; this money comes from the county general fund.
- We currently have a rental trade value of \$543,315 (since the first project in 2014) to cover rental costs for the next five years, through 2027.
- We've spent \$304,053 in total costs (with the exception of stage and lights costs) for the BNE since 2014. (Stage and light currently costs around \$15,000.)
- In years 2014-16, we spent an average of \$35,151. In the last three years we are averaging around \$65,000 for the acts.
- Tamra is willing to work up other data scenarios upon request.

Discussion:

- For the last fair (before COVID) we were considering spending \$40-45,000 for a BNE.
- Our regular attendees are accustomed to our having BNE.
- Consider inclusion acts like an artist that reaches the Latino community for Sunday such as a "Selene" tribute act.
- There are opportunities on Friday and Sunday; Friday is our weakest link.
- Have a strong Marion County local act for Friday.
- Have Saturday night's act fit the theme, agriculture.
- Joel and Pat will bring some packages to the December fair board meeting for the fair board to consider.

Ken made a motion to approve a maximum of \$60,000 total for two nights of big name entertainment. That figure includes the costs of the backline, catering, lodging and transportation for Friday and Saturday nights. It encompasses everything but the stage costs. Brandi seconded the motion; motion passed.

Discussion on having a three or four day fair

- Thursday is generally not a strong day for attendance. It does not have its own identity; we stopped calling it "Senior Day."
- We lost approximately \$8-10,000 in sponsorship in not having a Thursday fair.
- Is Thursday valuable from a programming standpoint?
- The carnival was happy with only having a three-day fair.
- 4H is on the grounds on Thursday. Last year, 4H parents were disappointed that there wasn't food available to them on Thursday. Perhaps we could provide a food truck.
- Cut down on the Thursday's fair hours as there is a lot of dead time.
- If the weather is bad on one day, it might be better to have four days to make up for the poor attendance on that one day.
- Jill will do an analysis of costs/expenditures and revenue on Thursday; she will bring back the results to the December meeting.
- Scott predicts we won't have the attendance we had this past year, but perhaps we'll have two thirds of that.

Elections

Denise indicated that she only heard from Mike regarding his interest in being the fair board chair for another term. Denise reached out to Brandi who had some reservations about being the Treasurer again.

Brandi indicated that she might not always be around to be the fair board Treasurer and would like to see someone else step up and learn the tasks of the Treasurer.

The duties of the treasurer include:

1. Prior to, and outside of the fair, the limited responsibilities include:
 - a. Reviewing monthly reports that are compiled by county staff.
 - b. Identifying the cash needed for the upcoming fair and ordering via Denise.
 - c. Scheduling the fair armored car deposits pickup via Denise.
2. During fair
 - a. Prepping cash each day for the cash drawers.
 - b. Working long hours transporting cash and reconciling cash drawers, counting cash late into the night after the fair closes.
 - c. Dual custody movement and working closely with the Afton representative in setting up the ticketing sales devices.
 - d. Produce daily deposits for armored car transporting.
 - e. Settle food vendor accounts Sunday evening post fair. (Each vendor has an individual appointment time in which their sales are reviewed and payment made to the fair.)
 - f. Maintain daily spreadsheets of gate entry numbers and food vendor sales.
 - g. Reconcile the final Afton sales reports post fair with Afton and Denise.

Mark volunteered to help Brandi for the coming fair. (Mark will need to take the county's cash handling procedures course in order to be authorized to handle the fair cash.)

Ken made a motion to accept Mike as chair, Shannon, as vice chair, and Brandy as treasurer of the fair board; Mark seconded. Motion passed.

Discussion was held on what should be included on the December meeting agenda:

- Updated 2021 budget document
- 3 or 4 day fair discussion
- Big Name Entertainment
- Member/Point Person Responsibilities (new items include Area Ambassador)
- Review of the Strategic Plan
- Review of the Management Agreement
- Approval of the October 6 and November 6 meeting summary notes

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 1, 2021 and December 16 BOC Work Session

Meeting **Adjourned:** 1:20 PM