

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,

August 7, 2024 5:30 PM

Meeting Convened: 5:32 PM

Call to Order/Introductions

In Attendance

Board Members: Dana Castano, Brandi Crandall, Amy Goulter-Allen, Shannon Gubbels, Greg Martin, Pam Zielinski

Key Volunteer: Rebecca Kaufman

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

Staff: Denise Clark, Community Services; Chris Eppley, Community Services; Cody Walterman, Legal Counsel; Kelli Weese, Community Services

I. No public Comments

II. Approval of July 10, 2024 Meeting Summary Notes- Pam made a motion to approve the notes; Greg seconded. Motion passed.

III. Financial Report

Denise indicated that the regular monthly report is not ready as there are too many outstanding items still to come in. The board would not get a true picture of the post fair numbers.

Brandi gave a "rough estimate" of the amount expected to come in for gate receipts in the mid \$90,000 range. She said this figure is still above budget as we plan conservatively when preparing the budget.

She believes the food vendor revenue is in the \$42,000 range which is above our target. Oregon Beverage is expected to bring in \$12,300.

The parking expenditure is still unknown. Jill said we did some marketing negotiations with state fair bringing our costs down by \$2,000. We sent out a news brief about the state fair to our e-list.

Melanie will get the parking passes numbers used/unused to Denise. She will also give her a contact for invoicing the market auction for their parking passes.

The cost for the ice vendor was higher than expected. There was a power problem causing the loss of ice. However, state fair replaced the ice. There was approximately \$1100 sold through the machine by credit card. The charge for their service should be minus the amount they took in via sales.

We are within budget on the tents as we dropped one and added one.

All Star provided the fans for the barns at no cost to us.

Brandi expressed that it's good we budget conservatively as it reflects what happens when we have variables such as heat and changes in the economy. New jobs have slowed down; the unemployment rate has gone up slightly. We still easily met our budgeted goals.

Scott noted that a lot of events all over the state are down 20% in attendance.

Brandi said the food vendors indicated that they are seeing other events' numbers being down also. Even though their figures are down, she said they gave feedback that they want to come back to our fair as it's clean and our staff is super helpful. They are happy with their experience with us.

Chris observed that we now have three normal years of data points following the COVID spike. This year shows the impact of negative variables- the heat and a down economy. He says we can now budget accordingly. This group needs to determine how much of a contingency we should maintain. Because this is a public body, we can't just store cash; we need to determine an appropriate figure. We should be proud that we came out just fine without the general fund subsidy.

Kelli said we are storing cash to pay for the projected rent we are going to have to pay state fair after the 2027 fair. We also need to plan for a circumstance, such as a catastrophic event, in which we have expenditures but no income. We do need to obtain a dollar figure from the state fair as to what they think future rent will be.

IV. **4H- Melanie**

- Melanie stated that "overall things went fairly well." This was the best year of FFA and 4H working cooperatively. She said Joseph Billington has been a big help with that.
- This is the second year that the 4H/FFA campers have not been provided power, only the ADA folks receive power. She said most campers are okay with it.
- The response to the new security cameras in the barns policy has been a quiet one.
- Good communication has made a difference. They were intentional with rule clarification participants prior to fair. Melanie told participants as far back as April that parking was going to be an issue this year. People followed the rules.
- William White, of Marion County's Risk Management, was really helpful pointing out potential risks in the barns. Participants were respectful and responsive to his directive.
- Load-out went really well. Denise noted however, that she received an angry call from a parent who wanted to talk to "someone in authority." He was mad (using foul language) because he wanted to move out before 6 PM.

V. **Items of Special Interest**

Talent Buyer Contract- Denise

Krista Ulm, the department's Contracts Coordinator, said that the talent buyer's contract ends 12/31/24. It would be easiest to just extend it through 12/31/27 versus doing an amendment. She wants to know if the fair board has any input on the contract and what direction they'd like to go. The fair board indicated that they are happy

with Source Management’s services. Greg made a motion to extend the contract through 2027; Dana seconded the motion. Motion passed.

State Fair IGA- Kelli

Kelli said that our current contract with the state fair is good through 2027. In planning ahead, Kelli would like to establish a subcommittee to determine how we want to move forward. Shannon and Dana offered to be on the committee. The current contract is very vague with no detail. Kelli would like to prepare a detailed amendment for future negotiations.

Brandi asked if we run the risk of opening a “can of worms” as state fair is already frustrated with us. Denise said that our former state fair representative cautioned her that she shouldn’t question things too closely or the costs might go up.

Jill noted she’d like to establish a deadline with them by which decisions need to be made. This year she asked for parking information during the winter and didn’t get answers until months later. Asking questions may open up more expenses to us, however, we can point out how things have been traditionally.

Scott has been frustrated with their assistance with our fair setup for the last two years. He said they don’t stage anything like they once did, bringing things out of storage for us and dropping them in a central location. These days Scott has to go find things himself.

Melanie noted that 4H takes all of their cages off the grounds once fair is over instead of storing on the grounds as they stay in better shape, and she knows where they are located. She said that the chairs that used to show up on Tuesday, didn’t show this year until Thursday around 10 AM.

Shannon suggested that we go back to the old practice of reviewing the work orders with state fair once we submit them. Scott said we submit them, but they don’t get down to the staff level. He said he’s learned to give copies to Karl (fair staff) directly.

Denise said that the atmosphere has changed in our relationship with the state fair. She said perhaps we can improve the atmosphere by introducing someone else to the talks. She suggests Chris Eppley take part in the conversations. Chris responded that state fair wants to eliminate the current IGA; they see us as just renters on their premises. He would be glad to be a part of the conversation.

Scott suggested maybe even bringing in a higher authority such as a county commissioner or a state representative involved.

Kelli said she will add the Ingalls, Chris, and Denise to the committee.

2024 Feedback- What went right/wrong:

Chris said, “It felt good and went really well.” There were no safety issues and it felt well managed. The green gate worked well; the red gate needs improvements.

Jill responded that the red gate has its own physical challenges such as the fire lane must remain un-incumbered. However, it ends up looking blank and industrial in that area. She's working on signage at the red gate. It was suggested to put a few vendors outside in that area.

Jill said they are thinking about moving the flyball campers to the orange gate; that would improve the look at the Aqua gate which is right along 17th Street and one gate down from the red gate.

Flyball wasn't happy parking on the black top. Dustin, their coordinator, worked hard on making the camping work this year.

- It was suggested to go back to having a rock band on Friday night, not two country acts.
- The sanitation people "rock!" When there is a need announced over the radio, they are quick to respond. The grounds were super clean. There were no problems in the barns with overflowing trash cans as has been in the past.
- There is a risk moving livestock from the beef barn to the Forster pavilion for photos after the auction. Maybe have caution tape blocking off the movement area. Task security to be there and watch out for fairgoers' movement. Have a conversation with the auction committee about how to do this more safely. Perhaps move animals in one big group, not as singles; the animals get anxious leaving their buddies. Have a holding pen, where an animal is held until there are multiple to move.
- The Forster Pavilion is half empty; we need to figure out how to fill that up. Have a petting zoo of some kind? When doing so, need to have specific bio security practices in place like a hand washing station.
- Have a petting zoo with farm animals called a "country corral." Add picnic tables around it. Reach out to Canby FFA about using their handwashing trailer. Brandi will give a contact name and number to Jill.
- Melanie liked having FFA displays under cover and also having the FFA advisors present.
- The family circus tent was a hit. However, all the variety shows appeared to be at the same time, so people had to choose which one to watch. Jill responded that she thought she had staggered the show times. She said she knows that the Community Stage and strolling attractions times were all staggered. She will check the signage to see if it wasn't captured accurately.

Security/Ticketing

- Ticketing went well; security did not. Scott said he is reaching out to TCB to discuss the problems. We had paid for security at night; he doesn't think they showed. He's going to check to see if they followed through on that. At fair time, it took multiple calls to reach security; they did not respond in a timely manner.
- The booth ticket takers didn't arrive on time.
- In the past years, the security manager took care of their ticket takers, providing them with water or anything they needed. Brandi had to do it this year.
- Scott feels that there were three security guards that did not appear to be competent at the tasks they were given.

- Parking security did show “grace” where we asked them to. However, the yellow gate was not their gate to monitor. They put a parking guard there and they kept letting people through. It was supposed to be just for entertainers to come through that gate; they were to make a phone call to be allowed through.
- The kettle korn vendor was disappointed that they didn’t make much money. They would have rather been considered a commercial vendor versus a food vendor. *(Note- if food is made on the grounds, they are a food vendor. If made off grounds and pre-packaged, they fit the commercial vendor category.)*
- The bubbleologist was a hit.
- Columbia Hall had empty booths. We had sold out all of the booths, but some did not show. It was suggested to oversell the booths by 4-6 vendors, and we’ll find extra space for them if needed. Another option is to keep a “stand by” list of vendors who are willing to participate at a moment’s notice if a vendor doesn’t show. Jill said they attempt to place things in the empty booths; “staging stuff that we can pop in there.”
- The community stage location was not good; it was not supposed to be outside of the main traffic area as it turned out to be. However, it had to be moved to accommodate a different activity. Because of the heat, people wouldn’t visit the area as it was in the direct sunlight.

Thursday Programming

- Thursday programming needs more discussion. Brandi said we need to look at the expenses associated with Thursday. She is willing to do a data analysis of the expenditures versus the revenue generated on Thursday.
- The late start (noon) was not beneficial. Jill said that we had hoped to start later than that, but the BOC wanted the fair to start at noon.
- We need to make Thursday more meaningful.
- There are 4H/FFA students showing and family members on the grounds that day.
- Have it open at 4PM and have it be free entrance.
- Have an in-depth discussion regarding Thursday at the retreat.
- There isn’t any energy on Thursday.
- If we decide to change it to Thursday, we will need to have a plan in place ahead of time to present the ideas to the Board of Commissioners.
- Have a food share day? Melanie said we have a relationship with the Marion/Polk Food Share. The market auction meat is donated to them.

Other:

- The market auction included 298 animals and grossed \$1.2 million. That figure doesn’t include the “add-ons” post fair. Melanie said that we have really great supporters in Marion County.
- Saturday night’s concert was a big hit. However, once it hit 94 degrees, the gates slowed down. (It was 106 on the previous Tuesday while 4H/FFA were setting up.)
- There were no medical issues due to the heat.
- There were two ambulance calls- a girl got knocked over by a steer; the other a girl went off her horse. On the latter, she did go back to her camper before the ambulance was called.

Shannon said that if anyone has huge concerns, or burning issues, to email them to Denise; otherwise save your ideas for the retreat.

It was noted that there was a “big gap” when one fair board member did not show up at the fair. Shannon said it will be addressed outside of this meeting.

It was suggested that Joseph Billington be approached about being a fair key volunteer as he is no longer an FFA advisor. He’s easy to work with, good with kids, and very helpful at fair time.

Fall Retreat Dates

Jill noted that the sooner we can address changes to the programing, the better. Suggested retreat dates were September 21 and October 12, 19, and 26. Denise will send out a Doodle Poll to find the best date for all.

VI. Ingalls Report

They are calling service providers for closing invoices; some don’t close until the end of the month.

VII. August Strategic Plan Items

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.

Carnival- Kelli said Finance indicated we will have to do an RFP for the carnival contract as there are multiple carnivals out there. We can make it a simple one so Funtastic will be willing to take the time to complete it. Ingalls said that Funtastic’s practice is if they decide they don’t want to respond to the RFP, they’ll just replace our event with another. Fair/events are “hard-up” for carnivals; four fairs lost their carnival this year.

It was asked if we could do an RFI? Answer- Finance said it must be an RFP. Chris suggests the department looks closer into this to determine some better options.

Sound and Lights- This contract needs to be approved by the BOC as the multiple years makes the value over \$100,000.

4.6.4 Hold an August fair recap meeting to address the positive and negative components of the most recent fair.
Done

5.2.4 Review Management Agreement every 5 yrs. (next Nov. 2027)

VIII. Other

Denise brought up that there were multiple commercial vendors that did not follow *the Rules Governing Commercial Vendors*. This is a document that they sign-off saying they read it. Denise is requesting a blanket okay for Denise to not allow these vendors to return next year. These folks did things like treat customers poorly, switching prices on them; or having left Saturday night leaving an empty booth space on Sunday; or they didn’t show up at fair at all. The fair board gave their consent for Denise to proceed as she deems appropriate.

To stop the leaving early, it was suggested to produce a daily vendor letter which includes stats on how many people attended the previous day's fair and reminders that they cannot break down their booth before the end of fair. Have the latter in writing every day, reminding them of this rule, could deter folks from doing so.

Jill noted that Community Services broke down their booth before 6 PM Sunday. Perhaps there needs to be better clarification on the rules for county department booths. Denise said that she had told the county booths' coordinator to reiterate this to the county departments. There is also a rules governing document tailored specifically for them. Part of the problem is that these are county employees who don't work weekends and must be back to work Monday morning. They are motivated to break the booth down as early as possible.

Greg reminded folks to not forget to give Denise their volunteer hours for the month of July.

IX. **Meeting Adjourned:** 7:37 PM.