

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

October 1, 2025

Meeting Convened: 5:45 PM

I. Call to Order/Introductions

In Attendance

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

Key Volunteers: Rebecca Kauffman

Staff: Chip Bury, Community Services Economic Development Manager; Denise Clark; Kelli Weese, Community Services Department Director; Sarah Coutley, Fair Volunteer Coordinator

Guests: Jill Ingalls, Ingalls and Associates; Kristi Duyck, FFA

II. Public Comments

Briana Lee, Gilbert House Children's Museum

Jill said that they have been trying to connect with Gilbert House for a long time. Briana has a history with the Marion County fair as she has performed on the stage many times.

Briana said that the Gilbert Children's Museum is considering having a "pop-up museum" at our event on Family Day. They would need a 10'x20' space and bring "key pieces of Gilbert House" to the fair. They would provide an activity for fairgoers to make a craft. As for the funding, they would partner with us to cover the costs. Other ideas- have a story time, bring their display case into Public Competitions; maybe have a "Gilbert House Corner." Have a child (3-10 yrs.) make a project at the Gilbert House and then display it at the fair in public competitions to encourage future participation in the fair.

Greg asked if we could agree to a price at this time. Answer- that's not realistic as it is unknown exactly what they'll be doing craft-wise and the associated cost.

It was suggested to make necklaces out of paper beads, also to find a craft that would fit into one of the public competition categories.

Jill will continue the conversation into the future and see how a project might be wrapped into public competitions.

III. Approval of September 3, 2025 Meeting Summary Notes

Greg said that it was his idea to approach the City of Salem about presenting a color guard, not the National Guard's idea. Greg motioned to accept the meeting summary notes with his suggested change; Pam seconded. Motion passed.

IV. 4H/FFA Reports

Kristi Duyck- FFA just wrapped up their leadership camp at Aldersgate.

4H- No one present to report.

V. Financial Report- Kelli Weese

The blue highlighted items are still outstanding; items highlighted in yellow are those changes made since last month's meeting.

Denise pointed out that a change was made to the budget document. We are now bringing forward the dollar figure that is reflected in the county's general ledger. This was first done with the 2024 fair, we will continue to do so each year moving forward.

Greg made a motion to approve the budget document as presented; Pam seconded. Motion passed.

Budget Change Request Forms- Jill Ingalls

(These documents were first presented in the September meeting but were not approved.) Public competition flyers were printed and are overbudget. However, we came in under budget in 4H/ FFA printing costs. Signs and banners was over budget; we are moving items around into the correct categories to fix that.

Pam made a motion to approve all of the Ingalls' budget change requests; Dana seconded. Motion passed.

VI. Items Of Special Interest

Sponsorship Commission

Jill requested that this item be removed from the agenda. (They have decided to keep the commission process as is for the time being.)

Meeting Agenda Policy Draft

Denise presented a new policy for putting items on the fair board meeting agenda. She has also sent the draft to Legal Counsel. She will bring the item back after hearing from Legal.

Public Competitions' Management

Chip said that with Rebecca indicating she will no longer be overseeing public competitions, the fair

board will need to fill that gap. Someone from the fair board needs to “step up” and fill this role.

Sarah said that she met with Rebecca to understand her role in overseeing the program. Rebecca has done more than one person can realistically do. Sara asked if the fair board wanted to continue having public competitions (pc) in the future. If so, the fair board will need to provide the manpower. She suggested people reach out to their sphere of influence to bring in additional help.

Kelli said we need a strategy for re-structuring this area, splitting up the responsibilities. She suggests establishing a subcommittee to develop a plan for moving forward. (The pc work starts in January or February at the latest.)

Rebecca said the oversight role should be broken up between 2-3 people. There also needs to be a superintendent overseeing each department. Sarah said that there is high potential for burn-out for just one person; there needs to be a strategy for splitting up the duties.

Sarah said Rebecca has been trying to fill the gap of the overseer and also fill the gap of some of the superintendent positions as we don't have all of those positions filled. She said changes are needed and the fair board needs to decide what it looks like. Sarah said she is happy to assist in the planning.

Jill, Amy, Shannon, and Pam are willing to be on the subcommittee. (The committee can meet virtually if needed.)

Shannon suggested recruiting another key volunteer to oversee the program.

Shannon said she will help with the planning but indicated that she is not able to help at the fair.

The committee will bring a public competitions plan to the retreat.

Made in Marion

Sarah indicated that the idea for having a “Made in Marion” area of the fair has been visited in the past. The Community Services department has a connection with the manufacturing world. She suggests going with the “tech approach;” these are the products actually made in Marion County. They’ve found that businesses can’t staff a booth the whole time; maybe we just have them on Saturday. Jill said that a one-day thing is best on Sunday, not Saturday.

Joe suggested having an ag expo at the fairgrounds like the state fair does. It gives farmers an opportunity to view new equipment.

Jill said that the reason we struggle with this concept is because fairgoers are not the target audience for the companies that make the products. They are sold to other businesses/manufacturers. Ingalls and Associates produce the largest agriculture expo in the Pacific Northwest with 184 vendors. This is held in November because vendors are not available in the summer when agriculture work is in full swing.

Perhaps ag vendors showcase their stuff by just dropping it off; connect them with people who can help do the showcase. Jill has a lot of connections and would be willing to help with this idea.

Maybe have a Pape Tractor representative come.

Jill said that SEDCOR has been at the table before to discuss a Made in Marion type participation at the fair. They indicate we've got a lot of cottage industry in the Willamette Valley. Perhaps, do a farmer's market type thing for people that make products at home. However, you then have a conflict with those in the commercial booth category.

It was suggested to emphasize the workforce aspect (like a job fair) and recruit students for future employees.

An educational display is best. We can provide a display case for them to provide a thumb drive promotional video to play.

The grass seed industry is big in this area; capitalize on that.

Jill indicated that sponsors want to "get in front of the youth" as they are really good hires.

Kids, with parents that have worked at a fabrication shop, are aware of the local manufacturers. Other kids don't have that background, so it's an educational opportunity.

Greg said he could bring in a "dozer" from the military for display, expanding Honor Day.

Create a documentary about Made in Marion.

It was suggested to add to the retreat agenda "Educational Displays/Made in Marion."

OFA Convention Basket Donation

Jill said that OFA is looking for donation baskets for the upcoming convention. She said that they have put together a basket in the past which includes fair tickets. There is a line item in the budget "Fair Board & Staff Conferences" that was used last year for this. Ashley, of Jill's office, is willing to put together a basket.

Retreat Update

Denise said she was asked to approach Sam Skillern about facilitating the upcoming retreat, November 22. Sam does have the date available and charges \$95 an hour. With preparation, a pre-planning meeting, and the retreat itself, he expects to put in around 10 hours. The fair board was in agreement to have Sam facilitate the retreat.

Kelli indicated that the cost should be associated with the 2026 fair budget, not the current budget, as it is for planning the 2026 fair.

Public Meeting Do's and Don'ts

Denise said she recently attended a training on holding public meetings. In tonight's meeting packet she included some flyers and notes she took for information only.

Shannon remembers signing a conflict-of-interest form for the fair board. Rebecca said that she could have signed a document indicating that they had taken, and understood, the conflict-of-interest training. Denise will look into a conflict-of-interest training for the fair board.

VII. Ingalls Report- Jill

Jill said that they are in the process of reviewing the last fair and looking forward to next year.

Regarding the big name entertainment, Jill suggests moving up the lead time in identifying a dollar amount. She said that Pat, the entertainment buyer, is struggling to find acts as they are currently going fast.

Jill is finding that attractions, such as Water Palooza and Circus Imagination, are asking if we want them to return for the 2026 fair, as they need to make other plans if we don't want them back. She suggests adding to the Strategic Plan an August review of past attractions, determining if we want them to return. She feels the November retreat is too late to make some of these decisions. She also wonders if we shouldn't move the retreat to earlier in the fall.

Jill suggests having a hosted reception, or activity, to recruit new volunteers. Board members would bring 2-3 friends/acquaintances to attend the event. It was suggested to talk about this at the retreat.

Ingalls are keeping an eye on the current trends.

Dana made a motion to approve asking Water Palooza and Circus Imagination to hold the dates for our 2026 fair; Greg seconded the motion. Motion passed.

It was suggested to reach out to Emily Nelson, a person who provided positive ShoWorks feedback, to see if she would like to help with public competitions. Jill said that it would be interesting to know if any of those who participate in public competitions, on a regular basis, know that they could be involved further with the fair.

VIII. October Strategic Plan Items

1.2.6 Negotiate agreements with State Fair on parking and fairgrounds rental include dates for move-in/move-out. Jill has already given Darrel, of State Fair, our fair dates. (Amy thinks they want this information now as there is a possible dairy goat show to be held on the fairgrounds in July.) Jill asked Darrel for confirmation on the dates; she has not heard back from him. Chip will reach out to state fair to confirm and set up the annual fair planning meeting with them.

2.1.4 Maximize use of "free media" (press releases, radio promotions, etc.) in addition to traditional print, radio, and television advertisements. Jill said that free media is on-going. Fair posters are becoming popular again. Public input on choosing fair themes is coming back.

2.1.9 Present new fair theme logo to board (if applicable .) Logo not needed.

2.2.1 Fair board members to increase public awareness through presentations, promotions at service clubs, chambers and other public meetings. Jill said that if any members belong to community groups,

she is willing to attend and make a fair presentation. Sarah indicated she can take material to the quarterly chamber meeting.

5.2.1 *Schedule work session with BOC for annual report; prepare docs.* It was suggested to hold this after the retreat, when all the numbers are in, perhaps in February.

IX. Other

Greg said the best thing he saw at the various fairs this year were misters. (In hot weather these are used for fairgoers; you walk under them to get water misted.) He would like to see them at our fair.

Have a list of volunteer duties available for recruiting others.

Denise asked how the board would like to handle food for the coming retreat. It was decided to have Denise purchase sandwiches and everyone else bring complimentary sides.

X. Meeting adjourned: 7:10 PM.