

Mission- 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**

February 17, 2024 8:00 AM- 1:00 PM

In Attendance:

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

Key Volunteers: Rebecca Turner

Guests: Sam Skillern, Kyle Dickinson, Scott Ingalls, Jill Ingalls

Staff: Denise Clark, Sarah Coutley, Kelli Weese

Welcome from Sam Skillern: Getting to Know You Ice Breaker

Virtual Tour of the Grounds- Jill

Jill showed slides of where everything (activities/attractions) are located on the grounds and talked about the components of each.

Columbia Hall (Exhibitor Bldg.) - Commercial vendors are a revenue source for us and we work at keeping them satisfied so that they will return subsequent years. Public competitions and the 4H displays are also located in here. The building has a demonstration stage in which things like making flower arrangements- tying the bow, sheep to shawl, and musical attractions are held. Jill noted that as an event producer that is trying to grow the fair, Columbia Hall activities bring in the community members that aren't "animal people."

The purpose of "The Woods" on Friday and Saturday nights, in the Natural Resources area, is a type of night club. The Board of Commissioners (BOC) opening day BBQ is also held in that location.

The floral building has the "green room" for entertainers to hang-out.

Attractions such as all Alaskan Racing Pigs, the pedal pushers, and Brad's World Reptiles, are specifically placed to draw people towards the barns where the animals are held.

Puzzlemania and Steam activities are located in the Willamette Art Center building/covering. (It's the state fair's *Tap House*.)

Sunday is the only day for the local community acts to use the main stage. We are adding a community stage in the gazebo area next to "The Oaks." The addition of this stage will cost us less per hour to run and is more fit for smaller acts. Adding the community stage fosters more community participation.

The fair needs a stage manager. This person will organize entertainers, greet them, direct them to the correct stage, help meet their stage needs, etc.

The historic horse stadium is only used for 4H activities. At one time we held small rodeo events in there, but we can't get good riders and good stock for a rodeo that time of year; and it was very costly.

Annual Review of Strategic Plan (SP)- Kelli

The purpose of the strategic plan is to identify what all goes on at the fair. It is the guiding document as to how to put on the fair. We review the timely tasks listed in the monthly board meeting. We modify it throughout the year. It is timely, we watch completion dates identify who is responsible for each of the tasks.

There are five goals to the document- *Increase Fair Revenues; Increase Public Awareness about the Fair; Be proactive in Organizing the Fair; Sustain and Increase Fair Activities; Events that Encourage Broader Audiences to Attend; and Increase the Effectiveness of, and Success of, the Fair Board Members.*

We are currently working on an RFP for fair event coordination. Because of the dollar amount it does require the BOC's involvement. If the total amount of the contract (over all of the years it incorporates) is over \$100,000, it requires a fair board recommendation to the BOC for approval.

Fair board members attending conferences is considered continuing education.

It was suggested that the task "negotiate with the state fair" be moved to earlier in the season, like September/October. Jill suggested that she'd like to see a fair board member involved in the "close out" after fair with state fair staff. This is a new procedure that occurs on the day they are leaving the fairgrounds. Perhaps have an additional follow-up meeting a month later.

Dana had questions on Goal 4, Strategy 7 "Expand events for teens, seniors, and families, including culturally diverse activities." She suggests that we need to increase public awareness; have culturally diverse strategies; bring in other populations to orient with those around us. Jill indicated that we are partnering with Enlace (pronounced "en-law-say".) Dana is willing to help identify the strategies.

Kelli said that any other suggested changes to the SP can be brought back to the next board meeting.

Group Exercise- Kyle Dickinson, Salem Leadership Foundation

Kyle expressed that it is nice to be in a room with a "working board;" this board has a "good kind of energy." His goal in this exercise is to establish a sense of clarity as to each person's task.

Activity- Write down on sticky notes, why you are on the fair board, and what is your dream (hopes/wishes) for the board? He said to include their own personal goals, and goals for the fair itself.

Hopes/Wishes for the fair itself (ideas written down on sticky notes):

- State Fair- better relationship; foster relationship; regain a positive relationship; land acknowledgement (*historically the county provided it*)
- Public Competitions- have a house plants competition; have more quilts; have a full team of superintendents and volunteers that return every year; find passionate supers to help lead all areas; increase advertisements to enter public competitions at local businesses and clubs
- Educational Opportunities- more involvement with literacy, perhaps a partnership with the library; more agricultural demos showing the student participant projects

- New Activities- increase/enhance fair activities; have a 5k/10k run; have a sport tournament (soccer, tennis, pickle ball, etc.); bring back horse racing; more local community acts of all ages; expand Honor Day
- Attendance- increase attendance; increase fair access for those that can't afford it; make the fair a destination for residents across the state, not just for locals; fair is for everyone!; fair have a profitable year; maintain money for contingency and increase revenue to increase activities; get more people to come and enjoy; increase fair awareness in the community;
- Fun- everyone have a great time so will want to return each year; have the fair not be so commercial, but be more fun; for all 4H/FFA kids to have a fun and positive experience at the fair and find a sense of belonging with friends
- Cultural Aspects- maintain Marion County's agricultural heritage and history; increase fair attendance by culturally diverse audiences; increase cultural diversity to better reflect our community in all areas- attendance, volunteering, and participation in competitions
- Fair Board- have each fair board member feel valued and have a specific fair role; for our fair to work successfully, our board to work together; I hope that our newly re-built group can feel connected and work positively towards a successful fair; make the board a more cohesive unit
- Miscellaneous:
 - More integration of "barns" events into day sheets and marketing
 - More photo-ops with hash tags for marketing push
 - Have a more "inviting entrance" at the red gate
 - Further message of a strong community fair which embraces everyone, and supports agriculture
 - Explore leadership roles within the fair board
 - Keep professional
 - Increase volunteer numbers, including finding groups or corporate volunteering to "own" an assignment
 - Have county departments have more "buy in" participation in the fair
 - Challenge others to think differently about the fair

Hopes/Wishes for your personal relationship with the fair:

- Improve my communication skills
- Shift toward coordination role instead of the hands doing the tasks
- Attend more fair conferences and learn of opportunities outside of Marion County
- Find my place (role) at the fair
- Find a good job for me
- Be a good partner for my fellow fair board members
- Have my son participate again this year to know the fun and connection to the fair that I grew up with
- Increase my engagement with the Marion County community
- Increase my strategic thinking and planning skills
- To have a fun and safe fair with all of my 4H beef kids
- Provide a different perspective for the fair

Personal Reasons for joining the fair board:

- To support and participate in my community
- It was suggested to me

- To be involved in community events and to ensure future of 4H/FFA at our fair
- To help out
- Internal love for “fair feeling”- childhood, showing, leading
- Wanted to be involved in an activity that mattered to me and my family
- To have purpose
- To support our local agricultural community
- Have a positive impact on my community
- Fairs are an important part of communities and a passion to me so I wanted to keep it a part of our community
- Too many corrections employees die within 5 years of retirement by not staying busy
- Selfless service to the community

Summary- Kyle

The goal is to become a more cohesive unit as there are new members on the board. He encourages everyone to “put principles before personality.” Be comfortable to release each other to do their role at the fair; trust one another to do their part. Allow everyone’s ideas in a meeting. Allow feedback from others. The end result of our efforts is the common goal of putting on a fair for the community.

He said group process for an organization involves Trust, Conflict (working out differences), Accountability, and Results

Take-a-ways:

- Want to leave with a good feeling; not having a toxic meeting. We have a common cause for a positive outcome.
- More attractions/attendance is a reflection of success.
- Be inclusive and recognize heritage at the same time; pulling in other facets of the community.
- Have family members involved and contribute to the community feeling.
- Grow activities/events that don’t have an associated cost; we don’t “nickel and dime” our customers.
- There is a “weird” age gap, the 14-16 year olds (outside of the 4H/FFA participants.) How do we get them to come to the fair? How do we become relevant to those kids?
- Awareness, lack of knowledge is a barrier. Educate the public. There is no age limit for participating in public competitions.
- We have opportunities for the public to be part of the fair such as the “paint a rock” activity. We’d like folks to learn about participation and then have them enter and display something at the fair.
- Barrier- cost of the fair. Look at admission; how to get the low-income households into the fair? Answer- awareness- admission is free if you do something; become a volunteer to get in free. We give away Children of Promise tickets to low-income families. On Family Day (Sunday) children 12 and under are free. Buy tickets early as they are cheaper; stair-step tiered approach to admission. Tickets are \$5 when you buy in advance. We can look at other advertising approaches. We need to identify where to focus our energies.
- OSU extension has a broad outreach to the different cultures. In 4H you can have all types of families and different animals in one club. FFA has a school barn for kids that don’t have land to enable them to participate. Small animals don’t cost as much for a student’s investment. Local performance groups- dance groups have a variety of kids, from various cultures, in them. 4H now has Taekwondo included.
- Talk to Cherriots (bus system) for a partnership program such as free ride if you have a ticket to the fair, or some other offer.

- Change intake days/times to accommodate those living in outlying areas and must travel into town.
- We are lacking public competition help.
- Increase our reach to more volunteers to engage.
- Heritage- where did we come from and what changes have occurred? Our heritage is relevant to people in general and important to them. Need both agricultural and cultural heritage emphasized or we will just be another festival.
- Selfie stations have a tag line, “See yourself at the fair.”
- Keep the “what are the barriers?” and the fair’s mission statement in mind when making fair plans.
- Salem Keizer “reupped” their FFA chapter in the last couple years, that has been helpful.

There will either be a tent or umbrella tables over the community stage.

Bylaws Review, Management Agreement, Conflict Resolution Documents- Kelli

Bylaws- An organizational document as to how the fair board functions. It includes the Mission Statement; responsibilities; relation to Marion County; powers of Marion County Fair Board for authorizing permits/contracts; membership identified; and more.

Allows up to seven board members and unlimited key volunteers. It was suggested that when there is a board vacancy, to not pressure key volunteers to become members, perhaps they are not interested and would like to stay as key volunteers.

There is a requirement to attend all monthly board meetings, only two of those meetings per year can be attended via Zoom. It was suggested that maybe this should be reconsidered; have a further discussion in the future if warranted.

Resignations need to be submitted in a written format and sent to the chair, Denise, and Kelli.

A meeting can be held by Executive Session. We would work with the county attorney to do this. Such meetings have to be held in Marion County.

There are various committees identified. Kelli would like to see these committees put back in place for the 2025 fair.

Conflict of Interest- If you or your family member could benefit financially from a decision, you can participate in the vote, but you need to declare your potential conflict of interest and state that you can make an impartial decision. In the case of an actual known conflict, you declare the conflict and do not participate in the discussion or in voting.

The county does provide Oregon Government Ethics training for advisory boards that the fair board can participate in. (Denise indicated that we have scheduled those for the fair board in the past. Some of the existing members have participated.)

On point 6.5 Minutes, Greg asked for clarification on using the term “minutes” vs. “summary notes.” Denise explained that minutes are very detailed and include how each board member voted on a call to vote. The previous BOC liaison, Com. Janet Carlson, authorized the fair board to produce “summary notes” instead of “minutes.”

Denise noted that the board member re-appointment process has changed. The new BOC would like the position advertised to see if there are any community members interested in filling the position. An existing board member is not

just automatically re-appointed if that was their wish, as they had been in the past. (There is no such requirement for Key Volunteer positions, a person can be automatically re-appointed if they desire.)

It was suggested that the wording be changed to reflect these new reappointment guidelines in “4.3 Term.”

Management Agreement-

This is an agreement between the MC Fair Board and Marion County. The fair board has the right to solicit other person or persons to do the services that the county currently provides.

One of the fair’s goals is to eventually operate by self-governance of funds, not to rely on any county fund transfers.

Finance Contracts- It was suggested to add language around when a contract needs BOC approval per the county policies/processes. (7c.)

Section 14 County Charges for Services- these are overhead costs, what it costs the fair board to have the county provide its services. The figure is a percentage charged based on how much is in the fair fund and the associated expenditures.

Conflict Resolution Document-

To resolve a conflict, a person must first go to the party they are in conflict with to try and resolve it. If there is no resolution, then bring in a impartial third party, and after that another impartial fair board representative. There is both a formal process and an informal process for conflict resolution.

It was asked if the volunteer training requirements should be included in the bylaws? Answer- it is already covered in the Management Agreement.

Identify Board Member and Key Volunteer Roles/Responsibilities

Call to Action; Select Areas of Interest:

Greg is willing to be the point person for Honor Day and also to assist with the bands as main stage host. Jill said that currently the event coordinator team fills the role of Stage Manager which includes identifying the schedule of acts. They are willing to train someone to take on the responsibility. However, the Event Coordinator will always be involved. She would like to see both a community stage and a main stage coordinator.

Rebecca is willing to oversee Public Competitions including the demonstration stage in Columbia Hall, and also help with STEAM ideas.

Jill would like to see someone take over responsibility for the public’s interactive activities.

Dana indicated that she would be glad to help with the Community Stage and shadow the Treasurer to be a backup for that role. She’s also interested in Special Things “DEI, Spanish Language, ADA and incorporating cultures of Marion County.” Also, Citizen Participation, “Collaboration with other community organizations.”

Jill would like to see the performing arts community of Marion County manage the Community Stage.

Greg is interested in the live emcee role, the “voice of the fair.” The person is present all day long. They make announcements as to the schedule of events and what is currently going on at the fair. There could also be a recording that is played.

Brandi is willing to help with “being proactive with the BOC.” Jill would like the fair board to define what Thursday looks like, including having the commissioners welcome the kids and their projects as was done last year. The regular board session that is held at the fair includes an attention getter of a live exotic animal. To have a 4H/FFA student with an animal is too problematic with their own schedule of events. Melanie is willing to send the BOC a formal request to do the opening welcome at the kick-off of the “Opening Exhibitors’ Meeting.” Amy is also willing to help. Jill, Brandi and Amy will meet to put together a plan to present to the BOC.

Jill said we need to identify new community connections. Sarah and Jill can get fliers into people’s hands to reach community groups. If someone has a connection, put up a poster at that organization.

Sam Skillern said that Salem Leadership Foundation (SLF) will make the pitch to their community groups including the Grant Neighborhood Association. Cherriots (the transit service) has been showing up at those meetings; he can reach out to them. Sarah said she also has connections to Cherriots.

STEAM game is an educational program that brings agricultural trivia. We have STEAM ambassadors (dressed up like professors) that draw the public into participating.

Have a real steam tractor from Powerland on display; they have participated in the past. Do some cross-advertising with them.

Shannon and Amy would be willing to oversee the *Barn Ambassador* concept in which there are people in the barns that would talk to the public about the animals. It is hard to find kids available to do this. Perhaps breeders would be interested as they could promote their farm at the same time. We don’t have a petting zoo feature, but rabbits and other small animals can be pet if the animal owner is there handling them. Perhaps have other county’s FFA participants come and help. Canby FFA has a fair trailer. The Oregon Dairy Princesses come and help with this. It was suggested to reach out to the state associations or have a scholarship program.

Brandi will work on the dairy princess connection.

Fair Theme- Jill

Identifying a fair theme is a component of the Strategic Plan. Jill suggests that it is late in the season to change the fair theme “Made in Marion” for this year and it would be costly to do so in changing the marketing/advertising. Perhaps next year is the time to make a change.

Greg made a motion to retain the theme “Made in Marion” for the 2024 fair; Amy seconded. Motion passed.

2024 Proposed Budget- Kelli

There are four different categories/sheets that make up the budget document- There is the *Balance Sheet* which is the summary. There is a *Revenue* sheet and an *Expenditures* sheet which is split between *Operations* and *Administration*. The latter being recurring expenses that affect the fair year after year, not specific to one year.

There is a significant amount of reserve in the fair fund. Kudos were given to our current Event and Marketing Coordinators for contributing to this success.

The overall goal is for the fair to operate as a non-profit. We need to have reserves in place for the “unknowns.” The current Networking Capitol figure is \$791,702.21 (as of 12/31/23.) This is a change in the budget document’s format to include this.

Kelli said we will continue the philosophy of identifying the lowest revenue figures of the past 5 years. For projected expenditures, we used the 2023 final figure and added an additional 20%. She said we could also do a revenue average over the last 5 years if that was preferred.

Shannon asked Scott about the sponsorship forecast. Answer- Election years are “squirrely.” A lot of big sponsors have been acquired. He suggests leaving a conservative dollar figure in that line item.

Brandi suggested that we leave the food booth revenue as is as we don’t know the impact of the state fair and their food vendor participation on our event.

Suggested Revenue Figure Changes:

- Carnival fees- \$30,000
- Commercial space- \$24,000
- Food Booth Fees- \$42,000
- Sponsor Fees- \$65,000

It was asked if the fair received the 2023 General Fund transfer of \$70,000 as it’s not listed on the document. Denise says that usually happens in December. She will check on it.

Scott asked if the BOC would be providing the \$7,000 for the big tent over the main stage? Answer- unknown.

Melanie indicated that the 4H budget has not changed since 2013. She is having trouble making ends meet. 4H is responsible for getting judges (for both 4H and FFA) purchasing ribbons and equipment, and premiums. She is asking for \$15,000 for judges and supplies and \$3,000 for premiums for a total of \$18,000.

It was asked why the FFA dollar figures are listed as they are which is different from the past. Denise said that the county MOU says that we only pay on actuals and that was the 2023 actuals. However, the contract says that they can get up to \$6200 from the fair board so that is what is listed in the proposed budget. Denise said that she has reached out multiple times to Scott Towery to ask about the figures and what they will need for the coming fair. He has not gotten back to her other than to say he will check. It was suggested that Denise reach out to Gerald Hossler instead of Scott Towery as he might be more responsive.

It was asked why the Grounds and Utilities total is up so significantly from last year. Denise said she will re-look at it.

Special Events- Honor Day has \$500 listed. Greg would like his out of town speaker to receive two nights of paid hotel stay as he is traveling from out of town. Greg would also like to give out impact awards, such as a commemoration coin.

Greg said that he has done some checking on hotel costs. Jill said that she is responsible for finding a host hotel for the fair.

Parking fees- state fair will pay for the person that collects the money, the fair will pay for the parking crews that indicate where a person should park.

Electrical charges are a “pass through” fee, what the state fair charges us. It was suggested that State Fair Electrical Charges be changed to \$7500; and State Fair Power Usage be changed to \$3,000.

In looking at the upcoming 2027 state fair Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), we need to identify how power is accounted for. *(Denise will work with the Contracts Coordinator for language inclusion.)*

It was suggested that we change the Armored Car Services figure back to \$2500 as it was originally. We don’t know if we’ll be using just one day of service or multiple days. We also need to ask state fair if we can still use their small safe.

Volunteer Appreciation dollar figure- A discussion needs to be held on how the fair board wants to do the Volunteer Appreciation for the coming fair. It was suggested that the discussion be held in an upcoming meeting.

The “Reserve” is for future expenditures and a contingency. We’ll be talking with the state fair and have a better idea of what our cost will be in the new IGA. At this time, we are doubling the potential rent; the new figure is \$180,000.

The Contingency is for an emergency in case we don’t have a fair (pandemic, natural disaster, etc.) We are using the lowest revenue figure we’ve had in the last 5 years. The figure used to be \$5,000; it’s now been changed to \$30,000.

Greg made a motion to approve the Proposed 2024 Budget with the suggested changes made; Amy seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting Adjourned: 1:30 PM