

*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

January 8, 2024 5:30 PM

**Meeting Convened:** 5:35 PM

### **Call to Order/Introductions**

#### In Attendance

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

Key Volunteers: Rebecca Kauffman

Staff: Denise Clark, Kelli Weese

Guests: Joe Billington, Jill and Scott Ingalls, Ingalls and Associates

**I. Public Comments-** None

**II. New Member Applicant Interview-** Joseph Billington

The fair board interviewed Joe and then agreed to recommend his appointment to the Marion County Fair Board to the BOC (Board of Commissioners). This recommendation will go to an upcoming BOC Management Update and then a BOC board session in February.

**III. December 4, 2024 Meeting Summary Notes Approval-** Greg made a motion to approve the summary notes; Amy seconded. Motion passed.

**IV. Financial Report-** Denise

The changes occurring in the past month are reflected in yellow. There are limited changes. The 4H/FFA camping and stall fee revenue was received. A question was asked regarding the administrative revenue investment interest. Is the amount listed as to what has been received so far and are there many months to go to reach the established figure? The answer is yes.

Greg made a motion to approve the budget report as presented; Amy seconded. Motion passed.

Budget Change Request Form- Conference Attendance: Denise foresees this needing to be increased by \$250 based on currently activity and also what is forecasted. Pam made a motion to increase the *Fair Board and Staff Conferences* line item (59220) from \$850 to \$1100; Dana seconded. Motion passed.

### **V. 4H/FFA Reports**

#### **4H-** Melanie

- Margi, the 4H office assistant, is retiring; her last day will be Jan. 16, 2025. The position is currently being advertised and will close on January 20. It is an "Office Specialist" position. The hours are M-F, 8-5 with some flexibility. There are limited after hours work that is required of the position. The position supports four team members.
- They are In the process of contracting for judges.

- The fair superintendents will meet in February.
- The Fair Book will be out the first week of May.
- There will be a beef weigh-in the first Sunday in February. They are expecting more beef animal projects for the coming fair.

No FFA representative present.

## **VI. Items of Special Interest**

### Updated By-laws (Member Attendance)- Denise

Denise said that she is bringing back the changes that were suggested in last month's fair board meeting discussion regarding the attendance requirements. The language that was added was, " More than two absences in any 12-month period may be considered good cause for removal of a member from the fair board." Dana made a motion to approve the suggested wording changes; Amy seconded the motion. Motion passed.

### Policy Review- Dogs on Fairgrounds Participating in Fair Sponsored Activities- Denise

This review is per the chair's request to review a policy each fair board meeting. There were no questions or concerns regarding this policy.

### Ticketing Strategies/Thursday Specials- Jill

Jill said that during the recent work session with the BOC, they indicated that they want to hold a board session at the fair on Thursday as they'd done in the past. They are willing to be flexible on the time.

It was suggested to have a subcommittee to work on the Thursday programming.

Jill distributed a document, "Thursday at the Fair," to address the challenges, suggestions, and considerations regarding Thursday's programming.

Items included:

- Capture food vendor sales on the first three hours of Thursday as vendors complain it's not worth being open those first hours due to limited sales.
- Work with Afton to capture the number of people that come to the fair those beginning hours; identify if they are vendors/participants or fairgoers.
- We need to determine how late to open on Thursday; last year we opened at noon. (Ingalls recommend we again open at noon on Thursday; fair board concurs.)
- Jill asked that everyone review the document closely before next month's fair board meeting for further discussion.

Melanie would like to see the BOC again attend the morning 4H kick-off meeting to greet the students. She suggested that the BOC bring a treat for the kids. It's a great opportunity for connecting the government with the students.

Another suggestion was to have free food for fairgoers on opening day such as hotdogs. Have the BOC participate wearing an apron and handing out the hotdogs; another connection opportunity for the BOC.

## Tiered Ticketing On-line System Document- Jill

Jill distributed a “Tiered Ticket Sales Strategy Timeline” document. The idea is that the ticket price starts low and increases the closer we get to the fair.

Ideas:

- Industry wide Ingalls are noticing that people don’t want to pay on-line convenience fees. Instead, they will just go to the fair and pay at the gate.
- Jill suggests maybe “go in deeper” with the tickets or have a BOGO (Buy One, Get One) deal.
- Scott has “convinced” the carnival to provide some kind of deal such as BOGO ride cards. The carnival is not willing to have unlimited ride wristbands.
- Have a deal such as purchase a ticket and give matching money to another project.
- Ingalls & Associates are starting promotions and marketing earlier in the year. The price bumps would align with other promotions.
- The fair is willing to absorb the convenience fees early in the season.
- It is easier to pay a fee when the price is cheaper.
- Have the deals run April 16 - June 15.
- Jill said a decision needs to be made on the tiered pricing at the February meeting.
- Have Marion/Polk Food Share participate in a food donation project. (They are a partner with the fair’s market auction.)
- Jill encouraged everyone to email her with thoughts or questions.

## New Logo- Jill

Jill indicated that she had planned on having Ashley, from her office, come and present the modified logos. However, Ashley had a conflict with another meeting tonight. Jill said that she can email the logos out to everyone.

## **VII. Ingalls’ Report- Jill**

Pat, our Entertainment Buyer, suggests going for a second headliner on Saturday night since we had Ned Ledoux last year and are having him again this year. (He will cost around \$25k). It was suggested to have Drake White. The fair board agreed to move forward with this concept.

Ingalls are currently watching what’s selling and what the economy is doing.

The barns setup starts the end of June.

It was suggested that the future state fair contract include language regarding the first right of refusal for any events being held on the fairgrounds directly in front of, or at the same time, as our fair.

Kelli said she met a state fair council representative (Soraida Cross) who is supportive of the Marion County Fair. She encourages anyone to send her emails with any concerns.

## VIII. January Strategic Plan Items

1.2.8 *Review theme days (Honor Day, Ag Day, and Family Day)*- Done.

2.1.2 *Build on broad-based and segmented marketing approach (TV, radio, internet/social networking, newspaper ads, yard/field signs, banners, etc.)* In process. Greg suggests distributing a calendar with entries regarding purchasing a “cheap ticket” by this date.

2.1.5a *Vote on fair theme (if applicable)*- N/A

3.2.5 *Identify and coordinate ground crews to do set-up and takedown*- In process.

4.1.2 *Work with event coordinator on potential entertainment and attractions as a draw for fair attendance*- In Process.

4.2.1 *Identify Performing Arts coordinator for community stage*- Actively recruit a key volunteer to do this. Jill will develop a job description, and a flyer for Sherry Lintner (County Volunteer Coordinator) to recruit.

4.2.2 *Contract with sound and lights contractor*- Contract completed 9/18/24; expires 12/31/27

4.6.1 *Coordinate dog related activities (flyball, Rescue Row, K-9 demos, etc.)*- Flyball is back. There is also a 4H dog show. The sheriff’s office does a dog demonstration. It was suggested to do an adoption event at the fair in the future. It is doubtful we will continue with Rescue Row.

4.7.1 *Develop veteran's recognition program with community-based coordinator*- In process.

4.7.2 *Convene STEAM partners to organize and develop STEAM projects*- In process. Jill will work with Melanie on this. Kelly Nowak and Laura Primm (rural outreach person) are point people on this. Will there be a 4H intern this year? Answer- “We’ll need to get that going.” Denise asked if there will be any STEAM coordination with Warren Franklin and his app. Answer- no.

## IX. Other:

Pam asked if the fair board was interested in donating to the upcoming Swine and Wine auction being held April 10 at the Oktoberfest grounds. In the past the fair board has donated a “package” for Friday and Saturday nights. Jill responded that this is a marketing opportunity, and that Ingalls & Associates create baskets for other organizations. The fair board agreed to donate to the auction. Jill will put a package together.

Kelli reported that at the board session today the BOC approved the reappointments of Dana, Shannon, and Amy to the fair board for another term.

## X. Meeting Adjourned: 7:26 PM.