

Marion County Fair Board

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

Monthly Meeting

Commissioners' Board Room, 555 Court St NE, Salem OR

August 7, 2019 5:30 PM

In Attendance

Board Members Present: Mike Adams, Joel Conder, Brandi Crandall, Shannon Gubbels, Ken Outfleet, Pam Zielinski

Key Volunteer: Amy Goulter-Allen, FFA

Guests: David Beem, Fair Ambassador; Jill Ingalls, Ingalls & Associates

Staff: Denise Clark, Melinda Hautala and Commissioner Colm Willis, BOC Liaison

I. **Call to Order/Introductions**

II. **Public Comments-** David Beem would like to see the fair board have business cards. Denise indicated that she has some generic fair board member cards available; she also has cards for key volunteers.

III. **Approval of Meeting Summary Notes-** Shannon made a motion to approve the July 10, 2019 meeting summary notes; Ken seconded the motion. Motion passed.

IV. **Financial Report-** Brandi

The July 10 meeting budget change request form items approved are reflected in the current document- transportation van increases and the \$500 for Chamber Greeters.

There will be more budget changes to come. Jill said that the Local Entertainment budget should be listed as \$9500, \$6,000 was budgeted. Gabe Cox, The Woods entertainment, was included in the \$9500 figure.

Denise noted that the carnival revenue (\$20,688.26) is coming in higher than projected.

Denise said that she and Sharon Davidson, of the Fair Foundation (FF) discussed the FF's contributions to the fair this year. These included:

- Open Class premiums came in at \$797.
- 4h premiums increased impact was minimal; including the \$3,000 from the Fair Board, \$11,983 was given out in premiums.
- Animal bedding costs were \$3,675.
- This year's Herdsmanship Scholarship total payout was \$200. It was broken down into chunks for various groups. Joel indicated that since the FF is doing the payout, in the future they will work out the process with 4h/FFA for handling the Herdsmanship Award.

Shannon asked Denise if the mini Hereford organizers had contributed to the bedding costs. Denise said that she hasn't heard anything about that. Shannon will check with them.

Joel asked where the merchandise sales of \$319 are listed in the budget document. Denise said it may be included in Permitted Activities, she will check with Lorrie as to where that landed.

Melinda asked about the figure in the Volunteer Hospitality line as she did not spend that much. (Denise will check with Lorrie.)

Jill said that there is \$82,250 in Sponsorship that has been contracted and invoiced.

It was noted that the Silverton banner needs replacing. City of Silverton personnel said it is no longer the correct size and it was not hung this year. (This was supposedly told to us last year; however the information did not reach the right people.)

Attendance/Revenue

Brandi summarized that the total attendance and receipts are up from last year. She feels we are making "positive strides." Thursday and Friday there was a slight increase in attendance; however Friday is still our weakest day and needs improvement. Saturday remained "status quo"; Sunday is our "growing day." She gave compliments to Jill for all of her energy put into building Sunday's programming.

On-line sales and pre-sales were added to the existing report document. They increased this year; maybe the reduced ticket price proved to be an incentive. Tickets in the amount of \$500 were purchased but not redeemed.

- Pre-sale carnival sales increased.
- 4H/FFA on-line sales were added to the document.
- We exceeded budget projections.

Denise gave Brandi kudos for providing the numbers so quickly after fair so Tamra could make a presentation to the BOC. Brandi said that was made possible by Afton having the sales so readily available on-line.

It was noted that janitorial and Cascade Sound personnel attendance numbers need to be included in the counts. (Denise will seek those numbers.)

Budget Change Request Forms

A Budget Change Request form was submitted to add the cost of the fair survey (\$1526) to Fair Administration 525930 (Events and Activities.) Ken made a motion to approve the budget change request form; Brandi seconded. Motion passed.

A Budget Change Request form was submitted to decrease Security Services from \$12,100 to \$10,917.98 and increase Security Gate Ticket Taking from \$7,300 to \$8,349.68 for a net security increase cost of \$132.34. Ken made a motion to approve the budget change request form; Shannon seconded. Motion passed.

V. Items of Special Interest

What went right/wrong at the 2019 Fair

Market Auction Buyers BBQ- It appears that no entry credentials were redeemed. *(Denise subsequently found them as "sold" for \$0 in the Afton Ticketing reports. There were 138 printed and redeemed. Denise will see if this number coincides with the report that John Kuenzi, of the market auction, submits.)* As for participants, the

market auction organizers send an RSVP to previous year buyers. (Students also send out letters of invitation.) Buyers mostly enter through the blue and gray gates.

Car show- Much improved; only four cars left before 6 PM. One belligerent driver left at 3:30 PM. Mike said that if someone says they have to leave early next year, they will be encouraged to turn their cars around and not participate. (This year, both the car show waivers and flyers say that a participant has to commit to staying until 6 PM.) Paul, the DJ guy, was good and very “interactive.” The giving of ribbons was not planned. Mike said that a guy (a volunteer) approached Tamra about giving ribbons; she got them from the fair office for him. Ken said that for next year, he would be glad to make plaques for everyone. The board said that if ribbons are desired, they can be purchased as they don’t cost that much. (Denise said that they are around \$3.50 each.)

Beef barn- Using this barn was new this year. Leaders and parents need to be out in the barn accompanying kids as there are too many obstacles; it’s dark and animals can easily get spooked by things associated with the blue lot campers. The exercise of animals should be done in the show ring instead of open areas around the barn. For next year, they’d like to see state fair clear out more inner parts of the barn. Amy said that there needs to be improvement in the cleaning out of the bedding hay.

Move-out- It was suggested that the blue gate be used for moving out the beef barn participants only; everyone else should use the gray gate.

Colombia Hall- The new layout worked out great. Compliments were given for the look of the entire fair layout.

Family Day Activities- The inside stage needs to have more local acts.

Friday:

- Jill feels that Friday lacked theme and identity. The programming needs to be strong; need to find things that attract both teens and adults.
- Maybe reach out to a younger country crowd on Friday.
- Teens will come for the carnival and for a really good concert.
- Have teens, that are already attending, draw in their friends.
- Reach out to kids through young moms and “grow” new fair participants.
- More discussion needs to be held on this at the fall retreat.

Saturday’s package is strong; build on our strengths such as reaching out to Saturday market auction participants.

Brandi suggested moving the market auction time to earlier in the day so that participants can attend the evening concerts. (Linn County’s market auction starts at 1:00 PM and is done around 7 PM.) Perhaps have the auction meal be a lunch instead of the dinner. Shannon will talk to John Kuenzi about the possibilities. (Add this to the fall retreat agenda.)

It was suggested to add ribbons to the Grill-off for participants “bragging rights.”

Honor Day- There was no bean bag baseball this year and the bingo participation attendance was low. Jill had reached out to other retirement centers about coordinating senior day activities but they are all moving away from doing such events. Maybe have a demonstration/teach of a project and then hold a contest to determine the best project.

Janitorial- There was very few complaints; just some emergency clean-ups occurred. The beef barn garbage was overflowing, however the bathrooms were clean. All janitorial calls go through Ingalls. The grounds were generally cleaner this year than in the past.

The Pirates Parrot Show was identified as the favorite event at this year's fair. It is nice that he educates the crowd and is all about parrot rescues.

ShoWorks-On-site registration is challenging. Should we only allow pre-registered participation as many other fair's do? We will discuss it at the upcoming retreat.

Coloring contest- continue it but only by pre-registration? Print pre-registration information on the coloring page itself.

Rodeo:

- Attendance was down by approximately one third.
- The organizer continues to cut the length of the show down; riders want to leave to participate in another rodeo event elsewhere.
- It's rough stock entertainment, not a true rodeo.
- We could go out for a rodeo RFP.
- There are more Spanish dance horses than cowboy events.
- There are many other rodeos happening around our event.
- Attendees are mostly those folks that are already at the fair; it is not drawing outside folks.
- Have a junior or kids event such as mutton busting.
- It would be nice if the event could be held outside instead of in the small stadium.
- We do have a lot of sponsors on-board because of the event.
- Have a rodeo discussion at the retreat.

David suggested having a wrestling event at the fair. Jill said that there were walk-a-round wrestlers in costume on Sunday.

Security-

- Joel suggested members make a list of security concerns and send them to Jill and then be addressed at next month's meeting.
- There was gate leakage
- There were lots of vehicles on the grounds.

The shade tents were "awesome." Joel said his original concerns about the big tent around the main stage were for naught, it worked out great.

Signage was great.

STEAM- SKEF decreased their participation with the STEAM labs by 50%. However, we didn't receive any negative feedback from fair goers. The focus was on Friday and Saturday; need to add more on Sunday. A lot of volunteers wanted to help with STEAM. Perhaps have STEAM lab volunteers walk around in lab coats to be easily identifiable.

The Woods activity was slow on Friday but was great on Saturday. Gabe Cox and Pendleton Hwy. bands were both very good.

We need to have a way to make public announcements, have a “voice of the fair” to announce what’s going on during the fair. This year flyers were used to direct people to the Woods. Maybe use an emcee on the main stage. Have someone walk around the fair telling people where they can find fun things to do.

Ticketing- More credentials were distributed out ahead of time this year. Jill hopes the cost associated with the mailing of those is feasible. Denise noted that the Real Heroes tickets being distributed through the Ingalls team worked well and the “will call” booth in general really cut down on the traffic and commotion in the fair office. Melinda said that there were times her volunteers at “will call” had nothing to do. Perhaps she should have a back-up activity when times are slow. Jill thought that key times of the day could be determined when “will call” is needed. Denise suggested that security be a back-up when times are slow.

Commercial vendor participation was down. Jill said that Amazon is “killing the industry.” She suggests we not look at this as a revenue source in the future; we did not reach our target dollar figure this year. There were very few commercial vendor complaints. Denise thinks that closing the building at 8 PM and the increased signage made a big difference. Jill said that having Puzzle Mania in the building also helped with traffic.

Commissioner Willis thought the Home Depot’s Kid’s Build was a great family activity; he’d like to see more of that. Jill said she’d like to see more “Make your Space” type activities. The Art Jam area had a “throw a pot” and roku making hands-on activities.

Food Vendors- One long time food vendor is a concern. A fair goer was burned on their arm and a person the vendor hired right off the street was a problem. The Nitro Freeze booth placement was a problem as the booth space takes up a lot of “prime real estate.” (The booth was moved from its original location due to the Fire Marshall’s directive.) The set-up is not appealing; it was suggested to scale it down. The Mexican food vendor needs to be moved to a more strategic location. The board chair suggested inviting the food vendor to a future board meeting to discuss these concerns.

The blue gate has a huge concrete pad; have a coffee and breakfast burrito vendor (such as a food truck) located there to meet the needs of the 4H/FFA families.

The Veterans Celebration event went well; nice stage organization and the Kenny Sears band was good.

All volunteers need to sign-in. Melinda indicated that there were a lot of “helpers” that didn’t get into her system, or if they did, they didn’t sign-in/out their hours. She is referring to helpers in such activities as public competitions, stage help, car show, etc. Everyone in leadership roles (those that over-see an activity) need to have their help check-in. Melinda said that at the very least, post fair give her the number of hours their helpers put in.

VI. Strategic Plan Items- August

4.6.5 Hold an August fair recap meeting to address the positive and negative components of the most recent fair.- Occurring now. Joel thanked everyone present for making an effort to attend this August fair board meeting.

4.6.6 Members to submit their attendance numbers at August recap meeting. Post fair report forms were sent out prior to fair; those that haven’t responded yet were sent a second notice.

3.2.3 *Evaluation of fair contracts, identify which contractors are eligible for renewal. Determine which services should be competitively solicited before the following year's fair.*

- The contracts document was reviewed.
- Denise said that the RFP for the carnival is due tomorrow (8/8). One response has come in so far and that is from Funtastic.
- Shannon has spoken with Krista (Contracts Coordinator) regarding receiving the open class MOU's sooner; she'd like to have them in-hand by the end of May. *(It was an over-sight this year that Shannon didn't receive them in a timely manner.)*
- Many of the contracts are reviewed annually even though they don't expire annually.
- The Zero Waste contract with Garten expires this year.

5.2.4 *Review Management Agreement every 5 years. Next review is September of 2021.*

VII. Other:

Fair Survey- Jill

This year's survey was a "scaled back" survey with the questions coming from the commissioner's suggestions. Intercept Survey Summary:

- Ingalls staff conducted the survey
- Fair goers were surveyed at exit points near gates, but not near the barns.
- There were 36% new attendees, however our attendance did not increase that much. The question is who's not coming back each year?
- How did you hear about the fair? People don't usually know how they heard about the fair; most said "friends."
- How many people in your group? The answer- typically 2 or 4. (At least one or two under the age of 18.)
- Residency- 80% Marion County.
- Albany radio reach is strong with 11% attendees.
- How long at the fair? Average stay is 3.85 hrs. We'd like to see fair goers stay through two meals (lunch and dinner) so we can receive more food revenue. Programming needs to be announced audibly such as, "Don't miss the 2:00 showing of the Pirates Parrots or don't miss the 6:00 rodeo," that kind of thing.
- 62% are not coming back to the fair another day; we need to hand out a coupon to get them to come back. *(Add this to the fair retreat agenda.)*
- Top favorite things- animals, food, and carnival.
- Where do you get your news? People don't really know; some said from Facebook, friends, and radio. From an advertiser's perspective, Jill will be putting more into digital (no radio, newspapers, and magazines.) Traditional marketing isn't working. For their own event they are going to the pixelated market, micro-target marketing in January. Algorithms are affected by boosting and by advertising on Facebook. They want to keep the algorithms as pure as possible; real traffic occurs when people share organically rather than buying advertising.
- Jill said that for a future fair survey she would like to see a marketing twist added to it. *(Add this to the fall retreat agenda.)*

Melinda noted that the information table volunteers said that people wanted a map along with the day sheets that were handed out. Jill said that the vendor booth layouts had a partial map included.

Commissioner Willis liked the Real Heroes area. Melinda said that she observed, from her location across from them, that young fair goers liked being able to climb on the vehicles.

Jill noted that the Salem Riverfront event, which was held the same time as our event, was poorly attended.

Melinda reminded folks that the Volunteer Appreciation Event will be held the evening of September 12 at the state fairgrounds; the contract with the state fair is done. All are invited to attend to show their support of fair volunteers.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:44 PM.