

Calhoun County Agricultural & Industrial Society
Minutes of Board Workshop
July 2, 2020 – In Person and Virtual/Remote Meeting - 7:30 PM

Call to Order

The July 2, 2020 Board workshop was called to order by CCAIS Board President, Bruce Rapp at 7:31 pm through in-person and Virtual/Remote means.

Attendance with Roll Call was conducted by Susan Baldwin.

Present at the fair office: Bruce Rapp, Steve Benham, Jim Olds, Teri Letts (7:52 pm.), Chip Riddle, Lisa Sands, Steve Swafford, Doug Wildt. Present virtually: Susan Baldwin, Bill DeSmet. Excused: Hope Horton. Also present: Jen Rice

Board Workshop

Financial Report – Bill DeSmet provided an update on the current financial status of CCAIS. Not much has changed since the last report. Cash flow remains very low due to the Covid-19 situation and events that have been canceled by the promoters and those renting the fairgrounds. He and Jen continue to watch the expenses carefully. He reported that \$15,000 had actually been received in the special request organized by Bruce Rapp for donations toward the mortgage payoff.

Bruce Rapp reported that he has received a total of \$26,200 in verbal commitments toward the mortgage payoff. (Some payments have been received as noted in Bill's report.) Bruce suggested telling people who still want to donate that the money could be used for roof repairs on the fair office. There was general support for this suggestion from the Board members.

Chip Riddle stated that the Board and membership owed Bruce many thanks for his idea to seek special donations for the mortgage payoff. The Board expressed its appreciation.

Bill DeSmet suggested making sure that Brenda Hunt, CEO of the Battle Creek Community Foundation, be informed about the mortgage payoff. BCCF was very helpful in working through the financial challenges back when the mortgage was taken out.

City of Marshall Water Main – Bruce Rapp reported that he and staff are working on a solution to the water main issue. He is suggesting asking for a grant from Cronin Foundation to help handle the costs.

Grants Update – Jen Rice reported that she is applying to the Marshall Community Foundation for a grant of \$10,000 to help with Covid-19 related financial issues. She shared the application language, which explains that most of the fairground events have been cancelled. Sponsorships have declined substantially. In discussion, Board members suggested also including information about damages to the grounds from the recent storm. Jen reported that she filed the damage claims but has not heard back from the insurance representatives.

Fair Status – Jen Rice reported that, as planned, she met with Eric Pessell, the Health Officer for Calhoun County, regarding the possibility of holding a traditional fair. Mr. Pessell stated that there was no chance of holding the fair. No matter what type of gathering CCAIS might plan, there would be many prohibitions: no camping, no food vendors, no grandstand events. He indicated that the covered arena could be considered “outside.” As of now, could do the classes as “day at a time” events. If the fair did decide to put on some type of event, plans for how the events would be run would have to be developed, should be run by the Health Department, and the Board would be responsible for enforcing the plan. Jen discussed options that could meet health department expectations. “Show and go” programs could be developed that would comply with agricultural event status. Only the exhibitors and their immediate families would be able to enter the grounds. Would have to prevent gate crashers. Masks would have to be worn and social distances maintained. Steve Benham mentioned that some shows were not requiring youth to wear masks in the arena.

Jen had spoken to Hope Horton prior to this workshop regarding whether the Lifestock and Non-livestock Committees should meet to develop plans to present alternatives.

Chip Riddle stated that he felt the Board should vote on whether to have a fair. He expressed concerns given the costs and limitations due to Covid-19. Board members wanted to have more discussion.

Doug Wildt stated he didn’t feel that CCAIS could have premiums for the kids, and should not have the livestock auction given the circumstances. Steve Benham mentioned that Jackson County was having a jackpot show, and that the only way to put on a livestock auction would be virtually but it would be expensive. FFA was putting the show on for Jackson. Doug stated that Branch County was doing a junior livestock show. He feels the biggest classes in our county would be the swine classes. Some shows this summer have had 150 to 200 pigs. He is concerned about participation.

Teri Letts shared that she heard some kids had gotten rid of their animals already. Lisa Sands felt that our best option was to call the fair off.

Doug explained how a jackpot show would work. The event organizers would charge competitors about \$30 to enter. Animals would be shown and the winner in each class might receive a small prize. The winner of the whole show would receive perhaps as much as \$400, depending on entries. At the end of the show, the animals would go home with the kids. If CCAIS put on this type of show, we would have to decide if we would open it to any kids, or just those in the county. The Board then discussed in detail the options to privatize shows. There were many concerns expressed about costs for CCAIS to put on a show. The Board also discussed how to schedule shows run by other groups where CCAIS is not unwriting the costs. Doug noted that CCAIS will have to refund the entry fees received so far in ShoWorks.

Steven Benham stated it would cost at least \$2000 to do a virtual auction. Teri Letts stated she has heard from some people asking how they could support an auction. The Board discussed that the kids would have to market their own animals if there is no auction. There was support for recognizing that this is a unique year and while it will be a challenge for the kids, marketing their own animals would be a learning experience.

Susan Baldwin asked about the costs to CCAIS to have the grounds ready to have a Show and Go type of event. Steve Benham stated that any groups renting the grounds could be charged for cleaning. Jen also stated that a private group would pick up costs. CCAIS would have expenses such as water, electric, some employee costs, liability insurance, mowing the grounds.

Lisa Sands moved to cancel the fair with an option to offer the grounds based on recommendations from the Livestock and Non-livestock Committees for other shows. Chip Riddle seconded. The Board discussed the motion and all of the concerns expressed, including the health department requirements, the costs and possible liability for any Covid-19 situations that could arise. After Board discussion, Lisa Sands amended her motion to simply propose that the fair be cancelled. Chip Riddle accepted the change and seconded the motion. Vote on the motion was all in favor – roll call vote taken, unanimous vote in favor 10-0, none opposed.

As the Board wanted to have options for those youth who may still want to show animals, Doug Wildt moved that Livestock promoters be encouraged to reach out to the CCAIS fair office to set up shows to accommodate area youth. Lisa Sands seconded. Voice vote taken – all in favor 10-0, none opposed.

The Board then discussed how the Superintendents could be involved in any shows by promoters.

Bill DeSmet noted that youth entries would need to be refunded quickly now that the fair was cancelled. Jen will work on refunds.

Doug Wildt called Colleen Albright from Branch County fair to ask about recommended language on how they handled cancellation of their fair and whether any shows are being put on by outside groups. The Junior Livestock group is putting on the Branch youth show – it is a special organization within that fair. Branch is not having an auction. If the kids arrange their own buyers who are not taking the animals, Branch is arranging one delivery to processing.

The Board asked Jen to draft a letter to be posted regarding the decision to cancel the fair. Jen will draft a letter and send to the Board for review on Friday.

The Board discussed the process for releasing the announcement. Jen will contact the paid vendors on Friday. The letter will be posted in the afternoon on Facebook and to the press, once the Board has reviewed it.

Adjournment – There being no further business to come before the workshop, members adjourned the workshop at 8:50pm.

Submitted by Susan Baldwin, Board Secretary