

Barbour County Commission Meeting  
EMERGENCY MEETING  
August 26, 2021  
10:00am

SUSIE CVECHKO COMMISSION PRESIDENT, JAMIE CARPENTER COMMISSIONER, DAVID STRAIT COMMISSIONER, CONNIE KAUFMAN COUNTY CLERK, SHANA FREY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Kim Lewis, Brad Johnson, Marybeth Hovatter, Megan Dumire, JC Price, Izzy Knotts, Dylan Harper, Corey Brandon, Dr. Cecil Holbert, April Sinsel, Jennifer Burner, Jean Clark, Sabrina Beal, Jody Carpenter, Ronnie Helmondollar, Brett Carpenter, Teresa Nestor, James Sandy, Sherri Summerfield, Ron Schoonover

Susie Cvechko called the Emergency meeting to order at 10:10am.

The commission meeting was held via conference call.

The purpose of this emergency meeting was to discuss and take any action regarding the Barbour County Fair and COVID-19.

Commissioner Cvechko began the meeting by referring to a letter from the Barbour County Health Department mandating the 2021 Barbour County Fair cancellation due to the ongoing rapid increase and a record high incidence rate of active COVID-19 cases in Barbour County. A letter was also received from the Belington Fire Department Chief supporting the decision to cancel the Fair to help protect our community and those that serve and protect it.

Commissioner Cvechko made a statement, as the Commission President, explaining that Barbour County is currently number one in state with COVID statistics and that we have to be mindful of our public education system and our children. Health officials predict that Barbour County will see a peak in cases around mid-September.

Commissioner Cvechko opened the meeting for discussion.

Students at Belington Middle School were given the chance to explain why they would like to have the opportunity to hold the livestock sale and show. Commissioner Strait asked the students if they were concerned with catching COVID at the livestock show more than during everyday life. The students responded that they did not have a greater concern but felt that mask wearing and hand sanitizing during the show and sale would need to be enforced.

April Sinsel, Fairgrounds Event Coordinator, asked if there would be a possibility to hold a livestock show and sale by itself, mentioning that areas around us are continuing with livestock events. Commissioner Carpenter added to the conversation that it needs to be determined whether or not the livestock show could be held independent of the fair and this is something that should be evaluated.

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Commissioner Strait added that everyone with reasonable thought should agree that we can't have an estimated 20,000 exposures in Barbour County, however suggested setting an attendance limit on the grounds or shut it down, agreeing with Commissioner Carpenter that they can't pick and choose who can and can't use the grounds.

Dr. Holbert reported that the biggest concern is the timing of the spike in COVID cases and potentially having a large number of people showing up in one location. He noted that the practicality of social distancing at the Barbour County Fair is very limited and mask mandates would be obsolete once people entered through the gates. The Fair would create a scenario that could have a catastrophic impact on our community. Health officials are not opposed to continuing with events that can be monitored and safety precautions enforced.

Sabrina Beal, Barbour County 4H Extension Agent, reported that thirty-three families would be showing livestock that consists of fifteen Beef exhibitors, eleven Lamb exhibitors, thirty-nine Hog exhibitors, and fourteen Goat exhibitors. Ms. Beal explained that they can split the exhibits and classes to limit crowd sizes, expecting no more than fifty people at once. She is willing to do whatever needed to make the events happen and also suggested doing the show in the outside arena.

Jody Carpenter explained that he is currently at the Randolph County Fair, of which has also been cancelled. He explained how their Livestock show and sale is continuing and what they have modified in order to meet safety procedures. He feels that with modifications, events could still happen safely.

Commissioner Cvechko asked if livestock events were to be held, could the schedule be met due to modifications. Sabrina Beal suggested to keep the same schedule due to several factors including judges, animals being at their peak, butchering has been scheduled, etc. She confirmed that the Livestock Association ran the show and sale and is independent from the Fair.

Ronnie Helmondollar, WVU Extension Program Director, reported that they are in support of the Livestock Association's plan that is in place and by working with the Health Department, Fair Board, Extension Office and Commission, an opportunity could be provided that is safe and will give young people finality with their animals.

April Sinsel also added that there are six Equestrian teams and in order for them to finalize projects, they need to hold their clinic on Sunday. She is requesting that these kids have consideration as well.

Teresa Nestor, Fair board member, reported that livestock events have been held in conjunction with the Fair for 45 years. Livestock, fruits, grains and vegetables are important and intricate parts of the fair. The Fair board typically pays premium fees and judges. Ms. Beal suggested that the Barbour County Livestock Association would absorb all fees and expenses.

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While listening to conversations, Marybeth Hovatter asked the students who joined what was the most important to them- the show, the sale, etc. The students agreed that the most important piece is to be able to show what they have accomplished with their animals.

Jennifer Burner added comments that the Health Department would not be opposed to having portions of the Fair as long as they can put protective measures in place. Further discussions are required to determine capacity, limits and safety measures. She discussed that being at the base of a surge, having an event such as the Fair in full capacity, could cause further shut downs. She explained that the letter from the Health Department to the Fair Board was received quickly in an effort to help the Fair Board recoup some of their funding due to cancellation.

Ms. Burner explained that organizations could submit a safety plan that details the time frame, number of people at any given time, space size, if outside/inside, how the event will be monitored and transitioned, etc. The approval turnaround time from the Health Department could be quick.

Ms. Burner stressed that the mission of the Barbour County Health Department is making decisions that are best for public health, stressing that all or nothing is not an option. She suggested that if there are pieces that can be carried out safely, consider allowing them to happen. She reported that the Barbour County health care staff is already very near capacity and while the Health Department wants to find safe ways to do events, some events cannot happen at this time. Public health is the number one priority.

Sabrina Beal feels confident that a plan of action can be developed in order to make the Livestock event happen.

Discussion was held regarding the Barbour County Fair Queen pageant and what can be done to make it happen.

The Fair Board is in support of continuing with the Livestock sale and show and support the decisions of the Health Department and County Commission.

Commissioner Carpenter added that he appreciates everyone coming up with a rational decision and attempting to keep things moving in the right direction while continuing to support our kids and community as well as keeping everyone safe.

The Health Department's mission is public health and they appreciate the collaborative support when presenting a central message to the community to have trust in the Health Department when determining what is best regarding public health safety.

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Following multiple discussions, Commissioner Cvechko made a motion to allow for events that are approved by the Barbour County Health Department from a public health perspective on a case-by-case request, Dave Strait seconded. 3/0

On a motion by Susie Cvechko 11:40am, seconded Jamie Carpenter. 3/0

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Susie Cvechko, President

Barbour County  
Cornie L. Kaufman, Clerk  
Instrument 265115  
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