

City Council – Action Request Form

Date: September 20, 2021

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Ben Rowe, Assistant City Manager

Council Action Requested:

Authorization to Hold the 2021 Carolina Classic Fair (North Ward)

Strategic Focus Area: Economic Vitality and Diversity

Strategic Objective: Promote Travel and Tourism

Strategic Plan Action Item: No

Key Work Item: No



Summary of Information:

Last year, due to the global pandemic, the City of Winston-Salem cancelled the 2020 Carolina Classic Fair. It would have been the inaugural year for the new name. As a result of the cancellation, the Winston-Salem Fairgrounds lost over \$3 million in revenue from the fair alone. Even with reduced expenses, the Carolina Classic Fair suffered a loss of \$550,000.

Prior to the cancellation of the fair, City staff had developed a restricted opening plan to facilitate social distancing to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. While vaccines have been developed and administered since that time, community vaccination rates have not met federal and state goals. In addition, the more aggressive Delta variant has led to an increasing number of infections and hospitalizations, especially among the unvaccinated population. City staff have been consulting with Forsyth County Health Department officials on developing protective measures, consistent with federal, state, and local health guidelines, to mitigate any spread of COVID-19 and its variants. The Carolina Classic Fair is scheduled to be held October 1-10.

Over the last few months, City staff have developed an updated Health and Safety Fair Opening Plan to incorporate the federal, state, and local guidelines for holding large-attendance events.

Committee Action:

Committee

Action

For

Against

Remarks:

The following is a summary of the new Health and Safety Fair Opening Plan for the 2021 Carolina Classic Fair. The full plan is included with this information item.

- Encourage gathering on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday for attendance.
- Face coverings are required indoors and strongly recommended for all Guests. If you are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, staff believe that for guest safety it is best to not attend the 2021 Carolina Classic Fair and increase exposure.
- The 70-acre Fairgrounds Facility will monitor attendance of guests at any one point in time. Should the Fairgrounds see an overwhelming attendance particularly on the midway ride area, staff reserve the right to hold gates to allow the crowd to disperse.
- Tickets strongly encouraged to be purchased via website or mobile app. All admissions will be touch free when possible.
- Indoor buildings will have one-way flow where allowable.
- Carnival operations will maintain social distancing between employees, conduct frequent and daily sanitation of rides and touch points, separate ride guests by families and as requested, and place hand sanitizers at all game stations.
- All entertainment will be outdoors.
- All food and beverage vendors will work closely with the Forsyth County Department of Public Health and follow best practices.
- There will be signage throughout the fairgrounds to remind guests and employees to practice social distancing and to wash hands regularly and entertainers to remind guests before each performance or show.

Unlike other venues for mass gatherings such as concerts, movie theaters, and sports arenas or stadiums, the fair is differentiated along the following lines:

1. The fair can manage admission capacities as needed on the grounds to allow for appropriate social distancing.
2. One hundred percent of fairgrounds dining will occur outside.
3. Exposure time between non-same-household sheltering family members is somewhat limited and completely controllable by the fair's guests themselves.
4. The fair's guests freely move throughout the 70-acre outdoor portion of the fairgrounds and tents. The fair's guests are not sitting in a single location,

elbow-to-elbow, for extended periods of time.

5. Nearly 80% of the fair's attendance is made up of family members, those who live in the same home, or those who regularly congregate together.
6. Additional sanitizing stations, specifically at entry/exits and concentrated food locations, will be installed.

Staff presented the new Health and Safety Fair Opening Plan to the Fair Planning Committee and Public Assembly Facilities Commission on September 9 and September 13, respectively, to receive feedback on the proposed plan. The members of those appointed boards supported the measures outlined in the plan.

City management presented the plan to the Community Development/Housing/General Government Committee on Tuesday, September 14. During the discussion of the plan, Council Member Burke asked about the number of children under 12 who attend the fair. Based on 2019 survey data, 16% of attendees were 17 or under, which is equivalent to 48,000 of 300,000 attendees. Of that number, staff estimate that 24,000 would be ages 6-11, according to the survey results.

As a result of the committee's discussion, City staff propose the addition of the following measures to the Health and Safety Fair Opening Plan.

Additional Measures Proposed for the 2021 Carolina Classic Fair

- **Mandatory masking at all times in all areas of the Fairgrounds (indoors and outdoors) during the fair**
- **Police officers assigned to the fair will be compensated at overtime rates, as a form of premium pay.**

At the City Council's meeting on September 20, the Mayor and Council will consider a motion to move forward with the 2021 Carolina Classic Fair.