



The Big Fresno Fair Operational Update 10/21/20

Attributed to Stacy Rianda & Lauri King, Deputy Managers, The Big Fresno Fair

The Big Fresno Fair was thrilled with the results from Drive-Thru Eats and the incredible support from the community. During the 10-day food and entertainment event nearly 26,000 cars passed through the Fairgrounds to enjoy this adapted version of The Big Fresno Fair, a 137-year Valley tradition.

This outpouring demonstrates that the community values the use of the 165-acre Fairgrounds, even in an adapted format. The public can expect future events like the Fresno Home & Garden Show (October 23 – 25) and Holiday Fantasy of Lights Show (November 27 – January 3) at the Fairgrounds – all operating within CDC and State health and safety guidelines.

Since March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown most Fresno Fairgrounds business operations, there has been minimal revenue to sustain ongoing operations. Therefore, the Fair adjusted to financially survive a long-term pandemic with an uncertain end by reducing expenses including staffing.

As a self-funded entity of the State, Fair Management and the Board formally entered into a process with the California Department of Food and Ag, Department of Personnel and CalHR to prepare layoff notices to all 26 full-time employees as of August as a precautionary measure since allowed public events were unknown at that time. These 120-day notices are effective as of December 16, 2020.

Based upon the allowed operations to-date, Fair Management will continue with a reduced staff of 8 full-time employees effective December 17 and into 2021. These positions encompass Management, Accounting, Administration and Maintenance.

Without knowing the future of public events and what is permissible by the CDC and State amid the ongoing COVID-19 health pandemic, the focus of the Fair is to continue raise funds through the Friends of the Big Fresno Fair and hold adapted public events within health guidelines.

There are a number of programs and organizations championing support of fairs throughout the State and Nation including Western Fairs Associations (WFA), International Association of Fairs & Expositions (IAFE) and several independent fairgrounds' efforts. All are working to lobby support of the fair industry as a whole, an industry that contributes \$4.67 billion for the U.S. economy and supports thousands of jobs. Locally, The Big Fresno Fair annually contributes more than \$77.1 million in economic impact to Fresno County.

