



Fair Complex Closes Four Buildings Due to Structural Hazards



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why are these four buildings closed to the public?

A recent structural assessment revealed the Main Exhibit Hall, Milking Parlor, Sheep Barn and restrooms near the livestock area represented a ***severe life safety hazard to the public*** because the aging structures had weakened over time. County staff met in person with the assessment team from Scott Edwards Architecture, to clarify our understanding. On March 1, 2018, building and fire inspectors from the City of Hillsboro viewed all four buildings and issued their own statement regarding the situation, indicating they concurred with the findings of Scott Edwards Architecture's report. Because safety is our highest responsibility when it comes to the events and activities at the Fair Complex, we agreed that all four of these structures should be closed immediately. The remaining buildings on the fairgrounds were also evaluated and found to be safe for this year's fair and other upcoming events. With some improvements and repairs, use of these additional buildings could be extended 15 to 30 more years, according to the report.

Q: What is happening to the events that were to be held in the Main Exhibit Hall?

County staff has worked quickly to inform the event producers of the new status of the Main Exhibit Hall. These producers are now considering alternate venues to hold their events and County staff has also recommended alternate locations and contacts. Some of the smaller events have been able to transfer over to the Cloverleaf Building. *We appreciate the patience and support we have been shown by all of our event promoters and users of the Fair Complex as we work through this process.*

Q: What is the plan for exhibits and livestock at the Washington County Fair this year?

Our goal is to minimize the impact of these closures on the Fair scheduled for July 26 - 29. For example, we are working closely with 4-H representatives to ensure that youth will continue to have a positive experience at the County Fair, including their animals and livestock projects. What that experience looks like is still taking shape.

Q: Will the construction of the Event Center be expedited?

Unfortunately, no. Design development is already underway and pre-construction activities (permitting, general contractor selection, etc.) will continue until late 2018 when construction will start. The completion date is expected by fall of 2020.

Q: What are the next steps?

The Board of County Commissioners created the Fairgrounds Advisory Committee (FAC) in 2010 to get recommendations about plans and future improvements at the Fair Complex. The FAC met on March 1, 2018, to discuss the findings of the structural assessment and receive public input. On Tuesday, March 6, the Board of County Commissioners approved a plan to close and remove the 66-year old Main Exhibit Hall. They specified that this should occur as soon as possible to allow Fair Complex staff as much time as possible to clear the area for safe usage during the upcoming County Fair event in July. Three additional buildings which were also deemed unsafe, the Milking Parlor, Sheep Barn and restrooms near the livestock area, will remain closed as staff obtains further information regarding the cost and feasibility of repairs.

Q: Why can't volunteers fix the remaining buildings?

We appreciate the interest and commitment to our fairgrounds. Under an agreement with the Fair Board, Washington County is responsible for making any improvements or repairs on the fairgrounds. We must also follow all of the City of Hillsboro's planning and code requirements as well as County policies and procedures. Our focus will be on finding solutions that result in improvements that last for decades and allow for revenue generation benefitting the on-going maintenance of all the structures on the fairgrounds. To do this, future structures will need to be built for flexibility, allowing both traditional usage during the annual fair event as well as for other uses the rest of the year.

Q: Was the structural assessment of the Fair Complex buildings performed by the same firm who is designing the new Event Center?

No, the County relied on a previously negotiated contract with Scott Edwards Architecture to perform assessments of County buildings as needed. Their firm provided the assessment and final report. The new Event Center is under design by LRS Architects, who also designed the Hillsboro Civic Center and the Linn County Fairgrounds.

Q: Did County staff have the authority to "condemn" the buildings at the Fair Complex?

Under a 2010 agreement between the Fair Board and the County Board of Commissioners, responsibility for the management of the County-owned fairgrounds and all the County-owned property located there rests with the County government organization, except

during the period of the County Fair event. After consultation with the County's Risk Management Division and County Counsel, the County Administrative Office directed Fair Complex staff to close the Main Exhibit Hall, and other buildings deemed unsafe, to protect life safety.

Q: Did the City of Hillsboro actually condemn all four buildings?

No. However, Fair Complex staff did communicate with representatives from the City of Hillsboro Building Department and Fire Department and provided them a copy of the structural assessment report prepared by Scott Edwards Architecture. On March 1, 2018, building and fire inspectors from the City of Hillsboro viewed all four buildings and issued their own statement regarding the situation, indicating they concurred with the findings of Scott Edwards Architecture's report. They also stated their confidence in the ability of Washington County to manage the issues without involvement from the City of Hillsboro and asked that the City be kept informed regarding next steps.

Q: Is the County planning to eliminate all of the barns to make room for the new Event Center?

No. The new Event Center will be located on an open section of Fair Complex land closer to the MAX station and the corner of NE 34th Avenue where it meets the roundabout on Veterans Drive. The Event Center is not being constructed where the barns are located.

Q: Is the Maintenance Compound being relocated to one of the barns as a result of the construction of the new Event Center?

No, the Maintenance Compound is not moving to one of the barns. However, the County is considering various options for possible relocation of the maintenance shop, materials and equipment.

Q: Are you currently following the Master Plan for the Fairgrounds, created in 2007?

In an effort to ensure long-term stability of the County Fair, as well as the ability of the Fair Complex to meet the needs of the wider community well into the future, the Board of County Commissioners initiated a strategic planning process in 2007. This effort led to the creation of a "Fairgrounds Master Plan" by a 15-member Fairgrounds Revitalization Task Force, representing a broad range of interests. Their work also included a [comprehensive report](#) which detailed their findings and recommendations to the Board.

In an attempt to move forward on Phase 1 of the Master Plan, voters were asked in November 2008 to approve a property tax measure which included the construction of a new Event Center. The measure failed (30 percent "Yes," to 70 percent "No"), as did previous ballot measures involving additional property tax revenue to fund the project. Although now best understood as conceptual, the Master Plan remains the foundational document for revitalization and enhancement of the Fair Complex. Its flexibility has allowed for review and refinement over the years, reflecting changes related to new opportunities, potential funding sources and cost increases.

The construction of the Event Center is happening now without raising property taxes, due to major funding from the County's Gain Share and Transient Lodging Tax revenue, an \$8 million contribution from the City of Hillsboro, and a \$1 million donation from the Washington County Visitors Association.

Q: Are there plans to update the Master Plan?

A review and update of the Master Plan is possible, in light of new opportunities associated with the Event Center and the challenge to address the need for modern, updated structures that can reliably and sustainably support the County Fair as well as other community needs and interests. More information will be provided as plans take shape for this endeavor.

Q: Is it true that the original parcel of land where the Fair Complex is located was donated to the County?

No. County records confirm that on February 25, 1946, the Washington County Fair Board, consisting of Elmer Guerber, Harry Schmeltzer and A.H. Abts, voted to accept an offer of H.W. Ray for purchase of approximately 80 acres of land near the Hillsboro Airport for a sum of \$16,000. The Fair Board voted on that day to authorize the Treasurer to draw a check for \$1,000.00 as earnest money payment, with the balance to be paid as soon as the papers for the sale were prepared. On April 23, 1946, Fair Board member, A.H. Abts, reported the deal for the H.W. Ray property was completed with the final payment of \$15,000.