



Marc Carroll, Mayor

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TO: Southeast Idaho Media Outlets
FROM: Mayor Marc Carroll
SUBJECT: Press Release

City of Blackfoot

A Letter from Mayor Marc Carroll Regarding the Eastern Idaho State Fair

The State of Idaho has been dealing with COVID19 since the middle of March. On March 13, 2020, Governor Little proclaimed a state of public health emergency. We are now nearing the end of Stage 4 of the subsequent proclamation, and life is still not back to “normal”, but instead, we are seeing a new normal coming into place. Local elected officials often end up with the task of interpreting and sometimes having to enforce the laws, regulations, and orders that come from state and federal government, with Governor Little’s Orders regarding COVID restrictions being included.

I talk to people almost every day whose points of view range from being very fearful of their own health or someone near to them, to those who believe the whole pandemic thing is a government hoax. Most people seem to fall somewhere in between.

Last week Brandon Bird, EISF Manager, phoned my office to extend to me the Fair Board’s invitation to attend their Fair Board Director’s meeting at 4 pm Thursday June 25. City Attorney Garrett Sandow and I attended along with our three Bingham County Commissioners, Mr. Bird, and I believe three other County Commissioners who are part of the 16-County sponsorship of the EISF. There are 6 Fair Board members who were all in attendance. For the nearly 2 ½ hours I was there, I felt the meeting was respectful and congenial to everyone’s expression of their respective points of view.

I am not going to try and recount everyone’s input, but will say that I believe everybody who wanted to express an opinion had a chance to speak. I will say, however, that two of the Board members were more vocal than anyone else. I said what I felt I needed to say and told the Board what action I will take if events proved that action necessary. My comments included the fact that we have not seen a plan as to how the EISF will address things like distancing, personal hygiene, and sanitizing. One Board member said that writing an unenforceable plan was a waste of time and that people had to take personal responsibility if they attend the fair; if folks are afraid of the potential exposure, then they should just stay home. I expressed concern that people who attend the Fair have, in the past, come from other countries, as well as from all over the United States. Normally this is an outstanding achievement for an event like EISF, but in this case it can be the opening of Pandora’s Box.

The Fair Board has lost sight of the fact that City of Blackfoot is the hosting location for the Fair, and all of the Fair Board and the sponsoring County Commissioners leave EISF and go to their

home communities at the end of the day, and leave our city to be potentially ground zero for the onset of the COVID disease. Obviously, I do not know that will happen, but I also do not know that it will not happen. As one Board member said, people can choose to exercise personal responsibility and not to attend the fair. It would be almost impossible to deal with the potential contamination in the community if a fair-going virus carrier stops at the Potato Museum, or a restaurant, gas station, or to visit a friend or family member. The Blackfoot community members who attend the Fair, work at the Fair, or come in contact with someone who has been at the Fair may exponentially expose others in the community. I am just trying to say that staying home from the Fair may not necessarily protect an individual from contracting COVID if it gets out through community spread.

It was my understanding from the Fair Board meeting that Butler Amusements (carnival) has cancelled their appearance at EISF. One of the night shows has cancelled, and I heard the other two night shows have yet to confirm. At least several of the regular vendors have also cancelled due to personal health concerns. Garbage and trash pickup is normally contracted through the Pocatello Women's Prison, but they have cancelled their contract. The contractor for restroom cleaning and maintenance has also cancelled, according to media report.

During the discussions, a few of the Board were very concerned about the future of the PRCA rating of the Fair's Rodeo and felt very compelled to continue the show at this year's Fair. The Indian Races, Pari-Mutual Races, and Demolition Derby and their various revenue streams were also very concerning to the Fair Board. The biggest concern, however, was in regard to an amount of \$400,000 that needed the revenue stream of EISF, otherwise the 16 member Counties would have to make up that amount of money. It seemed to me that the whole entire reason for pushing forward is the \$400,000 shortfall if the EISF is not held and the member counties would be responsible to contribute money to make up the shortfall.

My position right now is that I am willing to evaluate the EISF COVID operations plan in conjunction with the Southeast Idaho Public Health Department. EISF may be able to author an approvable plan, but at the Board meeting their conversation did not make it likely they will be able to achieve that. If we do not have an approvable plan, I will exercise mayoral authority granted in State Codes Title 50 Chapter 3, Title 46 Chapter 10, and the Idaho State Constitution and not allow the Eastern Idaho State Fair to proceed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Carroll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "M" being particularly large and stylized.

Marc Carroll
Mayor, City of Blackfoot