

Spring Meeting Summary Notes

The OAAS Board met by video conference on April 3-4. COVID-19 has certainly altered a lot of things but decision making and planning by the Board does continue. The Board's main purposes are to put on a Convention and support its member Agricultural Societies and so the Board's discussion and decisions supported those purposes at its meeting.



Fair modifications, postponements and cancellations

IMPORTANT: Please send notifications to the Manager at manager@oaasfairs.com as soon as you know that you are modifying, postponing or cancelling your Fair this year.

If you have created a poster or email regarding any changes, please send it along and it can be attached to your Agricultural Society's page on our website.

COVID -19 Information and updates

- 1) The Board has redirected priorities for staff, so their focus is on communication with members during the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore we are directing our Manager, for at least the next 3 months, to concentrate on supporting our member Agricultural Societies during the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that his other duties will be a much lower priority. It at all possible, please contact your Provincial Director for assistance prior to contacting Vince.

If you are sending requests or questions to Vince that are not related to COVID-19, expect that there could be a considerable delay before they are responded to or actioned. For example – if your Agricultural Society requires Awards, you MUST order them at least 4 weeks prior to presentation dates, Judging Standards Handbooks orders or uploading Judges' Lists to our website will take at least several weeks.

- 2) **It is IMPORTANT to check your emails and our website daily** for new information and scheduled COVID-19 calls. Please share this information with your Directors and membership.

IMPORTANT: The OAAS will continue to immediately share any information it receives from the Federal and Provincial governments. The OAAS or our Manager are not in the position to provide you with any guidance as to when or if your Agricultural Society needs to make the decision as to whether or not you should postpone, modify or cancel your Fair or events. We also do not have any inside information as to when the restrictions may be lifted – the daily Federal and Provincial updates will provide you with the most up to date information.

We are attempting to provide you with some tools and information to assist you to make decisions in the days and weeks to come.

- **NEW** – “**COVID-19**” tab on our website – we are posting links to the COVID-19 calls as well as other links and information on COVID-19. <https://www.ontarioagsocieties.com/covid-19>
- Scheduling regular weekly COVID-19 videoconferences for our Agricultural Societies and Districts to help provide and share information on how to deal with different concerns.
- If you have any suggestions for topics you would like to see on the videoconferences, please email Vince at manager@oaasfairs.com.

- 3) Each Ag Society has been asked to submit to its Provincial Director some specific data that the OAAS needs to ascertain the economic impact of fairs in your community and Ontario in general. This is especially important as the OAAS speaks with government agencies on behalf of all the Ag Societies. The OAAS's information is only as good as what is provided to it. The Provincial Director will contact each Society about information not yet received.
- 4) Letters will be written to appropriate federal and provincial ministers identifying the need for support for Ag Societies. We will be sending templates to our Agricultural Societies to send letters of support to their MPs, MPPs, Prime Minister/Premier and Ministers of Agriculture. Please watch for an email regarding this initiative.
- 5) Some key decisions were made about the finances of the OAAS in light of the effects of COVID-19 upon our Agricultural Societies and the OAAS:
 - a. An increase in Convention registration fees for 2021 had been approved in October 2019 since they have not changed for quite awhile. Costs have seen a steady increase over this period of time, and it was felt the organization needed to address this by looking at fee increases. It was decided that the OAAS will **delay implementing an increase** in the convention registration until 2022.
 - b. It was decided to **reduce by 50%** the travel budget for fair visits by District Directors and district travel by Provincial Directors.
 - c. **Postpone** the redesign of the OAAS website to 2021.
 - d. In addition, the Board Spring Meeting was held by video conference instead of in person.

Membership Updates

The Board firmly directed that any Agricultural Society or Service Member that has not paid its membership fees will no longer be considered a member in good standing and its information **will not be included** in the 2020 Fair Directory or Fair Date brochures, on the Ontariofairs website and will not receive further emails or correspondence from the OAAS or included in any further programs or member activities such as COVID-19 Round Tables until the 2020 membership is paid.

Convention

- 1) Celebrations still occur even with pandemics. The OAAS will be celebrating its 175th year as an organization at the Convention in 2021.

Two competitions will be launched. One competition is directed to the Districts to create a 60 second promotional tape to be judged for the convention and another competition is for each Ag Society to send a photograph that best captures their Society and it will be judged by the delegates at the convention. There will be a display of memorabilia from the past and pictures will be on the website that rekindle memories from the past.
- 2) Kathryn will be sending out a letter shortly letting people know that the rooms are available on May 1 for the 2021 convention. The Hotel is implementing a deadline this year - Anyone holding a room(s) after February 4 will end up paying for the room, **even if they don't use it and haven't cancelled**. Due to the high demand for Hospitality rooms, they will be assigned on a lottery basis since there are more requests than rooms. Any Agricultural Societies or Services Members interested in booking a Hospitality Room is to contact Kathryn prior to April 15th.
- 3) Generally positive comments about the convention and the app that was initiated this year.
- 4) Please send your suggestions for new seminar topics to Kathryn that could be included in the 2021 convention as well as names for keynote speakers.

Agricultural Societies and Districts

- 1) The Fair Passports, Directories, Fair Date brochures and OAAS Competition Winner cards **will be mailed directly** to each Agricultural Society this year. If your Agricultural Society has not submitted the form requesting the numbers you require, please submit it asap.

The "OAAS Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions Fair Dates" brochure is provided for you to distribute at various locations within your community and area to promote your Fair and Ontario Fairs in general. It is disappointing that more Agricultural Societies are not taking advantage of this promotional material.

- 2) Some of the earlier fairs have been cancelled and there was concern that their exhibitors would not have the opportunity to participate in the OAAS competitions. There was a suggestion that those fairs could look at other alternatives to allow their exhibitors to have the opportunity to compete. For example - they could pair with a later occurring neighbouring fair to hold those classes or hold mini- competitions prior to the District Competitions
- 3) The Board really encourages communications to continue on a regular basis at the District level even without the opportunity to hold in person meetings. It strongly supported this with a directive that all Districts who take out a year's subscription to Zoom or similar video-conferencing app will have half the costs up to \$100 paid for upon receipt of a paid statement by the OAAS Manager. It was recommended that the Zoom supervision be taken on by the Provincial Director to schedule District video meetings.
- 4) The First Impressions Program will not be held this year. However, training will be in place for coaches in the Strategic Implementation Program.
- 5) Reminder to the District Directors that have not submitted their Vulnerable Sectors police check that is overdue. This is a requirement of the position.

Other Information

- 1) The OAAS logo has been updated to reflect the OAAS 175th Anniversary in 2021 and will be used on all communications going forward for the next year.
- 2) There have been a couple of enquires/suggestions about the option of holding online Judging Schools. The Board did not support conducting judging schools by electronic means at this time as our energies need to be focused on the current COVID-19 issues affecting the member Societies. It was also felt that the previous commitment to modify the deadline to recertify as a Judge from July 2020 to Dec 31, 2021 would assist the Judges that would not be able to recertify this year.
- 3) The current website will be refreshed to make information easier to find.
- 4) This year the Board decided to focus on communications in the strategic plan and incorporated some of the areas from its self-evaluation that were identified as needing attention

The Board has tried to manage this current worldwide crisis with fiscal restraint, expanded communications, plans to build relationships with political members and with a positive view that Societies are resilient, supportive of one another, and kind to their members, exhibitors and fairgoers. The Board extends its wholehearted appreciation to all the essential workers who feed us, heal us, protect us, and serve us. We have so much to be grateful for even in this changed world. Your individual acts of kindness and generosity create that wave of comfort we all need. We will get through this, but we take it day by day doing the things we have control over. We all look forward to the days once again when we will crowd together to have those shared experiences at the fair.

Stay safe.