

Chairman Beltz and Members of the House Agriculture Committee:

The Bottineau County Agriculture Society was established in 1889 as an association to help promote agriculture and livestock within our county. We are the oldest county fair in the State of North Dakota celebrating 135 years in 2024. The fair board is made up of volunteers from each district in the county for a total of 9 members, plus a secretary and a part-time maintenance worker. We hire high school/college students during the fair.

The fair has a long history of supporting 4-H and FFA. We currently have a building that is used during the fair to showcase the 4-H, FFA and open class static exhibits, along with commercial vendors, and it is where our fair "office" and two public restrooms are located. In the off-season this building is used for various auction sales, rummage sales, a fireworks stand, safety training for the NDSU Extension office, class reunions, occasional wedding dance, and during the winter a storage space for campers, boats/pontoons, and miscellaneous vehicles. Typically, each year we house 25-30 units.

The "Exhibit Hall" is one the last buildings that needs a makeover. The metal exterior is in rough shape, most of the sheets are damaged and lifting away from the structure, and the roof is deteriorating and leaking in our storage and display areas. The exterior doors need to be repainted or possibly replaced as they no longer seal when shut.

The Exhibit Hall is somewhat of a gathering point during the fair. We have tables and chairs set up for people to come in, sit down, get out of the sun or rain, cool down, and catch up with their neighbors and friends.

We have been slowly making updates to our property and buildings. The County does provide us with funds to help run the fair, buildings and grounds improvements. Our fair is usually the second week in June over Father's Day weekend. There are approximately 10-12 outside food and commercial vendors, plus two indoor food vendors hosted in one of our other buildings. Our fair hosts a two-day Junior Point Show on Friday and Saturday, which brings in 50-60 families that compete with their hogs, sheep, lambs, goats, and cattle. They camp, stay in our hotels, eat at our restaurants and fuel their vehicles before leaving town. The fair books anywhere from 15-20 rooms for entertainment, sound/lights for the bands, and miscellaneous acts (racing pigs, axe throwing, etc.). The hotel owners have indicated they are normally at capacity during the days up to and including the days of the fair. We have three hotels within city limits. I personally have driven around the city camping site at the park and all the spaces have been filled with campers/tents during the fair.

The week starts out with various 4-H, FFA and open class judging of static and animal projects. The fair officially opens Thursday morning with livestock judging of small and large animals, and for supper we provide a FREE meal for the public sponsored by local businesses but served by

our fair board. Our rodeo arena is used for barrel racing, rodeo and women's bronc riders. They are a nice attraction to the fair and use the various business and hotels throughout Bottineau during their stay.

Bottineau County Fair would not be successful without the cooperation and contributions given from people and businesses throughout the county and surrounding counties. There are not enough words to explain the appreciation we have for the city and county support we need to create the safe, fun-filled, family orientated event each June. The board has been fortunate to contract with a small carnival each year that provides approximately 10-12 rides for all ages, various games, and some food carts. The carnival employees use our local business to restock their supplies and fuel for the rides and equipment. Part of the funds we receive from the county are used to secure and pay the \$25,000 fee to have the carnival.

The board has been supportive of hiring bands from within our neighboring counties to provide our main stage or bar band music in our beer garden. These bands are fed using the local "church" stand or the family run stand in our indoor food booth. If the bands need a special diet, we will use our local restaurants. The city bars are asked to submit bids to be able to have the beer gardens during the fair on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

On Sunday we have a demolition derby in the afternoon that fills our grandstand and the area surrounding the arena where the derby is held. I'm guessing we will get 1500 plus people in attendance. We have had up to 40 vehicles vying for prize money. This event is run by volunteers on all levels, event coordinators, ambulance, firefighters, set-up and take-down crew, ring men to control each heat, etc. The large influx of families to the community helps the local businesses and gas stations. On Sunday we host a horse pull competition with small, medium and large horses. This provides great entertainment for all ages.

Bottineau County Fair bought a set of bleachers from the ND State Fair when they were doing their grandstand renovation. Our hope is to eventually put a cover on this seating. A bid received approximately five years ago was over \$250,000. So that may be put on hold for a bit!

Admission to the fair is a one-time cost, so once you enter, we do not charge another fee to attend the concerts or special attractions (rodeo, concert, derby, horse pull, etc.). We try to keep the cost for a family to be reasonable. We have two main gates where we hire Dakota College of Bottineau Foundation and Bottineau County Veterans to get workers and man the gates. These two groups in turn give back to their students and groups.

We have obtained bids to replace the tin on the Exhibit Hall. As of last fall, the cost of the tin was around \$35,000 from Bottineau Lumber in Bottineau, ND and labor is going to be at least that same amount. We have a local carpenter ready to complete the project. This building is 50 plus years old and has stood the test of time. The building is 60'x120' with 14' side walls.

The men's bathroom in the building needs to replace some of the pipes to help with water flow. This cost would be approximately \$3,000-\$4,000. At this point we do not have any excess funds to complete the project for the Exhibit Hall. We have been hit with two years of inclement weather that brought our gate income way below budget, therefor not allowing us to have any funds in reserve for future upgrades.

Our board takes pride in organizing and running our county fair. Most of us are former 4-H and FFA members and do our best to support both those entities. The improvements to our Exhibit Hall would help to beautify and improve this well-used building.

I respectfully ask this committee to give House Bill 1591 a DO PASS to recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joan Wettlaufer".

Joan Wettlaufer

President

Bottineau County Agricultural Society

AKA "Bottineau County Fair"