

New Holland Fair Board Cancels 2020 Fair

From:

Paulene Redding

President of New Holland Fair Board of Directors

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Dear Community Members,

Cancelling the New Holland Fair was a decision that was laboriously made after contacting neighboring fairs, local officials, monitoring the CDC Covid-19 updates, educating ourselves on contingency planning material provided by International Fairs and Expositions, and hours and hours of discussion about “what-if” and “how can we” situations. While the festivities at our fair run for only a four-day period, planning for this event is year-round. Many components need to line up in the correct order for our fair to be successful. There were a number of factors that we considered, ranging from the amount of space we have to work with to how many people we thought would actually feel confident enough coming out into a crowd and enjoying themselves.

After weeks of waiting along with hoping that things would get back to normal, and seeing that they were not, our main concerns were our volunteers and the community. With the majority of our volunteers falling in the high-risk age group, asking them to risk their health and well-being for our four-day event was a chance that we were unwilling to take. The safety of our community is extremely important to us and asking thousands of fairgoers to come out and share a common space is exactly what is being asked of us NOT to do. We are a street fair with limited space, and we can only do so much rearranging.

Even with trying our best, it is unlikely that we would have been able to abide by the CDC social distancing guidelines. The contingency planning was preparing us to be ready to enforce a 6-foot distance between people in line for food, rides, games, exhibits, etc., ask that everyone wear a mask, perform temperature checks, limit crowd size, and not allow loitering in groups of more than 10 people- which is exactly what many of us do at a fair. Those are just a few examples of what we could have faced, and trying to enforce those guidelines had the potential to stir up a rebellious crowd and put all of our fairgoers in harms-way. Trying to put on a street fair during a pandemic, with so many uncertainties, would not be a fun experience for our fairgoers, and it would definitely not be affordable for us.

We are a non-profit, and we rely solely on sponsorships from local businesses and state reimbursements. There are a lot of out of pocket expenses. We spend thousands of dollars and hope to recover those payments during fair week. With so many families out of work and struggling to make ends meet, retrieving those costs would be a gamble that we don't have the

luxury of taking. Trying to operate during a pandemic could have a permanent, damaging effect on the fair. Commitment from the food and game vendors was nowhere near what it should be at this time. Some vendors mentioned that they are having trouble finding supplies, and many of them do not feel confident in signing a contract and making the initial investment because of the uncertainty in what to expect come fall.

And last, but not the least, our local officials were not confident that we would even be able to hold the fair with all of the unpredictability that still surrounded us at the time. Even if Lancaster County was moved into the “Green Phase,” there would still be CDC social distancing guidelines that would need to be followed, but just how strict they would be was unknown. It seemed very likely that we could spend countless hours of our time and thousands of dollars on preparing only to risk being told days prior that we were not allowed to move forward. Planning for the fair requires a great deal of service year-round, and we felt the best decision would be to switch our focus and use all of our time, energy, and money on planning for 2021.

While cancelling the 2020 New Holland Fair was a tough, heartbreaking decision to make, as community promoters we had to keep the health and safety of our volunteers and our community as our top priority. We are looking forward to 2021, and we know you are too!

-Paulene Redding

2021 New Holland Fair Dates:
Sept. 29 thru Oct. 2