

OHIO EXPO CENTER & STATE FAIR

Mission: *To professionally operate and maintain for public benefit a year-round, service-oriented event facility and produce the annual Ohio State Fair.*

Vision: *To be recognized as a unique, dynamic and profitable facility committed to creating a nationally recognized event venue and to produce a premier agricultural-based fair showcasing the best of Ohio with a world-class visitor experience.*

The Commission operates the Ohio Expo Center, a year-round, multipurpose convention and meeting facility. In previous years, the Expo Center has been home to five of Columbus' top 10 conventions, and typically has more than 200 annual events in multiple onsite facilities. In the past, these events generate an estimated 3.2 million visitors each and every year. In a typical year, the Expo Center has created a substantial economic impact on the City of Columbus, Franklin County and the state of Ohio, typically around \$500 million. As you can imagine, though, the last year has been anything but typical.

The effects of COVID-19 have been devastating to the Ohio Expo Center. Revenues dropped from just over \$17 million in 2019 to just over \$3 million in 2020. The Ohio Expo Center has not hosted an event since March of 2020, beginning with the cancellation of the Arnold Sports Festival, which is held in part at the Expo Center, and of course, including the cancellation of the 167th Ohio State Fair last summer. Fortunately, the agency had been able to put \$1 million into the State Fair Reserve account over the course of several years, but in 2020, this fund was depleted to keep the agency operating at minimal levels. The Ohio Expo Center is currently operating with a staff that has been reduced to just 7 employees to maintain the 360-acre facility during the pandemic crisis – about 10% of the employees it had last March.

During 2020, the facility quickly pivoted from renting its facility for trade shows and events, to COVID-19 response, testing, and personal protective equipment storage. With hundreds of thousands of square feet available, the Ohio Expo Center was able to fill the need for those needing expansive spaces to properly socially-distance while storing equipment, or for the public to drive through for a COVID-19 test, flu shot, and now, COVID-19 vaccines

While the events in a given year at the Ohio Expo Center would typically make up for roughly half of our revenue, we wouldn't be who we are without our premier event – the Ohio State Fair. The Ohio State Fair notably boasts exhibitors from each of Ohio's 88 counties. Whether they are young people exhibiting a 4-H public speaking project, showcasing their junior FFA livestock exhibits, or participating in the many open arts, cooking or horticultural competitions, they are able to showcase their work in the state's largest spotlight. These outstanding Ohioans annual exhibit approximately 12,000 junior livestock entries, 12,500 open livestock projects and 14,000 entries in our numerous other competitions.

The Ohio State Fair is currently scheduled July 28th through August 8th. The continued shadow of COVID-19 looms large of this year's event, however, we are planning for several scenarios. The Commission will make the decision of whether this year's fair, and what type of fair might be held, based on medical opinions of what is in the best interest of the safety of all Ohioans.

History of the Ohio State Fair and the Ohio Expositions Commission

The history of the Ohio State Fair is deeply rooted in the rich agricultural tradition of the state. In June, 1845, agriculturalists from throughout Ohio established the State Board of Agriculture whose mission it was to promote and assist exhibitions of farm products.

The Board's initial plans for a state fair to be held in 1849 were thwarted by an outbreak of cholera. Thus, the first Ohio State Fair was held October 2-4, 1850. Between 25,000 and 30,000 people arrived by carriage, canal and rail to view the displays which included cattle, horses, mules, chickens, rabbits, "modern" farming equipment, floral arrangements, fruits and vegetables. Railroads offered fairgoers reduced rates and all animals and articles for exhibits were transported free.

From 1851 to 1873, the state fair traveled to cities throughout the state as a convenience to exhibitors and visitors. From 1874 to 1885, the fair was held on the grounds of the Franklin County Agricultural Society in Columbus, now known as Franklin Park. In 1886, the fair made a final move to its permanent home on 115 acres of land which was designated the Ohio State Fairgrounds.

Throughout the years the fair has grown and adapted to the times. In 1895, electricity was added and five "horseless vehicles" drove around the racetrack. Additional land was purchased, allowing the grounds to expand to its present 360 acres. Although agriculture remained the focus of the state fair, in recognition of the multi-faceted entertainment, business, industrial and educational attractions which now constitute the annual exposition, the Ohio Legislature established the Ohio Expositions Commission in 1961 to oversee what is now called the Ohio Expo Center. Approximately 150 events are hosted throughout the year in the 58 buildings and facilities located at the Expo Center.

Today, the Ohio Expositions Commission is composed of fourteen members: nine are appointed by the Governor and five are *ex officio* members; i.e., the Directors of the Departments of Agriculture, Development Services and Natural Resources (who are voting members), and the chairs of the respective agriculture committees in the Senate and the House of Representatives (who are non-voting members). Of the nine appointed members, not more than five can be from one political party, at least three must derive the majority of their income from farming, and at least one, at the time of his/her appointment, must be a member of the board of directors of an agricultural society. Appointed Commissioners serve a six-year term. *Ex Officio* members serve during their tenure in their designated positions. R.C. 991.01-991.02

HUDSON ST. ↑



TRAILER PARKING

PARKING FOR EVENTS NORTH OF 17TH AV

PARKING FOR EVENTS NORTH OF 17TH AV

Ohio History Center

Cardinal Gate ENTRANCE Gate 1

Korbel North Campground

Parking Lot

Korbel West Campground

Korbel East Campground

Lausche

Cardinal Shelter

State House Gate 2

FFA

Kasach Hall

Highway Patrol Academy

PLAZA

17TH AVE

17TH AVE



Brown Arena Sheep Barn

Bricker

Gilgiani Complex

Celeste Center

Taft Coliseum

Garbino

Pavilion

Buckeye Ag Complex

Buckeye Pavilion

Buckeye Bldg

Ag & Hort

Woodschick Livestock & Trade Center

Denny Hayes Arena

Cox

N. Commercial

S. Commercial

Rabell Poultry

Work Center

Alumni Complex

National Resources Park

CLAY ST