

# Clark County fairground revitalization underway

By Jenessa Freidhof

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**NEILLSVILLE** — As the signs come down, animals go home and fairgoers mark their calendars for next year's Clark County Fair, organizers and county officials hope soon the fairground will get a major facelift to better serve the county.

Clark County Forestry and Parks Administrator Rick Dailey said aging facilities and capacity and infrastructure issues all have become concerns on the fairground.

"With aging facilities, building maintenance has been putting a significant dent in our budget," Dailey said. "We also have had some barn capacity concerns, particularly with the

hog barn not being able to hold all the animals for that fair that were coming in."

He said many of the buildings also have some electrical concerns that need to be addressed along with accessibility.

"Our barns are not accessible like they should be and that is a big deal. We plan to address that with this project," Dailey said.

Outside of the buildings, traffic flow and parking have also become increasingly inefficient as the fair has grown and changed.

"The fairgrounds are not laid out real efficiently so the trucks with trailers moving animals in and out is a safety concern for fairgoers. We have made some changes to traffic flow and we think it has

improved a lot, but with the new revitalization we hope to make some more improvements," he said.

The project, which could take up to a decade to complete depending on the final plan, is aimed at addressing the smaller concerns with existing structures and overall expansions on the fairground.

"We hope to build two new buildings, a multipurpose livestock barn and a multipurpose event center. Those two buildings, we hope to raise the money to build. The other little things that we are concerned with we hope to do through the county budget process," Dailey said.

He said the county board has been very supportive of the project so far, approving the purchase of 5

acres in Loyal for the highway department.

"The purchase allows the highway department to vacate a portion of the highway property adjacent to the fairgrounds, which will give us space for expansion. We don't think there would necessarily be a building going there, but it gives us room to grow," Dailey said.

Those involved with the project hope the two multipurpose buildings will help make things more convenient during the fair, while also providing opportunities to attract other events to the fairground throughout the year.

Dailey said the project is dependent on funding and will change depending on the opportunities presented to accomplish the goals.

"We hope to have a new building in place prior to the 2020 fair, but it will be dependent on fundraising efforts," he said. "We are using an adaptive process when implementing the strategic plan, so as opportunities to accomplish our goals are presented, they will be pursued and implementation will change accordingly. We are learning a lot as we are going through this process and we need to be flexible enough to make those changes in the best interest of the fairgrounds."

The Clark County Fair started in 1842. Organizers at the time, led by John Dore, hoped the fair would serve as a way to "improve and develop the agriculture program and to present a county fair which

will be the show window of our county," according to fair historical documents. The 40-acre fairground was purchased and the fair was born.

In 2018, 155 animals were sold during the Market Animal Sale Aug. 11, with many more animals being shown during the course of the fair. Organizers hope new facilities will allow the fair to continue to grow and be the "show window" of the county in the future.

For more information about the project, call Dailey at 715-743-5142. Donations can be directed to the Clark County Community Foundation, Fairgrounds Revitalization Project, P.O. Box 116, Loyal, WI 54446 or [www.clarkccf.org](http://www.clarkccf.org).