

*****Update/Possible Solution?*****
As of February 12, 2020
Compiled by the Jefferson County Horse Council

News of the potential closing of the Jeffco Fairgrounds is gaining attention across the state and even nationwide! Lots of good questions and suggestions are coming in from interested parties willing to help us, but there aren't yet definitive answers from anybody at Jeffco.

The consensus is that fairgrounds are not intended to be economically viable. The inverse is that fairgrounds have an intrinsic and irreplaceable value to the community as they are an integral piece of any master plan serving as part open space/park; part athletic/entertainment venue; part school/youth program; part convention/meeting center; and, part evacuation shelter for livestock as well as for humans (who use the RV sites so they can be with their animals) – and we strongly argue for this amenity because people often refuse to evacuate if they have to leave behind animals. While it's one thing to put your dogs, cats, and hamsters in the car with you, what do you do with five horses, a goat, and your chickens? And then where do you go? Whereas, a large room can accommodate multiple people, you can't just turn out multiple species that are unfamiliar with each other that also have multiple care requirements into a large pasture. Our fairgrounds' accommodations saves lives – both human and animal.

Another consensus is that the fairgrounds stay under a governmental oversight umbrella for hiring, training, and liability reasons. Lastly, the fairgrounds must remain intact. Yes, there are underutilized spaces, but all fairgrounds need arenas, pens, stall barns, expo halls, meeting rooms, offices, multipurpose parking, storage/maintenance facilities, and accessibility to be fully functional. To carve out any of these areas for other uses would undermine the entire purpose.

In addition to an economic impact, there is also an environmental impact. Bicyclists get their own dedicated lanes as a minority user because it promotes clean air and a healthy lifestyle, but what about agricultural users? One fairgrounds director referenced, if Jeffco were to close, there would be additional wear and tear on the roads for vehicles and trailers having to travel much farther away to other facilities not to mention the burden it would place on youth who can't provide their own transportation.

To further complicate matters, this morning (February 12, 2020) the Jeffco Sheriff's Office announced the early release of 23 additional inmates from the jail. This is indeed a complicated crisis; but, there might be a solution worth considering. A former State lawmaker suggested asking residents to vote to De-Bruce only earmarked grant monies from Jeffco's TABOR revenue threshold. This would be more restrictive than November 2019's 1A ballot initiative which failed. The idea is that these "bonus" revenues from sources such as Federal, marijuana, lottery, or foundation grants could go to designated projects like road maintenance, food assistance, or preserving our fairgrounds without having to be turned away due to the risk of creating too much revenue that would then have to be given right back to the taxpayers. Currently, these monies are going elsewhere in the state without any benefit to Jeffco's budget or to taxpayers as refunds. But, the clock is ticking. We're right up against the deadline for getting anything on the November 2020 ballot. A citizen initiative would also require time to get enough signatures. The canned reply emails from Jeffco representatives all claim that no decisions have been made, but the lack of communication from them is making it difficult for us to know what our next move needs to be. What we can do is to continue our public campaign to politely but strongly put pressure on our elected officials. Have your Jeffco friends, family, and neighbors all reach out to ask that they PLEASE SAVE OUR FAIRGROUNDS! For full details, go to www.JeffcoHorse.com. Thank you.