

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Ventura County Fairgrounds
31st District Agricultural Association - 10 W. Harbor Blvd. - Ventura, CA 93001 - (805) 648-3376
Website: venturacountyfair.org Contact: Jennifer McGuire, Acting CEO

Tuesday, October 24th, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.
Ventura County Fairgrounds – Santa Rosa Hall

I. Call to Order

Roll Call

Declaration of Recusal or Conflict of Interest

The meeting convened at 9:04 a.m. and called to order by President Lacayo.

Directors present: President, Leah Lacayo, Vice President, Daniel Long, Guillermo Rodriguez Ceja, Betsy Chess, Leslie Cornejo, M. Cecilia Cuevas, Miriam Mack and Shanté Morgan-Carter.

Absent: Michael Bradbury

Staff present: Jennifer McGuire, CEO, Jason Amelio, Sales Manager, Madalyn Johnson, Concessions Manager, Megan Hook, PR & Marketing Firm, Jim Howell, Maintenance Supervisor, Jenny Martin, Accounting, Cinnamon Howell, Accounting and Heidi Ortiz, Executive Secretary.

Guests Present: Tom Kiskien, Alexis Sklar, Dani Diamond and Chris Gonzalez.

There were no conflicts of interest with any of the Board members that were present.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Director Chess led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Welcome and Introductions of Guests

Invitation for the public to introduce themselves (not mandatory)

President Lacayo introduced Charles Southwick and Denise Elliott from the California Department of Food and Agriculture Fairs and Expositions Branch.

IV. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

In accordance with State law, the Board will not comment or otherwise consider Public Comment matters until and unless such items have been properly noticed for a future meeting.

V. Presentation – Hall of Flowers

Dani Diamond, the CEO of the Hall of Flowers, gave a presentation regarding his industry event Hall of Flowers. He explained the history behind it and how it has evolved over the years. He and his staff explained how they follow all the regulations that come from the Department of Cannabis Control and any oversight they are subject to, which they are eager to comply with, in order to host an event.

The board asked a number of questions, which Mr. Diamond and his team answered. There was a discussion regarding policy in regards to cannabis and the board has adopted the CDFA guidelines, but will be working on developing a policy specific to the 31st DAA and addressing some of the more specific details like local concerns.

VI. Approval of Minutes

A. September 26th, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the September 26th, 2023 Board Meeting minutes.

Board Member Name	Approved (Yes Vote)	Not Approved (No Vote)	Abstain
Director Ceja	X		
Director Chess	X		
Director Cornejo	X		
Director Cuevas (Motion)	X		
Director Mack (Second)	X		
Director Morgan-Carter	X		
Vice President Long	X		
President Lacayo	X		

VII. Financial Report

A. Financials ending August 31st, 2023.

CEO McGuire explained that Mr. Yopez is out on paternity leave and introduced some of the staff that is stepping in to help. Ms. Howell reviewed the dashboard for August. CEO McGuire explained that this report does not reflect auction because it has not been carried over due to the fact that the online portion did not end until beginning of September, so the September report will reflect all the auction receivables.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Executive Committee Meeting September 13th, 2023 – Leah Lacayo, Chair

- President Lacayo stated that the committee discussed all things Fair and they have an agenda that keeps the same items because they are ongoing. They discussed cannabis policy at great length and asked CEO McGuire to look into what other Fairs are doing and to gather as much information as possible and bring it to the policy ad hoc committee to help address the fairgrounds needs specifically.
- Mr. Amelio gave an update on the X Games and ESPN is the driver as to the dates of when the show comes and due to the Olympics, staff has been told, it will be in June. There are some things that X Games will need to address such as the janitorial crew, etc.
- There was a discussion regarding layout and there will be some improvements as far as location of the stage, children's dell, etc.

B. Ad Hoc Policy Committee

1. Discussion and possible action regarding cannabis policy

President Lacayo stated that the Ad Hoc committee is not ready to make any recommendations at this point.

IX. Old Business

A. Retreat

CEO McGuire has spoke with Ms. Bailey-Findley to set an agenda and asked the board to send her anything they were interested in discussing. It will be November 14th from noon to 5pm. It will be a team building session and then further down the road there will be a strategic planning session in 2024.

B. Policy Manual Review

Director Cornejo stated that the Ad Hoc committee is off and running and will be working on updating the policies. They are open to any suggestions or if anyone would like something addressed, they are more than welcome to call or email. They will be helping with the cannabis policy separate and have already received some information from CEO McGuire. They feel most of the policies are outdated and need to be refreshed and streamlined, especially some of the more important items that enable functionality.

Director Morgan-Carter stated that it will be thorough. She has already started pulling examples from other fairs and making detailed revisions and recommendations.

C. Fair 2024

CEO McGuire gave an update on where things are at with the Fair.

- Vendors are starting to get booked.
- Mr. Lieberman already has over \$250,000 signed in sponsorships and his goal this year is \$600,000.
- She is going to form internal staff committees because there are changes. The consensus of 2024 is that we have more vendors and more sponsors and we need more space, which we do not have, so we have to be creative.

X. Board Correspondence

A. Memo from Mike Francesconi at California Department of Food & Agriculture, Fairs & Expositions: SB 447 (Atkins) GO-Biz: BRIDGE Project: Repeal of Travel Ban

B. Memo from Mike Francesconi at California Department of Food & Agriculture, Fairs & Expositions: Vacation/Annual Leave Reduction Plans for the CEO and State Employees

C. Letter from San Buenaventura Women's Club

XI. Consent Agenda: Items hereunder on the Consent Agenda are considered routine, not requiring separate discussion and will be enacted in one motion. Individual items A, 1, are approved by the vote that approves the Consent Agenda, unless an item is pulled for separate consideration.

A. Agreements

1. Rental Agreements

MOTION: To approve the consent list with items A, 1.

Board Member Name	Approved (Yes Vote)	Not Approved (No Vote)	Abstain
Director Ceja	X		
Director Chess	X		
Director Cornejo	X		
Director Cuevas (Motion)	X		

Director Mack	X		
Director Morgan-Carter	X		
Vice President Long (Second)	X		
President Lacayo	X		

XII. CEO Report

CEO McGuire invited staff to give their reports first.

Madalyn Johnson, Concessions and Commercial Manager

- She addressed the non-profits and stated that she and Ms. Martin found a spot for the San Buenaventura Women's Club in the front for two days. They assist the community members in any way they can and explained that they pay a small fee and they get to leave around sunset and don't have to stay the whole time. This is the only location that isn't required to stay the whole day. She feels extremely passionate about community row and they service approximately 27 groups. She will be looking for more community and wants this fair to be about how we serve the community.
- She is confirming and advancing some of our anchor vendors that were popular like the camel experience, the petting zoo and the pony rides.
- She is starting her health department meetings. There are several groups that are asking the health department for consistency and transparency for everyone, so she is trying to bring that together. Next month she will start going to the rules and regulation meetings.
- She has started recruiting non-profits, vendors, artists, etc. who are unique and who really speak to the fair and will be good for the community.

Megan Hook, Publicity and Marketing

- She is still mining data from this past Fair for future use.
- She is in the early stages of website development and the structure of a new site that will be simpler and more user friendly.
- They are participating in the 2024 decision and discussion planning meetings for the Fair and they are advising from a marketing perspective because it always plays into things like the customer experience.
- She was involved in the sponsorship meeting with Mr. Lieberman because marketing goes hand in hand with sponsorships.
- She is setting a timeline as decisions are made to try and be ahead.
- She will be archiving and categorizing photos for future use; this past Fair she took over 60,000 photos and videos.
- Should staff contract with the Hall of Flowers, she would work closely in conjunction with them to help keep public perception in check and educate the public.

Jason Amelio, Sales Manager

- This report covers events from 9/23 through 10/22. During this time, we hosted a Lowrider Car Show, the 2nd year of Seaside Oddities Expo, The Harvest Festival, Seaside Highland Games, Boots and Brews as well as several other events.
- During this period, we took in \$121,374.50 in rental invoice revenue. That is up \$10,374.50 from 2022's \$11,000 rental revenue. Parking revenue from events this period was \$50,070 vs Approx \$77,000 during the same period. Down roughly \$27,000 due to the underperformance of Harvest Festival and reduced parking capacity for the Highland Games and Boots and Brews event.

- Some upcoming events are the Latino Business Expo, Spa Show, Lucy Penny Cat Show, the Gold Coast Gem Show, a Lucha Libre event and the yearly Ventura Raceway Turkey Night Racing.
- Skull and Roses has paid their invoice in full and there is a hold on dates for next year pending what is established as a new deposit and payment schedule going forward.

CEO McGuire reviewed her report.

- She explained that she is dedicated to staffing needs and will be working on getting employees where she needs them.
- There is a Manager's Conference she and Ms. Ortiz will be attending in Sacramento next month. There will also be a CEO collaborative meeting as well.
- Staff is getting ready for budget planning and will be emailing out the budget templates to all departments to start working on those. It will go to the Budget Committee to review and discuss and then be brought to the board.
- There is a new website in production which will be more user-friendly to all of our guests.
- She will be meeting with the Coastal Committee to see where things are at with the beach lot fees.
- She is working with the Ventura County Fairgrounds Foundation on developing an MOU and fundraising ideas.
- Mr. Howell gave an update as to what is being done to prepare for the anticipated winter storms.
- She will always keep the board updated on preparation for the 2024 Fair. One thing not mentioned earlier, is that JFB is being brought back and Ms. Inez is going to lead it. She also mentioned that she wants to bring in a touring memorial.
- She is meeting with different ticket companies and thinking about making a change to our ticket platform. She wants the online ticket system to be user-friendly. She wants to add in an option for online group sales.
- There are three proposals for our grandstand entertainment buyer and she is meeting with Mr. Giammanco, who is with CBF Productions, to discuss his. The three companies are Big Mouth Productions, Romeo Entertainment and CBF Productions.
- There is a Superintendent's Meeting tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.
- The grandstand bleacher project is almost complete. They will be pouring concrete and finishing the bracing. The final stage is replacing the wooden seats with aluminum seats.
- We are waiting for the Santa Cruz roof replacement to start. She gets weekly updates and they are looking at possibly starting next month.
- There are repairs that need to be done to the awnings on the San Miguel and Anacapa Buildings which will be done with a certified welder, and this came from a CCA assessment that was done earlier this year.
- One main focus this year is the Morgan Arena retrofit. There are a lot of different entities that are interested in that area such as the Fairgrounds Foundation and the Wood Claeysens Foundation. There is still grant money that is allocated to that area and she is looking at possibly getting another \$100,000 in the next few weeks.
- As far as grants, the CRC grant award notices have been pushed from December to April, but the fairgrounds still are in the running. She is also pursuing additional grants from USDA such as the Air Quality Control and the California Arts Council.
- We were able to budget some new equipment for maintenance. Last month it was reported that we were getting one forklift, but Mr. Howell was able to negotiate two forklifts instead of one.

XIII. President's Report

- She looks forward to the retreat next month and encouraged the board to send CEO McGuire any items they would like covered.

XIV. Director's Comments

Director Cuevas

- She encouraged the board members to pick up the Cannabis Control flyer that Mr. Diamond brought because there is a lot of good information.
- She thanked CEO McGuire and her team for the work that they have been doing. There were a lot of short-term, immediate situations that came up, both in X Games and Fair, and CEO McGuire has come out with flying colors much to the benefit and work of her staff. It has been a lot to manage, and she has stayed positive and continues to bring new things; she is happy that CEO McGuire is here. Also, she is very excited about the future of the fairgrounds and with the new direction that the fairgrounds is taking and the new illustrious board members who help manage it all.
- She hopes that everyone can get behind cannabis events because it is part of the economic future of California, in terms of revenue sources that are more friendly, and hopes that passes.

Director Morgan-Carter

- She thanked CEO McGuire and staff for all the hard work they are doing and is excited for the future as well.

Director Ceja

- He mimicked his fellow board member, Director Morgan-Carter.

Director Cornejo

- She explained that the county is going through its celebration for its 150th and great successes came from that. There was a big concert in Santa Paula that had a huge screen on both sides of the concert venue and there was a constant stream of photos from all the cities in the county. It was really enriching to see while enjoying music and wanted to share that thought.
- She was glad to learn that the board is legally fine, so far as the State, if the board proceeds with a contract for a trade show for CBD. She understands the board needs to be more specific in regard to policy if the board expands to other types of shows. She assumes at this point, that the board can expect a contract on the next consent agenda that would be timely to work for the supplier for the board's consideration. She is glad to see it proceeding and that the board doesn't need to create a policy today in order to get that done.
- She thanked staff and everyone for all the hard work and she is very excited for the future.

Director Chess

- She congratulated everyone all around and explained that it was an exciting time to be a part of the Fair Board.
- The show in Santa Paula was amazing and all the photographs came from museums, so she is sure we will be able to get those.
- She was pleased to hear what CEO McGuire stated about outreach for more ticket sales to corporations and hopes we are not interfering with Mr. Lieberman's potential sponsorships.

- She appreciates the other board members' patience as they help answer her questions because it is a big learning curve.

Director Mack

- She is excited about the future, which includes the retreat.

Vice President Long

- He thinks that the fairgrounds is on a very good path that we haven't been in a long time because there has been so much going on like the Thomas Fire, the gun shows and COVID. He feels CEO McGuire is doing a remarkable job as well as staff and everyone brings so much energy and is happy to see things moving forward and going in a good direction.

XV. Future Agenda Items

1. Fair 2024
2. Facilities Update
3. Cashless Fair

XVI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

Submitted by: Heidi Ortiz
Heidi Ortiz, Executive Secretary

Approved by: Jennifer McGuire
Jennifer McGuire, CEO Ventura Fairgrounds

Approved by: Leah Lacayo
Leah Lacayo, Board President