

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, January 23rd, 2024 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 Long.

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

Absent: M. Cecilia Cuevas

Staff present: Jen McGuire, CEO, Jason Amelio, Sales Manager, Madalyn Johnson, Concessions Manager, Megan Hook, PR & Marketing Firm, Jenny Martin, Accounting, Emilee Inez, Exhibits Supervisor, Marty Lieberman, Sponsorship Coordinator, Jim Jennings, Maintenance Supervisor, Patrick Maynard, Admissions Coordinator, Shelly Boyd, Sales Assistant, Gerry Duran, Maintenance Staff, Joe Hutchison, Maintenance Staff and Heidi Ortiz, Executive Secretary.

Guests Present: Aaron Pederson, President of Saffire, Sharon Ferro and Kathie Moore.

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

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Director Ceja led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Welcome and Introduction of Guests

Invitation for the public to introduce themselves (not mandatory)

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.

There were no public comments.

V. Presentations

A. Saffire – Cashless

CEO McGuire introduced Mr. Maynard and explained that he is the CEO of Blue Pacific Events and has been a key team member of the fair and fairgrounds. This year he is going

to lead a team in a new technology that we are striving for at the Fair and one of them is a cashless carnival.

Mr. Maynard stated that it was a pleasure to be here and was excited to work with everyone on the 2024 Fair specifically on the admissions and carnival side. With that, he introduced Aaron Pederson, the CEO of Saffire, who will be presenting the Blast Pass. This is a cashless or ticketless option that customers will be able to use on the carnival.

Mr. Pederson gave some background information on Saffire and stated that this is their 15th year in the fair industry. He explained that what he was bringing to the board today was technology that has been embraced by independent carnivals, like the Ventura County Fair, and Saffire has the honor to serve most independent midways. He continued with his power point presentation and explained the ins and outs of how the Blast Pass works.

Mr. Maynard explained that there is a lot that goes into this technology, so they have been meeting weekly to discuss the different options and configurations. He went over how admission sales was going to work and the reconfiguration of the front entrance. Kiosks will be used to sell tickets, similar to how carnival credits will be sold, but there will also be a percentage of cash sellers as well. They are working on plans, exploring different options and reconfiguring the front entrance layout. One of his goals is to be able to see what the real time data is at the end of each day. He explained that this new Saffire system will allow us to have that real-time data that we need. He explained that badges/credentials provided to staff, vendors, sponsors, etc. will have QR codes on them that indicate whether that person is in the right place. It will also give us the data to track scans and movements to see where people have been and the different gates they have accessed. Another thing he is looking into is placing kiosks at offsite locations in the community so people can buy tickets.

VI. Approval of Minutes

A. November 28th, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the November 28th, 2023 Board Meeting minutes.

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

VII. Financial Report

A. Financials ending November 30th, 2023

CEO McGuire commented that as she mentioned at the last meeting in November, we are shifting our financials over to CFSA who are producing our reports, paying our taxes and doing our payroll. Ms. Martin and Mr. Lopez are still in the accounting office and they are doing all the data entry and putting things where they need to go. They are going through the chart of accounts right now with CFSA and making necessary changes. The board will see as we move into the end of the year reports next month that a lot of the money is going to change from one account to another. There are some buckets that need to be fine-tuned and detailed that CFSA would like to see happen. There are additional revenue lines that need to be added and there will be a lot of shifting as we make these changes. CEO McGuire went on to review the balance sheet for the end of November 2023. She mentioned that at a previous meeting the board voted to move some money to the LAIF account, which she believes is at 4%, so that will be pursued.

VIII. New Business

A. Discussion and possible action regarding resolution for Workers Compensation for volunteers

CEO McGuire explained that Ms. Ortiz is going to read the motion and that we have to have this approved in the minutes before the deadline of February 15th for our Workers Compensation.

Ms. Ortiz read the motion the board was to approve: “A motion was made by Director blank, seconded by Director blank and carried that members of the Board of Directors of the Fair and any volunteers donating time for the Fair, will be covered by Workers Compensation Insurance while performing their volunteer work.”

MOTION: To approve that members of the Board of Directors of the Fair and any volunteers donating time for the Fair, will be covered by Workers Compensation Insurance while performing their volunteer work.

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

IX. Old Business

A. Facility Update

- CEO McGuire explained that the big projects in progress right now are the Morgan Arena Equestrian Center and the Ag Building roof replacement. She explained some of the details and where things are at.

- An engineer came last week and inspected underneath the bleachers. Also, the State comes by once a week to inspect the grounds and confirmed that the bleacher retrofit project is almost complete. The next phase is the seat repair where the maintenance staff will work with Mr. Naylor to get that done.
- We do partner with Mr. Naylor on a lot of projects and explained that he is the owner and manager of the Ventura Raceway. He has a lot of connections in the industry and one project that needs to be done is the removal of the HVAC units on the Derby Club roof and Mr. Naylor knows a crane company that will remove those, which is a huge cost savings, and repair the roof. This is estimated to be a six hundred thousand dollar project and it will now be under one hundred thousand dollars.
- In the off-season, maintenance went through and updated the bathrooms by painting, repaired damaged floors, replaced sinks, toilets, faucets, etc. Mr. Hutchison is working on replacing all the lighting in the bathrooms by adding LED lights. Maintenance also put in new door stops, painted the carnival lot and a lot of the electrical boxes have been painted.
- The awning project for the San Miguel and Anacapa Buildings is the next project which is where we must reinforce the awnings at the entryways. The engineer came out and did some drawings and the State will oversee this project. It is an easy fix, it is just a process.

B. Fair 2024

CEO McGuire explained that staff just went to the WFA Convention and came back with new ideas and wanted to start with staff reports.

Megan Hook, PR & Marketing

- She attended the WFA Convention and explained Ventura won 14 achievement awards including many for photography, posters, programs and more.
- She got to meet with partners/future partners and network with others in the industry and she is proud to say that we are ahead of most fairs as far as marketing and beyond.
- The website design is in progress, and it is about 80% complete. Content is being added and the design will be fine-tuned as we go, but there is still some work to be done before going live.
- The new site will have the ability to take payments, run programmed ads for sponsors, and will greatly condense the number of pages on the site. This will give users a better experience and allow the site to operate more smoothly.
- She is working with a graphic artist that specializes in logos to create a series of logos for us. This includes: a 150th logo, a cleaned-up version of our current Fair logo, a complete reimaged Fair logo, and a logo specific to the Ventura County Fair and Event Center that will help differentiate year-round opportunities such as facility rentals from the 12-day Fair.
- She's been participating in a lot of the planning meetings with staff from ticketing and layout to parking and entertainment.
- Every department intersects with marketing and it's helpful for her to develop marketing plans as decisions are being made. There is an incredible amount of

energy amongst the staff to not only improve upon area that require it, but to also create new opportunities and experiences.

- The first 2024 Fair contest begins next week which is the 150th Theme Contest. The community gets involved in choosing a 150th-specific theme that will be used in a number of ways. This contest triggers a series of community-based contests leading up to the 2024 Fair: The winning theme of this contest will determine the theme of the Youth Poster Contest that immediately follows.
- After the Youth Poster Contest, we'll be hosting a Commemorative Poster Contest for adults as a special 150th event that pays homage to past posters created by the community.
- Following that, they will ask the community to be a part of the Fair in a new way: by submitting their favorite photo ever taken at the Fair. It will be printed and posted at the Fair to showcase our community of fairgoers.
- For marketing specifically, she has mapped out a marketing timeline for this year's Fair. From contests to entertainment, press, advertising, and more. She will talk a lot about experiences because it is not just about getting people through the gate, it is about improving and providing good experiences once the community is at the Fair.
- She will be helping with a lot of things onsite like creative and themed signage to improve the look and feel of different areas of the fair.
- One example of onsite creative is their partnership with 805 beer, the 805 Stage and now 805 Day during the Fair (Monday, August 5th). They will have access and utilize musicians 805 Beer has already established relationships with. As part of this collaboration, they will elevate the 805 Stage area experience – from entertainment to layout, food and beverage with price points of \$8.05 and more. This includes branding the area with signage, fence wraps, promotional items and more. It's an all-hands-on-deck effort as every department plays a role in the execution.

Madalyn Johnson, Concessions Manager

- She explained that WFA was great and there was a lot of networking. It is great to find out that vendors at other fairs, a lot bigger than us, gross about the same amount or even better.
- She feels like her recruiting efforts are really coming to fruition right now. She has really focused on local and has had a lot of interest.
- She and Ms. Inez are working on Art Walk and Shop, which is inside the Youth Building, and will house approximately 30 vendors.
- She has gotten a lot of response on Outdoor Living which will have someone who sells BBQs, there will be cornhole, a swing vendor, a construction vendor, and will include a little entertainment and market lights to make it an experience.
- She had a great conversation with Dr. Banuelos and learned that we are on a Chumash Village. She is talking about constructing an authentic Chumash hut and they are talking about bringing tribal members to come and talk about it while it's here. There is another section where they are considering bringing one of their tamals which is a 26-foot canoe made from a special redwood and they would have some members talk about that as well.

- She is meeting with Director Morgan-Carter about other space that is set aside for community where there is a food vendor, commercial vendor or community exhibits so everyone really gets to see everything in many different spaces.
- She is also working on new food vendors and adding some in the 805 stage area.

Marty Lieberman, Sponsorship Coordinator

- He stated that he is ahead of pace of previous years at \$380,000 as compared to \$180,000 last year.
- There are a lot of contracts out, so he is working on getting those fulfilled.
- The website will be turned over in a month or so and he will be ready with new material for the sponsors.
- Fulfillment begins sometime in February, which will be a lot of digital for now.
- He is excited to be working with the whole team because there is a lot of excitement and good ideas that has created new sponsorship opportunities.

Emilee Inez, Exhibits Supervisor & Junior Fair Board Advisor

- They have been working really hard to reimagine what the Youth Building will look like and her main job is to highlight exhibits. This will be done by bringing in those tasteful, thoughtful and very applicable vendors and create an art walk as they go through it.
- She has been working with Ms. Hook to possibly put a literal yellow brick road down so people can follow it as they walk through the building and look at all the exhibits.
- She has also been working with Ms. Johnson, Mr. Reinwald and Mr. Lieberman on reimagining the Floriculture area.
- There are 17 Junior Fair Board members that were appointed to the team. They had their first meeting this past weekend. Her main goal when they restarted this program is to promote diversity of their membership. She did this by not only marketing the membership towards the classic roots of 4H, FFA and Grange, but she also took the time to email every single high school counselor, principal, teacher and career center. The impact of those efforts were extremely evident in the application pool that was received and consequentially the 17 that have been appointed. Among those 17 members, there are 9 cities represented and 12 different high schools. She thinks for the first time in JFB history there are more non-livestock students than there are livestock students. At the first meeting, it was exciting to see the new ideas, perspectives and just all the things that they had to say.

Jason Amelio, Sales Manager & Fairtime Parking Manager

- He stated that he is excited to move towards a more cashless version of parking. Staff will still have the ability to accept cash but will be pushing it more towards credit card sales, which increases our security with money handling. This will also allow us to have more dynamic information on our parking.
- He covered events from 11/12 through 1/13. During this time Ventura Raceway ran the annual Turkey Night event. December saw the return of the Great Junk Hunt as well as several private events, the hosting of a meeting for the California Department of Pesticide Regulations and a multi week stay from Zoppe Circus.

- During this period, we took in just over \$60,000 in rental invoice revenue, down significantly from \$136,671 during the same time last year. The reduction was largely due to the cancelation of the Victory Sports Girls Gymnastic event and CBF Productions' decision not to run Snow N Glow locally this year. Additionally, last year the Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services required use of one of our Halls due to rain evacuations that were not needed this year. Similarly, parking was down during this same period with \$30,540 this year vs just over \$40,000 last year, again due to the loss of the 2 larger public events.
- One very bright spot was this year's Ventura Raceway Turkey Night event which saw a modest increase in parking revenue of about \$1,000 but a major increase in camping revenue with \$14,230 taken in this year, over double from what was taken last year which was \$6,435. Special thanks should go to Ms. Boyd, Ms. Inez and Mr. Vann who all worked very hard in making the camping such a success this year.
- In February we have several return events including the Jurassic Quest dinosaur show, Chopperfest, and The Great Train Show. We will also see two new events next month with the Grimoire Academy: World Fair & Exhibition and the Ventura Home Improvement and Outdoor Living Expo, a new Home and Garden Show event.
- We are continuing to work forward towards our spring event calendar including Hall of Flowers, California Strawberry Festival and Skull and Roses. We also hope to have updates on some big events for this summer and fall soon.

CEO McGuire wanted to add that staff is working on promoting our own events such as motorsports events, Octoberfest and possibly some one-off concerts and use those as Foundation fundraising events. She had a lot of meetings at the Convention and motorsports will probably kick off in June. She will work with Mr. Naylor on that and the proceeds for that event could be put back into the Raceway.

CEO McGuire introduced Jim Jennings, who used to be head of maintenance many years ago and is now our production manager in the main arena during the Fair. He is here now to oversee the maintenance department in the interim season.

C. Discussion and possible action on the proposed purpose, mission, vision and direction statements

CEO McGuire explained that these were included in her CEO report.

There was further discussion and any directors that have input on any of these statements can email Director Morgan-Carter which she can bring to the Marketing Committee Meeting for discussion and then be brought back to the full board.

X. Board Correspondence

- A. Memo from Mike Francesconi at California Dept. of Food & Agriculture, Fairs & Expositions: 2024 State Rules for California Fairs

CEO McGuire explained that there were two memos from Mike Francesconi at F&E. One was in regards to the State Rules and the other one was Fair training reimbursements.

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, 1-2, are approved by the vote that approves the Consent Agenda, unless an item is pulled for separate consideration.

- A. Agreements
1. Standard Agreements
 2. Rental Agreements - Interim

MOTION: To approve the consent agenda with items A, 1-2.

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

XII. CEO Report

- There was a Ventura County Fairgrounds Foundation meeting yesterday. Four members resigned for various reasons, but there are nominations for new board members who will go through an interview process. They discussed whether they wanted to continue, and the board agreed that they did. Fundraising ideas were discussed and possibly doing one event a year and doing it well. She explained that there needed to be separation between the fair and foundation in terms of staff because it is a compliance issue across the state. They had election of officers. This year the focus for the Foundation is going to be on the Morgan Arena. There was discussion about hiring Ms. Hook or someone who comes recommended to tell their story, which she feels would make a huge difference in getting donors. It is important to keep the 501(c)3 active so that grants can be made through them. There is a new direction and they want to get more involved. They did an extensive tour of the Morgan Arena with Mr. Bowman who is with the Wood Claeysens Foundation. The Wood Claeysens Foundation really wants to see additional donors come in and help with things down there. She feels it is important to get their story out and have a media presence out there.
- There will be a Surfer’s Point Meeting this afternoon with the City’s engineer and construction manager. The Fair will be losing a lot of land and it will be good to walk it and actually visually see where they want to make changes.
- The Junior Fair Board is hosting a beach clean-up along with the City on March 2nd from 9 am -11 am. This will be a great activity for the Board to meet the Junior Fair Board. It

is open to the public and the Fair is offering a free fair ticket for anyone who comes out and helps.

- We did win a number of awards at WFA and she is glad Ms. Hook got to go so she can see everything and get an idea of how to win all the awards next year.
- Hall of Flowers is scheduled in March. They had to jump through some hoops with the City in terms of permitting and getting some paperwork straightened out. The City has an ordinance to hold only one event per year, so that will be our one event. The board will need to look at that policy and the City is going to revise their policy as well.
- She is working with Ms. Bailey-Findley on April dates for part two of the strategic planning.
- The CRC grant she applied for will require a strategic planning meeting so this will be perfect timing.

XIII. President's Report

- He explained that Mr. Hecht who is on the Foundation and also with Sespe Consulting, said that there are other ways to engineer things as far as our parking at Surfer's Point, which is good to hear. We are certainly going to look at that and do all we can to minimize the amount of parking we lose. The board will be updated as there are more details.
- He couldn't be any happier with what he hears and all the things getting done around the fairgrounds. He sees so much exponential potential this year. He is happy that we have such hard-working, dedicated staff that just keeps on plugging away and thanked everyone.
- He feels we are in really good shape and stated that CEO McGuire is an amazing leader and doesn't know how she does all that she does.

XIV. Director's Comments

Director Morgan-Carter

- She thanked staff and our fearless leader CEO McGuire.
- She is excited and is looking forward to continuing with the marketing efforts to bring awareness about the great things that we do.
- She is looking forward to this year.

Director Ceja

- He thanked everyone for the invitation to attend the WFA Convention. That was his first outing as a board member and explained that it was an interesting event. He explained that it was amazing to be in a room with so many other board members from other fairs throughout southern California. It was an interesting event and he really appreciated it.

Director Mack

- She explained that the bike path clean-up work that happened was amazing and appreciated.
- She explained that WFA was an amazing experience and she had never seen staff work so hard. She really had a good time and was impressed with everyone's work ethic and the creativity, experience and professionalism. It is a real honor to be part of this effort.

Director Chess

- She thought the convention was really interesting but seemed that staff got the most out of it. There was a lot going on with staff meetings, as they all heard today, but it is exciting to be a part of it all.

Director Cornejo

- She explained that she was only able to attend one day of the convention but made the most of it. It regenerated the excitement of being a part of this industry.
- She thanked staff, many of whom have stuck around over the years through some really tough times and they have stayed with the vision of what this Fair can be.
- She is excited to hear about having drones this year.

Director Lacayo

- She thanked staff for all the repairs and the upkeep of the fairgrounds. Redoing the bathrooms is such a huge deal, especially for women.
- She explained that CEO McGuire is doing a great job.
- She congratulated President Long for having his first meeting under his belt as well as Vice President Ceja.
- She looks forward to 2024.

XV. Future Agenda Items

1. Fair 2024

XVI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

Submitted by: Heidi Ortiz
Heidi Ortiz, Executive Secretary

Approved by: Jennifer McGuire
Jennifer McGuire, CEO Ventura Fairgrounds

Approved by: Dan Long
Dan Long, Board President