

# 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](http://venturacountyfair.org) Contact: Jennifer McGuire, Acting CEO

**Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.**  
**Ventura County Fairgrounds – McBride Hall**

## **I. Call to Order**

### **Roll Call**

### **Declaration of Recusal or Conflict of Interest**

The meeting convened at 9:03 a.m. and called to order by President Long.

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

**Staff present:** Jen McGuire, CEO, Jason Amelio, Sales Manager, Madalyn Johnson, Concessions Manager, Megan Hook, PR & Marketing Firm, Emilee Inez, Exhibits Supervisor, Gerry Duran, Maintenance Supervisor, Joe Hutchison, Maintenance Electrician and Heidi Ortiz, Deputy Manager.

**Guests Present:** Liz Campos, Kathie Moore and Heather Ellis.

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

## **II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Director Mack 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.

## **V. Presentations**

A. Heather Ellis, EMS Administrator, Ventura Fire Department

Ms. Ellis explained that she is the EMS Administrator for the Fire Department and explained that after working various events at the fairgrounds one thing she recognized not being around the grounds are AEDs. She knows we rent the facilities out and it is a growing concern statistically in the county that cardiac arrests are increasing. She explained how they work and what the costs are. Stop the bleed kits was also something

she suggested the board to consider. She recommends that any building made rentable should have an AED in them. Staff were asked to come back at an appropriate time with an approach to buying these AEDs.

## **VI. Approval of Minutes**

A. April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes

**MOTION:** To approve the April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Board Meeting minutes.

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

## **VII. Financial Report**

A. Financial Report

Ms. McGuire explained that all the financials have shifted over to CFSA who are having to redesign multiple years to get a final number. They have not closed out 2023 yet, so there was a month-to-month comparison of revenue and expenses. The maintenance department has the biggest expense, but there are a lot of projects that need to get done. Ms. Martin been doing a lot of research for CFSA so they can move forward with closing everything out. The accounts have all been changed so everything must be moved around. They are still reconciling various accounts that go all the way back to 2007. CFSA is changing things so there will be a Fair budget and a non-Fair budget.

## **VIII. Old Business**

A. Discussion and possible action regarding policies

Director Morgan-Carter asked to table this item because they need at least one more meeting before they make their final recommendations to the board.

B. Facility Update

CEO McGuire explained that it is a continuation from last month. There are a lot of ongoing projects like the gas line replacement project, getting the grounds ready for the California Strawberry Festival, repairing and painting the barns, landscaping, tree trimming and replacing lights. One of the vendors has painted a mural on the side of McBride Hall and there are resources to come in and possibly paint more.

Mr. Duran explained that he is working with the City and Cal Trans to lay asphalt on Rodeo Row and a part of the main parking lot. They will bring the machine and the labor, and the fairgrounds would pay for the asphalt.

President Long commented that he was amazed when he walked around the grounds at how much has been done and the improvements that have been made.

Ms McGuire explained that there are a couple of grants she is looking into and will apply for.

### C. 2024 Fair Update

#### Ms Hook, Marketing and Publicity

- The website has been flipped and everything has been transferred over. It is designed to be mobile first, so that will be a user's best experience and that is how the majority of our traffic visits the site. They are trying to give year-round events a bigger placement on the home page and event page. They are still working on the custom pages and staff has identified some things that need to be corrected/updated.
- The LED screen on the corner has been a great addition. It has been kept up to date with relevant information and events that are happening each week.
- They are working with a lot of community partners.
- They are collaborating with the Supervisor of schools to deploy information such as Fair activities like the poster contest and read and ride.
- She started working with the Foundation on their marketing and getting their story out. They have added 11 new members to their board totaling 17. Last week the Foundation toured the fairgrounds and they were incredibly impressed by the work that has been done. They are motivated and excited to raise money for the fairgrounds and are talking about big goals and how to achieve them. The VC Reporter was here and they are working on a feature on the Foundation and the projects that are being accomplished on grounds. As he interviewed different members, he asked two common questions which was "Why" and "Why Now?" They all had a slightly different answer, but they all had one thing in common and that was CEO McGuire. They talked about her enthusiasm for the fairgrounds for new events and bigger ideas and it was contagious to also have that excitement and sense of elevating things, which is our key word this year.
- The poster contest judging is tomorrow. There were over 240 posters this year and last year there were 32. The \$10 fee was eliminated, and it was expanded to kindergarten through twelfth grade. In addition to the invitation the Directors received, there will be community members, past judging panels and organizers that we have at the fair to judge the posters.
- Entertainment is happening right now and there has been a really good response. The concept of "Go free or go VIP" was introduced along with the Fair partnering with CBF Productions. Starting last week, they started introducing the actual entertainment lineup one by one day by day. Thursday the tickets go on sale.
- They are marketing read and ride, favorite photo submissions/entries, graphics for the Junior Livestock Auction brochure, pricing out the gate and VIP concert promotional items, they started their print advertising, reviewing and negotiating proposals for media companies, securing content creators and working on the list of signage needs. The goal this year is to educate the public on the changes that we've made in a positive manner.

Madalyn Johnson, Concessions Manager

- She has reached the point where she works with the health department almost every three days. She has 75 food vendors, and she is starting to shepherd them through the process. We have the most arduous process in any Fair in the State of California with the health department.
- With the elevated experience, she is putting in the VIP and general admission area some food vendors that hit all the different areas like something sweet, crunchy, savory, delicious and new. Peiranos will be in the VIP area doing something specific to the community that they love and a possible picnic situation that can be offered to everyone.
- Community is doing really well. Dr. Lily Tamai, who just took a position at Channel Islands, has a completely different side which is Asian Pacific Islanders. She will present a list once everyone is finalized. The community is very interested in this 150<sup>th</sup> Fair; there are so many groups inquiring about getting in which is really great to see.
- She feels like this is really the time to elevate customer service. She wants to make sure they all have the information needed to make that happen. Ms. Eryn Johnson, who works in the concessions office, is the epitome of customer service.
- Commercial vendors have been pouring in and they are up to about 137.

CEO McGuire mentioned that staff is reopening the Garden Street entrance to the public. The fire marshal has approved it, and she feels it will help a lot of the vendors on that end of the property. Ms. Johnson has been able to relocate some of the community vendors to different areas, so that will be a great addition this year.

Emilee Inez, Exhibits Supervisor

- Entries are open and there are about 400 entries that have come through. In 2023, there were about 12,000 entries and 25% of the people registered within the last 48 hours. She will be working with Ms. Hook on marketing and getting people to register early.
- There was a Small Livestock Exhibitor meeting last week. It is one of the most specific departments and there are over 1,000 divisions and category combinations. There were about 50 people who came, and they got to help them with the registration process and answer any questions that they had.
- This Saturday will be the Large Livestock tagging part II with the lambs, goats and swine.
- Other than volunteering on grounds, the Junior Fair Board has been hard at work with planning their games and working with their committees. This year they have introduced the media committee, and they are hard at work. They are in charge of photographing and cataloging everything the JFB does. She mentioned their own Instagram and encouraged everyone to go follow (@VCFairJFB). They are doing department chats where different members of the Fair staff come and about what their job entails.

Marty Lieberman, Sponsorship Coordinator

- Sponsorships are going well and he is expecting an all-time high. There are about twenty sponsors currently and he is projecting to be about 10% to 15% above the all time high.
- He is hoping to bring in seven to eight more sponsors.
- He is excited about all the changes and energy in the room, and it has all helped with the sponsorship department.
- If anyone would like to see the sponsors they are on the website where they are all well represented.

CEO McGuire explained that there will be a new area called the Speakeasy that will be accessible only to sponsors, Fair Board members and the Foundation Board. It will be a special area that will staffed from about 4pm to 9 pm. She explained that the box seats will be true box seats this year, but will have access to the VIP area and be elevated. She also added that at the June meeting there will be maps on display and Mr. Maynard will walk the Board through how the front entrance will work, how the traffic will flow and the process of the cashless carnival. Also, she just got back from Mules Days and has confirmed with those groups to have the mules come in and do demonstrations.

#### D. X Games Update

Mr. Amelio explained that the X Games officially starts move-in June 6<sup>th</sup>. They will be building for roughly two weeks and the actual event takes place June 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>. The major difference this year is that they are activating both the carnival lot and main lot. There will be food and beverages in both areas. They will have multiple performances each night on the stage that will be in the back. They have announced two of the three acts. Mr. Amelio and Mr. Duran meet with them weekly. He is also meeting with them and the City weekly as well as independently almost daily. There is a lot being learned from event to event and those things are being applied to the next event. For instance, any traffic issues that came up during the Strawberry Festival have been rectified and the solution will be applied to the X Games.

Mr. Amelio explained that the sales revenue for the last month was down slightly from last year roughly about \$68,000 which is due to the Skull and Roses cancellation, and we did not have Pak House return this year. He is working with Mr. Maynard on admissions and parking. There will be a hiring day June 15<sup>th</sup> and hours are still to be determined. This will be open to anyone interested in admissions, parking, maintenance and security. There is still a large slate of events between now and the Fair. There is an expanding Summerfest Dog Show, Circus Vargas, X Games, Surf Rodeo, Tequila and Taco and a Tatto Expo. He is very happy with the way the California Strawberry Festival went. There were about 41,000 people which was down from 2023. The traffic was much better and all the meetings ahead of time with the different organizations involved really helped.

#### E. Surfers Point Managed Retreat

CEO McGuire explained that there was a community meeting last month. They are on track to start work after Labor Day this year. They are working on a Public Arts component for which there has been \$300k that will be spent on that.

**IX. Board Correspondence**

CEO McGuire explained that there was a circular letter explaining that there will be an in-person training day at the OC Fair.

**X. 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, 1-3, 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
3. Concession Agreements

**MOTION:** To approve the consent agenda with items A, 1-3.

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

**XI. CEO Report**

- She can't reiterate enough how the Foundation and the new members are going to be a game changer for the fairgrounds. It will be amazing in years to come and with Ms. Hook's work on the PR and marketing will be huge. The story has never been told and it is time that it is and gets out to the community. One thing that they do want to do is have a joint board meeting so that the vision of both boards can align, and they can build that relationship.
- She is still working on the fairgrounds partnerships and with the help of Director Chess, the Executive Director with the Ventura Music Festival wants to do something with us and build a partnership and do some outreach with different projects along with the Rotary.
- She is scheduled to be a speaker for the California Woman in Agriculture in June and will let everyone know when that will be held if anyone would like to attend. She will do a quick overview of our mission, vision, purpose and our goals.
- She is continuing to work with downtown and all of our neighbors and partners. Just in the result of the Strawberry Festival, it has been a tremendous success. Mr. Amelio goes to all of the networking meetings to get our name out there.



- We have acquired some additional parking lots and those will be given out at the next meeting.
- She has a meeting tomorrow with the Director of the Ventura County Community Arts Council regarding some mural projects on grounds. The Quonset huts is something she would like to see done, and there is a huge building down by the horse arena that she would like to see done.
- We are continuing with staff updates and trying to get people into civil service positions which Ms. Ortiz has been working really hard to get done. It is a long process, and she is hoping to officially have a Business Assistant, Event Coordinator and Exhibits Representative II.
- There is a lot of talk out there about naming rights and sponsors and that is one thing that her and Ms. Ortiz will be working on with Mr. Terry, Ms. Hook and President Long on. There will be a menu put together of what's needed, what are talking points are in terms of price and get that approved through legal and send it back to the Foundation board to go out and find it for us. There are a lot of ag companies that want to come in and put their name on it, but we want to make sure it is done right.

## **XII. President's Report**

- He did check with Mr. Southwick from CDFA regarding meeting with the Foundation and did say that was fine and it could be done like a workshop. It would be noticed like any other meeting, and they are thinking about doing it sometime after the Fair. He did sit in on the Foundation's last meeting and it was exciting to see all the enthusiasm.
- Every time he has to do a report he is excited because he is seeing all this stuff and all the enthusiasm which is contagious. Staff is doing a great job and it makes him feel proud to be a part of everything.

## **XIII. Director's Comments**

### **Director Lacayo**

- She is very excited about the Fair and X Games coming and all the work that is being done on the grounds.
- She thanked the staff for all their hard work.

### **Director Cuevas**

- She attended the Bagley-Keene and Ethics training provided by the State which was very informative and hopes everyone gets the chance to attend that, which will probably help with everyone's roles and responsibilities. Mr. Southwick is always available for comments, questions, calls or anything like that.
- She is very excited about the grounds and what is going on here. It is very evident to her, under CEO McGuire's leadership, that this place has turned around, and the overall staff quality, enthusiasm and dedication is apparent. People don't follow what they don't aspire or admire to be, and this staff is all in when it comes to CEO McGuire. She is very excited to have her here and hopes that we can continue this positive trajectory because it is long overdue.

Director Morgan-Carter

- She is happy and excited, as she always is, when she hears all the great reports and with the 150<sup>th</sup> celebration and bringing all these great groups from the community in.
- She will have this as a future agenda item and mentioned that Director Cornejo had brought it up previously but look at how we recognize directors as they retire out. Director Bradbury was never recognized and if there are any directors in the future how they want to handle that.

Director Mack

- She is impressed with everything that staff is doing and can't wait to see how it all plays out.

Director Chess

- One of the things mentioned when she was first on the board, and it hasn't even been a year, but who are we as a board and whether or not this is a proactive or reactive board. It seems with the first two meetings it was reactive to all the problems that we were facing, but it seems that we have turned a corner thanks to CEO McGuire. We are now able to think ahead and be proactive, which is very exciting.

Director Cornejo

- She just wanted to share the excitement about this year and all the coming changes.

Vice President Ceja

- He was lucky enough to attend three events at the fairgrounds since the last board meeting. He brought his family out to the different events which were the Latino Business Expo, the Fishing Expo and the California Strawberry Festival. He was able to get photos from the cross that overlooks our beautiful layout of the grounds. Everyone heard the press last year about the traffic, but to see everything flowing from that hillside was great.
- Also, coming today to see the slab completed was great. There are a lot of things changing real quick and our timeline is tight.
- He congratulated staff for getting everything organized, laid out and completed just in time for our big events.

**XIV. Future Agenda Items**

1. Fair 2024 Update
2. X-Games Update
3. Facility Update
4. Director's retirement activities

**XV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m.



Submitted by: Heidi Ortiz  
Heidi Ortiz, Deputy Manager

Approved by: Dan Long  
Dan Long, Board President