

# 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: Heidi Ortiz, CEO

**Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.**  
**Ventura County Fairgrounds – Derby Club**

## I. Call to Order

### Roll Call

### Declaration of Recusal or Conflict of Interest

The meeting convened at 9:02 a.m. and called to order by President Ceja.

**Directors present:** President Guillermo Rodriguez Ceja, Vice President Gloria Martinez, Betsy Chess, Leslie Cornejo, Dan Long, Shanté Morgan Carter, Ph.D. and Miriam Mack.

**Directors absent:** Leah Lacayo

**Staff present:** Heidi Ortiz, CEO, Jason Amelio, Deputy Manager, Emilee Inez, Exhibits Supervisor, Madalyn Johnson, Concessions Manager, Megan Hook, Media & Sponsorships

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

## II. Pledge of Allegiance

President Ceja led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## III. Welcome and Introduction of Guests - None

## IV. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda - None

## V. Approval of Minutes

A. November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

B. January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

**MOTION:** To approve November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Board Meeting minutes.

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

**VI. Financial Report**

A. Financials ending October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025 and November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025

CEO Ortiz shared that both October and November were positive and that the assets were equal to the liabilities.

**MOTION:** To approve Financials ending October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025 and November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

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

**VII. New Business – None**

**VII. Old Business**

A. Surfer’s Point Update

CEO Ortiz said that the project coordinators projected a completion date for the end of January, but she believes it will be closer to the middle of February. Striping has been completed and they are now finishing the landscaping. Director Cornejo inquired as to whom would provide the final sign off for the completion of the project, to which CEO Ortiz said that the city and California Construction Authority would sign off on the project. She was also able to get the electric vehicle charging station meter information to Ms. Martin.

B. Derby Club Update

CEO Ortiz asked the board for guidance on how to proceed with this task. Director Cornejo asked how they should convey their input to her, CEO Ortiz said she would like to begin now and continue to build communication. Director Mack shared that she sent a memo to the Executive Committee in October on how she believes it should be approached. The memo detailed that she believes there should be an examination of the building, an evaluation completed by a qualified economist to complete a market study specifically looking at community needs and competitors, and to allow for a Request for Proposals to be sent to potential developers. She would like the Board to create a committee to expedite the process and to ensure that they have a say about what happens to the building. There was discussion amongst the Board to decide if this should be an action item for the Buildings and Grounds Committee or be an ad hoc Committee. Director Martinez agreed with Director Mack that there should be an economic study conducted and with Director Morgan-Carter that there should be an

ad hoc committee created due to the uniqueness of the project. CEO Ortiz stated that the Derby Room lease ends at the end December of 2027 and the Player's Club is currently on a month-to-month lease. This was shared so that the committee can take into consideration the timeline of the leases. Director Chess and Director Cornejo said that the Board should be ready when the time comes so that all current occupants of the building have vacated. Director Morgan-Carter wanted to ensure that the committee sets clear goals to give any consultants directions. Director Long asked if the ad hoc committee would report to the full Board, the Executive Committee, or the Building and Grounds Committee, to which Director Cornejo said they should report to the full Board.

President Ceja appointed Vice President Martinez and Director Mack to the ad hoc committee, to which they both accepted.

### C. 2026 Fair Update

CEO Ortiz said that Fair planning is full speed ahead. The team just returned from the Western Fairs Association Convention in Reno, Nevada. She and Mr. Amelio met with the admission team, Total Event Access Management, who will be coming back again this year. They will be meeting with security in February, have a tentative carnival provider, and she continues weekly meetings with Romeo Entertainment.

#### Madalyn Johnson – Concessions, Commercial, and Community Manager

Ms. Johnson said that she has over 400 invitations to return to vendors. She and her team continue to recruit new vendors from across the county and are continuing to reach out to nonprofits. Revenue is currently \$21,000 for commercial space, \$6,000 for concessions, and \$7,000 for RV spaces. She is hoping to have about \$70,000 in total revenue from RV spaces. She is working on the map and fitting everything in. Styrofoam will be prohibited on grounds this year, she clarified that she would have a one or two-day grace period for vendors. She shared that there is nothing more valuable than the peer-to-peer conversations she had at the WFA Convention, and that she was able to meet with eleven concessionaires and commercial vendors while there. The focus of many of her conversations was to ensure that concessionaires have a value meal on their menus and to know if prices or portion sizes are changing. She ended by saying that she is working on the health department paperwork and showed the Board a large stack of reports that she receives from the Health Department daily during the Fair.

#### Megan Hook – Media and Sponsorships

Ms. Hook shared that she is ramping up on planning earlier this year by establishing timelines for marketing and ticketing. She announced that the Fair theme would be "Find Your Fun." She is also working on ensuring that all events are on the website and separating the Foundation site from the Fair's. The history page will go live shortly. In regard to sponsorships, she is streamlining the packages and revamping the benefits to better match the desires of sponsors. She is starting from scratch on many of the contracts and diving into what the sponsors really want. There are many new opportunities, such as a page about new Fair foods on the website, which will have sponsor recognition and concessions marketing. Ms. Johnson is a huge part of

sponsorships and Ms. Hook works closely with her. She ended by announcing that the Fair won twenty-six first place prizes in the WFA Achievement Awards, and that our commercial won 1<sup>st</sup> place and was shown at the awards dinner. Director Cornejo reminded the Board to always be considering potential new sponsors for the Fair, and Ms. Hook added that a human introduction is always best when establishing a new relationship. Vice President Martinez asked if it was possible to receive a copy of the sponsorship kit, Ms. Hook said yes and there is additional information on the site.

Jason Amelio – Arena & VIP Manager

Mr. Amelio began by saying how much other Fairs enjoyed our Feature Fair Tour last year, which highlighted the VIP concert area. He said it is high praise in the industry for other fairs to admit they will be blatantly copying us in our design. We have already had our first meeting to tighten up the design. He will be working with similar companies because many of them are in multi-year contracts.

Emilee Inez – Exhibits Supervisor & Junior Fair Board

Ms. Inez began by speaking to the changes she is making in the Large Livestock Entry Guide, detailing the way she and the livestock team identify opportunities for additional clarity within the guide. She showed a page of diagrams she created so that swine exhibitors can more clearly understand the pictures necessary to complete their entry. She continues to work to create interactive and educational displays for the exhibit halls. Ms. Inez has created a calendar that allows her to track deadlines and reminders, thus creating the groundwork for future years to have a month by month plan on timeline completion. The Junior Fair Board had their annual retreat in January, where members competed in a scavenger hunt across grounds, created their own dream Fairs, and conducted elections. The elected officers were shared as: President Mia, Vice President Carson, Treasurer Aurora, Secretary Mya, and Media Coordinator Sandy. Ms. Inez shared that she has been able to consult with multiple fairs across California to assist them in starting their own junior fair board programs or to problem solve situations that she has faces. She shared that she has a unique perspective having served as a member and an advisor to Junior Fair Board. Finally, Ms. Inez announced that she was selected to present at the WFA Convention for the second year in a row. In collaboration with the Young Professionals Alliance, of which she is on the Leadership Council for, she presented on how to approach innovation while maintaining traditions. Overall, the WFA Convention was an extremely beneficial trip for her to connect and reconnect with members of the industry.

## **IX. Board Correspondence**

- A. Memo from Dr. Annette Jones, State Veterinarian regarding the Poultry and Dairy Cattle Ban.  
CEO Ortiz announced that the ban on poultry exhibitions has been lifted and that the Fair's show will return this year.
- B. Memo from Mike Francesconi at California Dept. of Food & Agriculture, Fairs & Expositions: California Fairs Contract Procedures  
CEO Ortiz said that we are in compliance with the updated procedures.
- C. Memo from Mike Francesconi at California Dept. of Food & Agriculture, Fairs &

Expositions: District Agricultural Association and Non-Profit Relationships  
 With this information, CEO Ortiz asked Legal if there were any changes that needed to be made to the MOU recently completed with the Foundation, she is awaiting updates from CDFA Legal.

D. Email regarding Surfer's Point Parking

**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, 1-2, 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 (Second)	X		
Director Cornejo (Motion)	X		
Director Morgan Carter	X		
Director Long	X		
Director Mack	X		
Vice President Martinez	X		
President Ceja	X		

**XI. CEO Report**

CEO Ortiz began by speaking about an email she received from F&E about required training, staff has been notified and that the Board should ensure they are completing their necessary courses. Additionally, Form 700s are due to her by the March Board meeting if not sooner. She has received the application from the Coastal Commission for the price increase and will start working on that. A couple of general announcements she made was about the Derby Club's new bingo nights, an updated event calendar, and their grant writer is in the technical review process for a grant. She asked if Vice President Martinez would be able to secure a letter of recommendation to accompany the grant proposal.

**XII. President's Report**

President Ceja thanked everyone for attending and that he was nervous but glad to serve as president this year. He said that he has assigned Vice President Martinez to facilitate the CEO evaluations, and reminded everyone to turn them in by February 11<sup>th</sup>. He closed by saying that he liked the theme and looked forward to his Local being at the Fair again this year.

**XIII. Director's Comments**

Director Morgan-Carter, Ph.D.

- She said that she missed everyone, she is excited for the new year, and congratulated the new Board leadership team. She asked if it was possible to participate in WFA Convention again. She is looking forward to working with staff on the Fair again this year.

Director Long

- He said that he loved the enthusiasm of the staff reports and that CEO Ortiz is doing a fabulous job. He sees us in a good place moving forward.

Director Mack

- She said that the staff presentations were great and that she was very impressed. She asked for clarity on security issues as they came up. Finally, she said that the revenue on Oktoberfest being \$77,000 stood out to her.

Director Chess

- She echoed the other directors' comments. She asked what would be happening to highlight the Bicentennial celebration and would like to see it be acknowledged.

Director Cornejo

- She said she was looking forward to this year and the positivity in staff and the Board's attitudes. She thanked Director Long for his service as President.

Vice President Martinez

- She thanked staff, especially Ms. Johnson and Ms. Inez for taking the time to meet with her to further understand their departments. She welcomed directors to attend the LA County Fair with her May 8-9<sup>th</sup>. She also asked how to participate in the WFA Convention, and requested a formal memo from CEO Ortiz on how to do so.

**XIV. Future Agenda Items**

1. Discussion on the Bicentennial celebrations

**XV. Closed Session**

Pursuant to Gov. Code Section 1126(e)(2), the Board is authorized to meet in Closed Session for the purpose of conferring with and receiving advice from legal counsel regarding pending litigation.

There was no closed session that took place.

**XVI. Report Out of Closed Session - None**

**XV. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:19 a.m.

Submitted by: Emilee Inez  
Emilee Inez, Exhibits Supervisor

Approved by: Heidi Ortiz  
Heidi Ortiz, CEO

Approved by: William R. Ceja, Jr.  
Bill Ceja, Board President