

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, March 24th, 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 9:08 a.m. and called to order by President Ceja.

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

Absent: None

Staff present: Heidi Ortiz, CEO, Jason Amelio, Deputy Manager, Emilee Inez, Exhibit Supervisor, Madalyn Johnson, Concessions Manager, Megan Hook, PR & Marketing, and Karen Pineda, Executive Assistant.

Guests Present: None

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

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Vice President Martinez 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

There were no public comments.

V. Presentations – None

VI. Meeting Minutes (discussion and/or approval)

A. February 24th, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

- a. Minutes were approved with corrections by Director Cornejo to her Director's comments.

MOTION: To approve the February 24th, 2026 Board Meeting minutes with corrections.

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

VII. Financial Reports (discussion and/or approval)

A. Financials ending December 31st, 2025 and January 31st, 2026

- a. CEO Ortiz noted that the December financials are preliminary to the Statement of Operations and with President Ceja’s permission, she moved onto January financials.
- b. CEO Ortiz shared there was a small loss in January due to the light event schedule, minimum wage increase, and repairs to the Derby Club. She predicts the losses and gains to balance out within the next couple of months.

B. 2025 Statement of Operations

- a. CEO Ortiz summarized that the operating revenue for 2025 was \$14,273,555. The fairgrounds received a \$128,500 grant from the AB1499, as well as grant money from FEMA. The operating expenditure was \$13,582,613. Ultimately, we saw an increase in NET resources of \$660,709 for the year.

MOTION: To approve Financials ending December 31st, 2025 and January 31st, 2026 and the 2025 Statement of Operations.

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

VIII. New Business

- A. Discussion and possible action regarding approving a resolution for the CEO evaluation and salary increase
 - Director Long motioned to amend the last sentence of the resolution to include “by July 1st, 2026.” After a brief discussion, he withdrew the motion.

MOTION: To approve CEO Ortiz as the permanent, full-time CEO with a 5% salary increase under classification of Secretary Manager VI, effective July 1st, 2026 or as soon as CalHR approves.

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

IX. Old Business

- A. Surfer’s Point Update
 - a. CEO Ortiz updated the board on the Surfers Point project. She shared that a request was made to The City of Ventura to paint the curbs at the surf check spots. CEO Ortiz referred to the Beach Lot Tracking Report created by Mr. Amelio, that shows how much the parking lot makes each day at the current \$2 rate. She explained that the lot is operating at a loss of \$2,383 under the \$2 pricing. Switching to a \$5 daily rate would yield a profit of just under \$20,000. The amendment has been submitted to the Coastal Commission permitting staff for an initial review.
- B. Derby Club – Update from the Ad Hoc Committee
 - a. Director Mack stated that she and Vice President Martinez met to discuss the Derby Club and asked for support in directing staff to gather as much information as exists about the building, such as its square footage, layout, amenities, efficiencies, photographs, and any cost estimates readily on hand. Director Mack and Vice President Martinez believe this information could be useful for those who may be interested in utilizing the building. They would like a list of ideas on how the building could be used and have those ideas presented to the board with various approaches towards re-using, renovating, or upgrading the building for use. Vice President Martinez thanked Director Mack for putting together this memo and added that there may be a possibility to operate the Derby Club building more internally in close partnership with the Ventura County Fairgrounds Foundation. Director Cornejo mentioned that speaking to Mr. Amelio could be helpful as a lot of this information may already be included in previous rental contracts for special events held in the

Derby Club building. Director Mack would like confirmation that there are no documents that limit what can or cannot be done with the building. She also suggested surveying other fairs to see what kind of permanent uses they have on their grounds for any out-of-the-box ideas. CEO Ortiz agreed that reaching out to other fairs is a good idea. Director Long stated that it's important for board members to have this information and review it together.

C. 2026 Fair Update

Emilee Inez - Exhibits Supervisor

Ms. Inez provided an exhibits update. She shared that this will be the first year implementing a Jackpot showing, which is a diverse competition of high-level exhibitors. She also confirmed that all auction marketing towards past sponsors and top buyers are done on paper. Save-the-dates for the auction will be provided if they become available before the next board meeting. She shared that the goal for the art in the youth building is for it to look intentionally displayed rather than loosely displayed. The indoor-outdoor model of the souvenir booth had a successful trial run at Oktoberfest, and she is hoping to expand that for this year's fair. Exhibits will be introducing a new specialty competition this year called Red, White, and Blue Ribbons in honor of the country's 250th anniversary. Ms. Inez explained that an exhibitor is allowed to change the animal they intend to sell, only if the secondary animal is the grand champion. She's hoping to eventually introduce more experiences with the growth of the youth building.

Madalyn Johnson – Concessions, Commercial and Community Manager

Ms. Johnson provided a concessions update. She shared that she is working on fair and Oktoberfest simultaneously and is also helping to book entertainment for Oktoberfest. Her and her team have collected about \$119,000 in commercial deposits, \$46,000 in camping, and will begin taking food vendor deposits at \$2,000, which is an estimated \$118,000 for vendors who pay rent at the end of fair. Ms. Johnson and her team are trying to be as flexible as possible, while also getting the most variety when recruiting for this year's fair. Ms. Johnson praised Ms. Eryn Johnson for attending the Conejo Valley disabilities event where she came by over 20 leads for fair booths. Ms. Johnson and Vice President Martinez met with Supervisor Parvin to discuss ideas with the health department. The conversation was productive, and Ms. Johnson shared that she will be working with the health department to get about 79 vendors permitted for the fair. She thanked CEO Ortiz for allowing her to work on this project. CEO Ortiz added that the money brought in by Ms. Johnson's team is deferred and will be included in the July financial report.

Megan Hook – Marketing and Sponsorships

Ms. Hook provided a marketing and sponsorships update. She shared that she is still working on pre-sale ticketing set-up. A transparent model will be used this year where every promotion and plan will be on the fair's website ahead of time, so people know what to expect and where to buy. Pre-concert announcements will be made so people are incentivized to purchase tickets early. A post-concert announcement will be made for customers who have been waiting to hear the entertainment line-up and can still get a great deal on tickets. The Youth Poster contest is set to end Friday, April 3rd, and

Ms. Hook thanked Supervisor Parvin and the Museum of Ventura County for their support in promoting the contest. The Read and Ride program will begin early this year, and kids can earn six ride passes for every four books read. Participants must submit book summaries and may pick up their passes in July. Ms. Hook reported that fair planning is well underway, and she is developing entertainment marketing plans for artist management. Graphics and branding efforts for ticketing and the auction are also in progress. Ms. Hook shared that there are 16 potential sponsorships, including new and returning partners. There will be one sponsor who will sponsor all the food for fair and there will be a page on the website and program dedicated to that. On-site activations and giveaways will be a huge focus this year and will be programmed into the schedule so they can be efficiently advertised. Ms. Hook has created a micro-sponsorship program where local businesses or community organizations can advertise at the fair in a less expensive way, while also bringing in revenue to cover costs. She emphasized what a great marketing tool the programs are as it provides a glance into how fair functions. She said daily program print outs are an option, but QR codes will be available for people to view on their personal device.

Jason Amelio – Arena and VIP Manager

Mr. Amelio provided an update on the 2026 Fair. He shared that the team has been working to refine and dial-in new ideas for the arena. He confirmed that there won't be any drastic changes to the arena this year. They will be looking into food locations, tent locations, and seeing what amenities can be added or adjusted. Camping, the beach lot, and gates will be needing more attention moving forward. He and the team are looking at how these components will integrate with the layout and functionality of the arena.

CEO Ortiz shared that the staff has a weekly fair planning meeting and updates will be brought to the board every month.

X. Board Correspondence – None

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, 1-3, 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	X		
Director Lacayo (Motion)	X		
Director Long	X		
Director Mack (Second)	X		
Director Morgan-Carter	X		
Vice President Martinez	X		
President Ceja	X		

XII. CEO Report

- CEO Ortiz introduced the new Executive Assistant, Karen Pineda.
- She reminded the board that she and Mr. Amelio will be attending the Nuts & Bolts training in Sacramento from Wednesday, March 25 to Thursday, March 26.

XIII. President’s Report

- President Ceja thanked CEO Ortiz and the maintenance staff for taking their time to meet with two contractors to look at the asphalt project and identify some of the bigger problem areas. Another contractor looked at the different pump stations on the lots to provide direction for improvements.
- He shared that he is working with local entities to potentially sponsor and contribute to the fairgrounds. He thanked the staff again for getting a lot done in a short period of time.

XIV. Director’s Comments

Vice President Martinez

- Vice President Martinez thanked CEO Ortiz for getting key critical staff in place.
- She also thanked Director Mack for the work she’s put into the Derby Club ad-hoc committee.

Director Cornejo

- Director Cornejo welcomed Ms. Pineda and is glad to see the staff growing.
- She shared that she and Director Long are part of a committee that will be voting on the art that will be displayed at Surfer’s Point. There were 15 applicants approved, which they will rate against certain criteria. She is happy to be involved and representing the fairgrounds during this process.

Director Mack

- Director Mack expressed that the enthusiasm from the staff is contagious, and she is excited about this year’s fair.
- She also welcomed Ms. Pineda to the team.

Director Chess

- Director Chess welcomed Ms. Pineda to the staff.

Director Morgan-Carter

- Director Morgan-Carter welcomed Ms. Pineda to the staff.
- She also thanked CEO Ortiz for implementing training for the staff and appreciates the openness to learning new things.
- She expressed her excitement for this year's fair.

Director Lacayo

- Director Lacayo thanked the staff for their enthusiasm for the fair even though it's only March.
- She thanked her fellow board members for participating in the ad-hoc committees.
- She also welcomed Ms. Pineda to the team.

Director Long

- Director Long shared how excited he was to see Ms. Pineda join the team to assist CEO Ortiz.
- He expressed how amazing the staff has been. He said that it's inspiring and enthusiastic to know there are great people working to keep the fairgrounds in great shape. He's happy to be a part of it and believes we're in better shape than we have been in a long time.

XV. Future Agenda Items – None

XVI. Closed Session

The Board is authorized to meet in Closed Session for the following reason:

1. Pursuant to Gov. Code Section 11126(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.

President Ceja convened into closed session at 9:59 a.m.

XVII. Report Out of Closed Session – None

President Ceja reconvened at 10:44 a.m. He stated that there was no reportable action taken during closed session.

President Ceja reminded the Board of the timeline for submitting the Form 700 as well as the required online trainings.

XVIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Submitted by: Karen Pineda
Karen Pineda, Executive Assistant

Approved by: Heidi Ortiz
Heidi Ortiz, CEO

Approved by: Guillermo R. Ceja Jr.
Guillermo Rodriguez Ceja Jr., Board President