

# 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

**Wednesday, May 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 9:01 a.m. and called to order by President Ceja.

**Directors present:** President, Guillermo Rodriguez Ceja Jr., Vice President, Gloria Martinez, Betsy Chess, Miriam Mack, and Dan Long.

**Absent:** Leslie Cornejo and Shanté Morgan-Carter.

**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

Director Chess 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

### A. Youth Poster Unveiling

- CEO Ortiz explained that the youth poster unveiling has historically been the kick off to Fair. It really showcases the talent of our youth in the county. There were approximately 300 entries which were up from last year. There were about twenty judges including community partners like Ms. Caldwell who is the CEO of the Chamber of Ventura, representatives from the Ventura County Supervisor’s Office, members of Ventura Coast and President Ceja.

- Miss Inez announced the winners of the youth poster contest. She introduced the third-place winner, Simon Shapiro, a sixth grader at Sinaloa Middle School. Mika Sanchez was the second-place winner, a tenth grader at St. Augustin Academy. The first-place winner was Annalise Cheng, a ninth grader from Camarillo.
- Ms. Hook shared that the poster artwork will be used for fair merchandise and advertising.

**VI. Meeting Minutes (discussion and/or approval)**

A. April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

**MOTION:** To approve the April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Board Meeting minutes.

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

**VII. Financial Reports (discussion and/or approval)**

A. Financials ending March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

**MOTION:** To approve Financials ending March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

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

**VIII. New Business**

A. Discussion and possible action regarding revisions to the policy manual.

Director Long asked President Ceja if discussion regarding the policy manual can be tabled until next month's board meeting to address the various questions received by directors. President Ceja approved postponing the discussion until the June Board meeting.

**IX. Old Business**

A. Surfer's Point Update

CEO Ortiz shared that the city painted the surf check points green, and the necessary signage has been posted. An updated revenue report for the parking lot will be shared at next month's meeting.

B. Derby Club – Update from the Ad Hoc Committee

Director Mack and Vice President Martinez met with CEO Ortiz and Mr. Amelio for a committee meeting to review information about the Derby Club building's capabilities. They have asked staff to gather preliminary estimates for building improvements as well as revenue from when fair staff previously managed the building. The ad-hoc committee will meet with staff again to craft recommendations from the information provided.

C. 2026 Fair Update

CEO Ortiz shared the success of the pre-sale ticket sales that commenced on May 1. The first season pass promotion exceeded numbers from the promotions last year. This year's fair will feature approximately 8 to 10 additional rides compared to last year. Mr. Helm is currently working on erecting a two-story carousel in Cub Country.

Megan Hook – Marketing and Sponsorships

Ms. Hook shared that the five-day season pass promotion has exceeded units sold during last year's season pass promotion. Wristbands for carnival will be available to purchase beginning June 1. Efforts to spread the word on the clear bag policy continue, as it's been posted across various pages on the fair's website, included in newsletters, and ticketing checkout and confirmation pages. Ms. Hook announced a sponsorship with McDonald's, where tickets to the fair will be available to purchase at the 17 restaurant locations across Ventura County. In the coming weeks, there will also be cross-promotional opportunities for the public to purchase Oktoberfest tickets when purchasing fair admission tickets.

Madalyn Johnson – Concessions, Commercial and Community Manager

Ms. Johnson highlighted the artists who will be featured as commercial vendors during the fair this year. Three local pet vendors are currently booked for the fair, one of which will feature dog-friendly charcuterie boards. She also expressed her excitement to work with local Ventura County breweries.

Emilee Inez - Exhibits Supervisor

Day of entries will be introduced within the youth building this year, as parents have expressed interest in this in the past. The profiles section of the Future of Agriculture Barn will feature mostly people from within the fair community who have experience in the agriculture industry. Ms. Inez shared the success of utilizing exhibit specific business cards for exhibitor recruitment. This idea was recently featured by WFA during Fairgrounds Appreciation Month as an innovation in the industry, along with the use of the iPad system used in the livestock department.

Jason Amelio – Arena and VIP Manager

Mr. Amelio shared there won't be much to report on the arena until building and staging gets underway. There will be a portion of security staff that will be directly employed by the fair, which should result in significant cost savings. Mr. Amelio is working with the maintenance department to increase communication during event transitions. Hiring Day will be taking place on Saturday, June 13 at Santa Cruz Hall, where we hope to hire about 100 people.

**X. Board Correspondence**

CEO Ortiz shared an email from a community member describing how the fair has positively impacted her life and introduced her to the world of agriculture.

**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 (Second)	X		
Director Lacayo (Motion)	X		
Director Long	X		
Director Mack	X		
Vice President Martinez	X		
President Ceja	X		

**XII. CEO Report**

- CEO Ortiz met with a grant writer and the regional director for the State Coastal Conservancy regarding the Climate Bond Grant application. They will be working on restructuring that application for 2027, as 2026 grants have been allocated.
- She is meeting with the Alpha Group, which is a company that works with government agencies to provide mission critical infrastructure services. This would be a potential revenue stream as they would pay the fairgrounds a monthly rental fee to pre-position emergency equipment on grounds.

**XIII. President's Report**

- President Ceja shared exhibits that stood out at the LA County Fair: America's Great Outdoors, car show groups, non-profits, and pop-up performances. He believes fire

education and a sensory friendly family space could be interesting to include in future fairs.

- He looks forward to attending more fairs in Southern California.

#### **XIV. Director's Comments**

Vice President Martinez

- Vice President Martinez referenced the county parade featured at the LA County Fair, which included various county agencies. She expressed her willingness to assist in engaging agencies should the fairgrounds consider a similar concept in the future.
- She was also impressed by LA County Fair's focus on disability access.

Director Mack

- Director Mack expressed her appreciation for the staff.
- The History Ad Hoc Committee will provide recommendations to CEO Ortiz regarding the recognition of Orpha Foster following the fair.

Director Chess

- Director Chess expressed that she is blown away by fair staff's hard work.
- She echoed how pertinent it would be to include fire education at fair.

Director Lacayo

- Director Lacayo stated that she is proud of the staff for the work they have accomplished and is looking forward to the fair.
- She gave Ms. Inez kudos for being recognized by WFA.

Director Long

- Director Long said that he is proud and amazed by the work staff does to make the fair as successful as it is.
- He invited Alex Mangone of the Ventura City Council to say a few words.
- Mr. Mangone stated that he is looking forward to the fair and has noticed an increase in public communication regarding fair events.

#### **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 10:05 a.m.

#### **XVII. Report Out of Closed Session – None**

President Ceja reconvened at 11:06 a.m. There was no reportable action taken during closed session.

**XVIII. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 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