

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, August 25th, 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 9:04 a.m. and called to order by President Ceja.

Directors present: President, Guillermo Rodriguez Ceja Jr., Vice President, Gloria Martinez, Leslie Cornejo, Leah Lacayo, Dan Long, and Miriam Mack.

Absent: Betsy Chess and Shanté Morgan-Carter

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

Guests Present: Liz Campos, Phil Fields, Rima Muna, Mary Jo Mitchell, Chris Thompson, Sara Burns, Lynn Dines, Catherine Schoenherr, Karen Rodrigues, Scott McCarty, Cynthia Nustad, Natalie Johnston, Maty Mendenhall, Carisa Kuhns, Amanda Taylor, Wendy Lofland, Barbara Greene, Doug Emerson, Megan Marble, Kalena Massey, Karn Sarver, Robin VanEyck, Aaron Funez, Beth Mansfield, Kathleen Koenig, Tom Koenig, Mindy Zellis, Kay Mendel, Jennifer Quigg, Earl Bishop, Jane Acuna, Max Acuna, Stephanie Zandbergen, Rob Zandbergen, Jeffrey Miller, Alice Tseng, Diana Kelley, Jeanne Zuls, Karol A., Greg Martin, Tomas Rebecchi, Hellen O'Neill, Lucie Leake, Grace Lestak, Sean Lloyd, Amy Strickland, Darlene Cody, Kris Pustina-Haldane, Julia Griggs, Kathy Peterson, Jackie Pinson, Mary M. Olsen, John Susleck, Eloise Kong, Jayden Secor, Nick Maffei, Jennifer Montoya, Kerri Yim, Kathy Stephens, Laurel Meyer Zdeblick, Denise Chandler, Kim Cardenas, Debra Merz-Kieffer, Chris Torgerson, Theresa Olmstead, Christine Samusick, Barbara Hynes, Pam Brisco, Betty Trest, Kendra Gonzalez, Lisa Cook, Sondra Menther, Michele Payne, and Linda Jones.

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

President Ceja opened public comments.

- Liz Campos – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Alex Mangone – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Phil Fields – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Rima Muna – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Beth – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Lynn Dines – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Barbara Greene – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Sara Burns – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Kalena Massey – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Adriene Coulter – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Chris Espinosa – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Andy Kahn – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Jackie Pinson – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Alice Tseng – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Pam Briscole – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- John Susleck & Eloise Kong – were opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Mary M. Olsen – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Tomas Rebecchi – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Christine Samusick - was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Jeff Miller – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Kay Mendel – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Mariza Sullivan – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Lisa Cook – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Jeanne Zuls – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Sondra Menther – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Lucie Leake – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Natalie Johnston – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Leaf Monroe – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Nick Moffei – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Karol Katzman – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Cloud – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Sebastian K. – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Aaron Funez – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Michele Payne – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Michael MacDonald – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Debbie Turnee – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.
- Theresa Olmstead – was opposed to the Global Stack proposal.

V. Presentations - None

VI. Meeting Minutes (discussion and/or approval)

A. July 21st, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the July 21st, 2026 Board Meeting minutes.

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

VII. Financial Reports (discussion and/or approval)

A. Financials ending June 30th, 2026.

MOTION: To approve Financials ending June 30th, 2026.

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

VIII. Old Business

A. Surfer's Point Update

CEO Ortiz opened public comments.

Robin VanEyck - expressed that the absence of the annual parking pass at the beach lot is a major concern for residents. Offering a reliable pass would foster strong goodwill with the fairgrounds and community. He urged the board to resolve pricing discussions with the Coastal Commission and reinstate an affordable annual pass option as soon as possible.

CEO Ortiz shared that she would like the Surfer's Point ad-hoc committee to meet now that the fair is over to work on pending administrative items. The coastal commission permit application is still pending, and she is hopeful that they will conduct a hearing in September with that on the agenda as they communicated.

B. 2026 Fair Recap

CEO Ortiz presented a recap of the fair by the numbers.

- Ticket sales earnings were \$3.2 million, compared to last year's \$2.9 million. This year ticket sales started May 1st where ticket sales last year started early March.
- Food earnings were \$5.8 million.
- Bar earnings were \$2.5 million. She stated that Allied Beverages' willingness to be a creative partner added to the success.
- Parking earnings were similar to last year's at \$495,000.
- Carnival earnings were about \$3.3 million.
- VIP concert sales earnings were about \$960,000.
- Rodeo sales totaled around \$107,000, which was lower than last year. This was due to trying to find that happy medium to where people were still comfortable but it wasn't over crowded.
- She shared the average spend based on the total attendance number of 268,791 people. At the gate people spent about \$11.10. On beer sales, they spent about \$9.08. On parking, they spent about \$1.86. At the carnival, they spent about \$11.69. The food average was \$21.39.
- CEO Ortiz shared that the VIP concert experience continues to be something people love. A ride, game and a food booth were added to the VIP entrance this year.
- She believed that the increase of attendance was attributed to fairgoers staying longer and spending more time at the fair.
- Just under 16,000 season passes were sold. Season pass scans at the gate were 47,732. It averaged at about three visits to the fair per holder.
- Monday, August 3rd, saw the highest attendance, which was attributed to the Ashanti and Bow Wow concert, as well as the 17 and under carnival wristband promotion.
- CEO Ortiz mentioned the Pint for a Pass program held by a local blood bank.
- The shuttle program saw almost 106,000 riders utilizing the free bus service.
- Concert revenue was over \$200,000.
- The top selling concert was Marshmello. CEO Ortiz would like to continue booking EDM talent moving forward.
- Marshmello, Iratton, and Ashanti generated the most revenue. The county artists ranked lower in popularity this year.
- The Fair received approximately \$1.3 million in revenue from its percentage of carnival sales.
- Sales tax generated from food sales was \$407,000.
- The fair received \$683,329 in commission from food and beverage sales. She attributed the increase in gross profit to OVG and the sponsorship with Allied Beverages.
- Total sales from the Junior Livestock Auction was \$1.7 million; total add-ons were \$481,623. There were 461 animals total. The Foundation animal generated \$16,250.
- CEO Ortiz shared that the clear bag policy will be implemented for future fairs.

Megan Hook – Marketing and Sponsorships

Ms. Hook shared that she utilized paid and organic marketing, community outreach, and numerous channels to remind the community how much fun was waiting for them was at the fair. The “Find Your Fun” theme allowed for versatile marketing campaigns. There were about 320 Instagram grid posts this season, with 204 posted during the fair alone, and we shared over 1,000 stories. Ms. Hook reported collaborations in the community with groups in the county, including Moms of Conejo Valley and Ventura County Business Alliance. There were over 3.4 million views on the Facebook page. She explained that we are spending less money for more clicks. On Instagram, there were 14 million views and 18,000 link clicks. We gained over 10,500 followers during the fair season. Our click through rate on Instagram is 1.5 times better than the industry average, and we are paying half the industry average for it. On Tik Tok, she reported the demographics were split down the middle between men and women. The biggest age group was 18-24. Ms. Hook shared that the newsletter has over 80,000 subscribers. Marketing collaborated with radio stations on social media, which expanded reach in promotional efforts. Pre-sale numbers were up by \$850,000 compared to last year. She highlighted the partnership with McDonald’s and shared that over 2,000 discounted tickets were sold and gained over \$27,000 in revenue from the foot traffic to their restaurants. The new partnership with Allied Beverages brought new offsite advertising opportunities, where they printed signage promoting the fair and their brands at bars and grocery stores. The Ventura County Credit Union became a ticketed partner, with opportunities for their members to purchase discounted tickets. Ms. Hook reported that sponsorship contracts totaled more than \$1 million. Vice President Martinez thanked Ms. Hook for her hard work and asked her to expand on the community partnerships. Ms. Hook explained that collaborations with community groups are not formal agreements, but more of a willingness to share information, which contributed to the organic advertising growth.

Madalyn Johnson – Concessions, Commercial and Community Manager

Ms. Johnson shared that fairgoers were eager to try new food items at this year’s fair. The team was strategic with space and believed that fair space was utilized efficiently. She was excited to report that the commercial buildings were full and active. Best practices that she will be speaking to vendors about include ROI, look and feel of stand, any history with the fair, what their speed of service is, etc. Some things that were successful were the added value meals, souvenir cup, and Beer Fest. She shared that vendors with lemonade sold about \$100,000 in lemonade alone. The concessions department is working through Oktoberfest and progress is going well. CEO Ortiz gave Ms. Johnson special thanks for coordinating the water hydration stations this year. Director Long suggested more hydration stations be added for fair in the future.

Emilee Inez – Exhibits Supervisor

There were 9,376 still exhibits, which was up nearly 2,000 from last year. Ms. Inez gave kudos to the superintendents for their hard work in recruiting exhibitors. Youth exhibitors took advantage of same-day entries. The Red, White, and Blue Competition was a success with dozens of participants. The Home-Arts superintendent is planning

on holding a special competition every year. The floriculture building was nearly overflowing and the agriculture building felt livelier. Ms. Inez shared that they are focusing on how to retain exhibitors for future fairs. The Junior Livestock Auction was successful. She shared that they see a shift from animal sale price to add-ons. The new barbeque company was well received and great to work with. The Junior Fair Board decided to make all games free this year, and it was well received by fair patrons. Over 65 people participated in Adult Showmanship.

Jason Amelio – Arena and VIP Manager

Mr. Amelio spoke about the success of concert operations at the last three fairs. He reported that we regularly admitted between 7,000 - 8,5000 people in general admission. The VIP component has not come at the cost of general admission capacity. It allows patrons the ability to breathe and enjoy the shows while ensuring their safety. Mr. Amelio said that there were approximately five nights with some of the highest attendance capacities, which he attributed to CEO Ortiz's hard work on the concert lineup. He said that there is much to improve in regard to safety and security but believes each year should get better. Mr. Amelio expanded on the process of turning over the concert set-up to the rodeo arena. He explained that it's a concentrated effort between OVG, maintenance staff, the tent rental company, and fencing company.

IX. Board Correspondence

- A. Memo from Mike Francesconi at California Dept. of Food & Agriculture, Fairs & Expositions: Dymally-Allatore Bilingual Services Act Language Survey.
CEO Ortiz summarized that a public employee who has frequent contact with the public, either in person or by telephone, must tally the languages spoken by members of the public and submit their findings to the State.

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, 1-4, 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
 - 4. Judges Agreements

MOTION: To approve the consent agenda with items A, 1-4.

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

XI. CEO Report

- CEO Ortiz will continue to work with the California Construction Authority on the storm drain in the carnival lot.
- She shared that she hopes to tackle the replacement of the Santa Rosa building's roof.
- She is working diligently with Mr. Amelio on drafting RFPs to send to the State for review.
- The team is full speed ahead on planning for Oktoberfest.
- She thanked Ms. Pineda for her hard work during the fair.

XII. President's Report

- President Ceja shared that he attended all 12 days of fair with his family.
- He gave kudos to Teri and Suzy in the main office and thanked the rest of the staff for their hard work.
- He learned a lot from the auction and looks forward to attending more events and gaining more knowledge.

XIII. Director's Comments

Director Lacayo

- Director Lacayo congratulated the staff on a fabulous job with the fair.
- She appreciated the core carnival and look of the fairgrounds.
- She asked CEO Ortiz to confirm how long the State is taking to return RFPs. CEO Ortiz confirmed that it is taking longer to getting them back due to DGS having new requirements for bids.
- Director Lacayo expressed how great the concert lineup was and gave kudos to CEO Ortiz for her work on it.
- She thanked her fellow board members and expressed how fun it was to see them during the fair.

Director Long

- Director Long shared that he attended the fair every day.
- He thanked the staff and was impressed by how much work was done by so few.
- He acknowledged the scale and professionalism by the core carnival. He expressed that he had never seen so many rides at the fairgrounds.

- He said it was one of the best fairs he's ever seen.

Director Mack

- Director Mack congratulated the staff for the professionalism of their work, and for the thorough presentations shared today.
- She expressed that the carnival was great.
- She expressed that she had a great experience meeting and working with the exhibit superintendents.
- She noticed that fair patrons in general were happy and said that it was overall a great fair.

Director Cornejo

- Director Cornejo extended her gratitude to the staff for the wonderful job done for the fair.

Vice President Martinez

- Vice President Martinez thanked the local residents for sharing their concerns.
- She thanked the staff and was impressed by the work that was done.
- She expressed how rewarding it was to judge the youth exhibits, and to see the overall participation of the community.
- She commented on how great it was to see the community stages activated and thanked staff for coordinating that.
- She expressed how EDM brings in a new generation of fair goers.

XIV. Future Agenda Items

1. Discussion and possible action regarding the Global Stack proposal.

XV. Closed Session

There was no closed session that took place.

XVI. Report Out of Closed Session – None

XVII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m. in memory of Carol Anderson.

Submitted by: Karen Pineda
Karen Pineda, Executive Assistant

Approved by: Heidi Ortiz
Heidi Ortiz, CEO

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