

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, September 22nd, 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 9:00 a.m. and called to order by Vice President Martinez.

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

Absent: Guillermo Rodriguez Ceja Jr.

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

Guests Present: Jessica Anderson, Sharon Ferro, Leslie Gonzalez, Pam Klittich, Kathie Moore, Olivia Nava, and Greg Webster.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Director Morgan-Carter led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Welcome and Introduction of Guests

Invitation for the public to introduce themselves (not mandatory)

Joe Long of Bardsdale 4H introduced himself.

Greg Webster of Greg Rents Equipment Rentals introduced himself.

IV. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

Vice President Martinez opened public comments.

A. Mr. Long shared that he would like to see the return of Livestock meetings to discuss important matters.

B. Mr. Webster thanked the Board for allowing Greg Rents to bid on the fair contract and provide the equipment for this year's fair. He noted that there is potential for a donation of grandstand bleachers, and they would be willing to help with the installation.

V. Presentations - None

VI. Meeting Minutes (discussion and/or approval)

A. August 25th, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the August 25th, 2026 Board Meeting minutes.

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

Director Chess and Director Morgan-Carter abstained from the vote because they were not in attendance at the August 25th Board Meeting.

B. September 15th, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the September 15th, 2026 Board Meeting minutes.

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	X		
Director Morgan-Carter (Second)	X		
Vice President Martinez	X		

VII. Financial Reports (discussion and/or approval)

A. Financials ending July 31st, 2026.

CEO Ortiz shared that the fairgrounds is operating at a deficit, but we are still in a solid financial position despite the loss. It's not unexpected because July marked the start of fair operations. Some of the fair's largest revenue sources are not realized until later. A true financial outcome of the 2026 fair season will not be known until the August revenue report.

MOTION: To approve Financials ending July 31st, 2026.

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		

VIII. Old Business

A. Surfer's Point Update

CEO Ortiz shared that there has been no update from the Public Works Department, but she has reached out to them for a meeting. Director Cornejo and Director Long should continue with the working group.

IX. Board Correspondence

A. Memo from Mike Francesconi at California Dept. of Food & Agriculture, Fairs & Expositions: SB 84 Supplemental Payment Obligations – Repayment Process

CEO Ortiz summarized that money was allocated to each of the DAAs by the Department of Finance. The money was based on employer retirement contributions and will have to be repaid. Fairs and Expositions will confirm the dollar amount, and the Department of Finance will then share an invoice in the next couple of months. There may be an alternative to help with the DAAs, but nothing is definitive. CEO Ortiz will update the Board with additional information once available.

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

CEO Ortiz noted that the Oak View Group contract amendment is included in the Rental Agreements. She reiterated that the amendment is only to extend contract dates and does not impact contract terms. She explained that it will allow for more time to work on the food and beverage RFP.

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 (Second)	X		
Director Long (Motion)	X		
Director Mack	X		
Director Morgan-Carter	X		
Vice President Martinez	X		

XI. CEO Report

- CEO Ortiz reported that there was an unexpected delay in the Surfer's Point art installation piece. She reached out to the Parks and Recreation division for an update. The structural plans are nearly complete, and the artist will be applying for the foundation permit. A timeline for installation is in progress. She will confirm with the Board once that is completed.
- She plans to attend the CDFA collaboratives, which will take place between December and February. The Nuts-and-Bolts training will take place in March.
- She shared there may be a possible board meeting date change in November due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Staff will reach out to the board members for their availability.

XII. President's Report

- Vice President Martinez stated that since she was filling in for President Ceja during the meeting, she did not have anything to report on his behalf.

XIII. Director's Comments

Director Mack

- Director Mack said that she was looking forward to Oktoberfest.
- She shared that she looks forward to continuing with the work to improve the fairgrounds and working for the community.

Director Chess

- Director Chess acknowledged that the Global Stack discussions were difficult.

Director Cornejo

- Director Cornejo thanked the staff for helping the Board navigate last month's meetings in a professional manner. She appreciated the extra effort and work that went into it.

Director Long

- Director Long agreed with the previous comments made by Directors.
- He acknowledged that the Global Stack discussion showed that the Board can disagree but still work cohesively.

- He expressed his excitement for Oktoberfest.

Director Lacayo

- Director Lacayo echoed everything her fellow board members have shared.
- She thanked the staff and gave a special shoutout to CEO Ortiz. She shared that CEO Ortiz is doing an outstanding job in handling the fairgrounds business.

Director Morgan-Carter

- Director Morgan-Carter apologized to the Board and the public, as she has missed some meetings. She confirmed that she is still in tune with what is going on at the fairgrounds.
- She thanked the staff for their hard work.
- She addressed the public and was thankful for their input and attending the meeting.
- She expressed that she looked forward to Oktoberfest.

Vice President Martinez

- Vice President Martinez agreed that the Global Stack meeting was a difficult meeting.
- She believed that the Board had the best interest of the fairgrounds at the core of the decisions that they make. She thanked them for taking the issue seriously and deliberating it in a professional manner and looks forward to work to support staff, community, and to make the fairgrounds the best that it can be.

XIV. New Business (information/discussion/action)

A. Installation of a plaque honoring Orpha Woods Foster.

Director Mack shared that she found information about E.P. Foster's wife, Orpha Woods Foster. She recommended that more information about Mr. and Mrs. Foster be shared on the fair's website, with the addition of links. She expressed hope that a plaque honoring Mrs. Foster could be installed on the fairgrounds administration building near the existing plaque, with a note recognizing her contributions, which had previously been overlooked. She thought it would be a good idea to install it during Women's History Month.

Director Morgan-Carter made a motion to support the installation of the plaque and to further acknowledge the additional history on the website. Director Chess seconded the motion, and Vice President Martinez called on the board for discussion.

Director Lacayo questioned including the statement about an oversight on the plaque and believed it should be installed without any negative forethought. Director Long, Director Cornejo, and Director Chess agreed with Director Lacayo's comments. Vice President Martinez communicated that she would like to take some more time to have a discussion around what is the goal, and how to best get it done. Director Lacayo voiced that this topic should be moved to next month's meeting. Director Cornejo and Director Long agreed with Director Lacayo, stating Director Mack with the help of Director Chess come back with recommendations on the content of the plaque including a visual.

Director Morgan-Carter rescinded the motion. Director Chess rescinded the second.

Director Cornejo emphasized that the plaque should focus on honoring the individual rather than correcting historical oversights. She also suggested that at minimum, a QR code be provided for visitors seeking additional information on Mrs. Foster.

B. Livestock exhibitor disqualification protest.

CEO Ortiz invited Olivia Nava to deliver her statement.

Ms. Nava shared that she would not have chosen pig #445 to compete with at the fair if she knowingly gave her animal a prohibited drug. She spoke to her involvement with FFA, 4H, and various school programs. She expressed concern for the way the animal's sample was collected and handled and had not been provided with the veterinarian paperwork concerning the collection and handling of the sample. Ms. Nava made an attempt to have a split test completed, but the 72-hour window had already expired. She shared that social media activity was directed toward her, and the situation was reported to her school. She asked the Board to allow her to compete next year, and to allow her to keep the 2026 Reserve Grand Champion title.

Director Chess asked if leading the pig through the barn and to the testing area is standard practice for all exhibitors. The livestock veterinarian, Dr. Mike Giacomuzzi, confirmed that it is standard practice. He introduced himself as the fair veterinarian of about 45 years. He explained the process of how samples are taken and expressed that environmental contamination did not occur in this instance, and it was unlikely due to the filtration rate from the kidney to the bladder. Less than one nanogram per million would be considered environmental contamination. 20 nanograms per million of a substance indicates that there was a therapeutic dose given to the animal. He confirmed that there was no other pig or animal that tested positive for Banamine and Banamine was not present in the testing area. Dr. Giacomuzzi spoke about the security of each sample, explaining the containers were sealed and contained a barcode in order to identify them. Samples and their chain of custody forms were locked appropriately.

Director Cornejo asked if the purpose of the testing is so that the marketability of the animals is safe for the public and Dr. Giacomuzzi confirmed it is. Director Chess asked for clarity regarding the 72-hour notice for a split test. Dr. Giacomuzzi informed the Board that a sample could degrade over time and it's best practice not to belabor the testing. He went on to explain that Banamine is an anti-inflammatory and can be used as a fever reducer. It can be administered orally or as an injectable. Director Mack questioned if the length it took for Ms. Nava to receive the 72-hour notice letter impacted the retest time. CEO Ortiz confirmed that exhibitors have 72 hours from the time they receive the letter. Dr. Giacomuzzi informed the Board that a split test is when you take a urine sample and split it into two containers.

XV. Closed Session

Pursuant to Government Code (GC) section 11126, the Board is authorized to meet in Closed Session for the purpose of considering matters involving:

A. Pending Litigation - Govt. code 11126(e)(2)

Vice President Martinez convened into closed session at 10:16 a.m.

XVI. Report Out of Closed Session

Vice President Martinez reconvened at 11:07 a.m. She reported that because of the violation, Ms. Nava's awards, premiums, and auction proceeds will be forfeited, except that Ms. Nava will be allowed to show next year.

XVII. Future Agenda Items

1. Installation of a plaque honoring Orpha Woods Foster.
2. Presentation from the county regarding emergency communications.

XVIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

Submitted by: Karen Pineda

Karen Pineda, Executive Assistant

Approved by: Heidi Ortiz

Heidi Ortiz, CEO

Approved by: Gloria E. Martinez

Gloria Martinez, Vice President