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, October 27th, 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 9:03 a.m. and called to order by President Ceja.

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

Staff present: Heidi Ortiz, CEO, Jason Amelio, Deputy Manager, Sara Gutierrez, Sales Manager, Megan Hook, PR & Marketing, and Karen Pineda, Executive Assistant.

Guests Present: None

II. Pledge of Allegiance
President Ceja 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. September 22nd, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the September 22nd, 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		
President Ceja	X		

VII. Financial Reports (discussion and/or approval)

A. Financials ending August 31st, 2026.

CEO Ortiz shared that the fairgrounds is caught up with the fair expenses and revenues. The total NET resources beginning was $8.2M and our total NET resources ending were $9.3M, resulting in a positive increase of $1.1M.

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

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

B. Update on SB84 Repayment.

CEO Ortiz referred to the letter sent by the Department of Finance, which outlined that the 31st DAA is required to repay over $537,000. She summarized that the SB84 loaned money to help pay down California's pension debt, which was calculated by the number of civil service employees the fairgrounds had in 2017-2018. The Department of Finance borrowed loaned money from the Surplus Money Investment Fund (SMIF), to pay the obligation they couldn't fulfill. CEO Ortiz confirmed that this obligation of repayment is outlined in the financials under the Statement of Net Positions, under liabilities. The current figure in the financials is incorrect, but our master accountant will correct it to reflect the accurate amount. If this is repaid with cash, it will reduce liabilities. She recommended that the repayment be budgeted in 2027 and paid off by June 30, 2027, so as not to accrue interest. She asked for consensus of the Board on how to move forward. Director Long shared that he was in favor of completing the repayment by the end of June. Director Cornejo commented that it is regretful that the amount was calculated by the number of employees there was at the time, since there were 25-30 employees, and now there is a staff of 9. Director Morgan-Carter said it was a relief that we are ahead of the curve with this. Director Lacayo and President Ceja also agreed with CEO Ortiz's recommendation. Director Long presented a motion to the Board.

MOTION: To approve that the repayment of SB84 be budgeted in 2027, to pay it off by June 30, 2027.

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		
President Ceja	X		

VIII. New Business

A. Marketing Report

Ms. Hook shared that Oktoberfest ran two special promotions this year for pre-sale ticketing. Customers could buy a fair ticket during a two-week period, and they received an Oktoberfest ticket as well. The second was offered through the Oktoberfest flight redemption, where customers could purchase a beer flight at a discounted price, which included a free plastic stein, and that stein automatically qualified for refill pricing. The overall marketing campaign this year for Oktoberfest was "more." The goal was to provide more German beer, food, and entertainment. A survey was sent to the public for feedback from the fair and Oktoberfest. Sponsorship recap meetings are also underway to see what worked and what didn't. Ms. Hook shared that she is working with Mr. Vann on creating an inventory sheet for signage. She also shared that she is working on a facilities and rentals guide with the sales team, which includes renderings of buildings, capacities, square footage, and she hopes to get images for outdoor areas as well. This will be on the fairground's website. She hopes to include drone footage and an interactive map as well. Ms. Hook and CEO Ortiz will be meeting with the website developer to refresh the site. Ms. Hook reported that she is also working on submitting materials for the Western Fairs Association (WFA) awards. She will be hosting a session on influencer marketing at the WFA Conference in January.

B. Sales Report

CEO Ortiz introduced our Sales Manager, Sara Gutierrez. Ms. Gutierrez reported that there was a good turnout for the Super Custom Car Show, Seaside Oddities Expo, and Seaside Highland Games. The National Scholastic Association made its comeback to Ventura since 2024. She noted that the Turnstile concert drew a large crowd for a Wednesday night. She reported that compared to the same time period in 2025, profits increased by approximately 24%.

Director Mack wanted to know if attendance is recorded for interim events during the year. Ms. Gutierrez confirmed that they typically try to, but sometimes they don't receive accurate numbers from promoters after events end. Director Lacayo thanked Ms. Gutierrez for her prompt responses for event rentals. Director Chess appreciated having a list of upcoming events in the board packet.

IX. Old Business

A. Discussion and possible action regarding the installation of a plaque honoring Orpha Woods Foster.

Director Mack recommended a narrow 24"x 4" plaque to be placed under the current E.P. Foster plaque on the administrative building. She referenced the visual included in the Board packet, which illustrated the proposed plaque design and wording they would like to include. She asked the board to concur with the language of the plaque, along with the size, and location of it. The subcommittee asked the staff to procure the plaque for no more than $900. She noted that a sponsor may cover a portion of the cost; however, that has yet to be determined. Director Morgan-Carter presented a motion to the board.

MOTION: To accept the recommendation to install a bronze plaque on the fairgrounds administration building, honoring Orpha Woods Foster, using the recommended wording and dimensions, for no more than $900.

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

B. Discussion and possible action regarding Lot C storm drains.

CEO Ortiz shared that she collaborated with the COO of the California Construction Authority (CCA) and a civil engineer to present two options for a solution to rehabilitate the storms drains. Option one was under $1.3M and would have a lifespan of approximately 20 years. Option two was about $531,000 and would have a lifespan of approximately 10-15 years. Either option will require maintenance over time. She explained that option two is more within our budget. She asked for the Board's approval to the resolution, which outlined that the Board authorizes her to work with CCA to complete this project with a budget up to $531,440. Anything above that amount would require President Ceja's approval up to $150,000. CEO Ortiz clarified that repair would be for the asphalt in lot C, and with consistent upkeep, could have a longer lifespan. She confirmed that the repair would span across the middle of Lot C to the pump station

behind the Santa Cruz building, but the entire lot would be resurfaced. The difference in cost between the two options is the asphalt work, and there is no cost difference for the underground work. Vice President Martinez emphasized the importance of considering the liabilities when making decisions on projects like this one. CEO Ortiz explained that the two storm pumps behind the Santa Cruz building are non-operational and cannot be turned on until the storm drain is fixed. The debris will go into the drains and plug up the system causing further damage. CCA will be the project manager, work with the contractors, and work on site when needed to ensure the project runs smoothly. Vice President Martinez appreciated the conversation and dedicating time to discuss decisions like this with the Board. Director Long presented a motion to the Board.

MOTION: To accept the Board Resolution as recommended, authorizing CEO Ortiz up to $531,440 to work with CCA on the Lot C rehabilitation project.

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

X. Board Correspondence

A. Letter from Dr. Jeannette Sanchez-Palacios, Mayor of the City of Ventura – Data processing facility

CEO Ortiz commented that the letter was received after the meeting with Global Stack.

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 presented the updated policy manual to the Board.
- She shared that staff have done two walk-throughs with X-Games. Mr. Amelio went on to say that discussions have gone well and the fine details are in progress. Director Cornejo asked if X-Games will be hosting the full games instead of only the final games. Mr. Amelio explained that they have a year-round league, and there will no longer be just one game. The summer games will be their big finale. He shared that the event may take place in June or July, but that is still in discussion. Vice President Martinez asked how many events of this size he thinks the fairgrounds could handle a year. He said that it depends on the event builds, time, and space. Vice President Martinez was interested to know if an analysis had been considered comparing the benefits of hosting fewer, larger events throughout the year versus a combination of few major events and a greater number of small events. Mr. Amelio stated that that was the focus post-COVID, but there will need to be a balance as the fairgrounds needs the medium income as well. Director Lacayo suggested exploring creative marketing opportunities to increase public awareness of the fairgrounds' involvement, and Director Morgan-Carter encouraged proactive engagement. CEO Ortiz highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships between the fairgrounds and VVCB. President Ceja inquired about the potential use of the dirt lot and arena for the games, which Mr. Amelio explained may be challenging due to television requirements. Vice President Martinez also suggested utilizing X-Games photography and footage to promote the fairgrounds if possible. Ms. Hook noted that operational considerations would need to be addressed.
- CEO Ortiz reported that the Coastal Commission will likely bring the beach lot parking permit to the December hearing. The fairgrounds will likely be preparing a statement to read into the record. Mr. Amelio drafted a letter with CEO Ortiz to the Coastal Commission asking for additional days for set-up and tear-down.
- She will be hosting the Leadership of Ventura County lunch on November 10th.
- She noted that with so much going on, the Board may need to meet in December. December 15th was suggested as the tentative date, but as things progress and should the need arise an email will be sent out to confirm that.

- The Western Fairs Association Conference is set for January 31- February 3, and more information will be shared with the Board.

XIII. President's Report

- President Ceja reported that he attended the LiUNA Convention in Las Vegas.
- He also attended the Trade Day at the fairgrounds and reported that 900 students were in attendance, and he looks forward to seeing the event grow.
- He expressed appreciation for the updated policy manual.

XIV. Director's Comments

Director Lacayo

- Director Lacayo thanked the Policy Manual Committee for their work on the manual edits.
- She congratulated President Ceja for receiving the Labor Legacy Award at the Labor Leader Dinner.
- She encouraged CEO Ortiz and staff to keep up the good work.

Director Long

- Director Long commended the staff on their hard work. He expressed how proud he is to be part of the organization.

Director Chess

- Director Chess echoed Director Lacayo and Director Long's sentiments.
- She thanked Mr. Amelio for the helpful information regarding X-Games.

Director Mack

- Director Mack emphasized the importance of understanding and communicating the Fairgrounds' year-round activities, noting that it would help show that operations extend well beyond the two weeks of fair.
- She suggested establishing a framework for evaluating future development proposals, referring to a recent proposal involving Del Mar's parking lot. She felt having a clearer understanding of what may or may not be acceptable in future development would be beneficial.

Director Cornejo

- Director Cornejo thanked Director Mack and Director Chess for working on the Orpha Woods Foster plaque.
- She thanked the staff and expressed appreciation for the updated policy manual.
- She shared that she would do her best to promote the work done by the Board at the Leadership lunch.
- She mentioned that the Volunteer Breakfast had the largest turnout she had seen and commented on how well the event was executed.

Vice President Martinez

- Vice President Martinez remarked that she had the privilege to watch President Ceja be honored at the Labor Leader lunch.
- She thanked CEO Ortiz and Mr. Amelio for their hard work and for cultivating relationships with businesses and organizations around the county.
- She acknowledged the subcommittee for their work on the Orpha Woods Foster plaque and shared that the visual was helpful.
- She also thanked Director Cornejo and Director Long for their work on the policy manual.
- She acknowledged Director Mack's comments and agreed that they should be able to look through a lens where they're more united. She conveyed how proud she was of the Board for how they wrestled with difficult conversations.

  Director Long added that he spoke with a city representative who would be looking into permitting matters with the Players Casino's new location. He also noted that he and Director Cornejo should meet as the Surfer's Point Committee. CEO Ortiz explained that several items are still pending with the City, and the committee will meet to address those outstanding action items.

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)

President Ceja convened into closed session at 10:31 a.m.

XVI. Report Out of Closed Session

President Ceja reconvened at 11:02 a.m. There was no reportable action taken during closed session.

XVII. Future Agenda Items – None

XVIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:04 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