

ORANGE COUNTY FAIR & EVENT CENTER
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Regarding

MEETING OF THE OCFEC BOARD OF
DIRECTORS 32nd DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL
ASSOCIATION,

OC Fair & Event Center
Administration Building
88 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, California

Monday, April 27, 2020
9:00 a.m.

Reported by:
LUIS R. HERNANDEZ

1 APPEARANCES OF BOARD MEMBERS:

2 Sandra Cervantes, Board Chair
Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia, Vice Chair
3 Robert Ruiz, Director
Barbara Bagneris, Director
4 Ashleigh Aitken, Director
Doug La Belle, Director
5 Newton Pham, Director
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9 STAFF:

10 Michele Richards, CEO
Ken Karns, VP of Operations
11 Summer Angus, Board Clerk
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16 APPEARANCE OF COUNSEL:

17 OFFICE OF THE CALIFORNIA ATTORNEY GENERAL
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1 PUBLIC SPEAKERS:

2 Doctor Horn

Vincent Pollmeier

3 Pam Jones

Jeremy Cates

4 Gina Montes

1 Costa Mesa, California, Monday, April 27, 2020

2 9:00 a.m. - 9:34 a.m.

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6 CHAIR CERVANTES: Good morning, everybody. I now call
7 this meeting to order.

8 All matters noticed on this agenda in any
9 category may be considered for action as listed. Any item
10 not so noticed may not be considered. Items listed on
11 this agenda may be considered in any order at the
12 discretion of the Chairperson.

13 The mission of the OCFEC is celebration of
14 Orange County's communities, interests, agriculture, and
15 heritage with results justifying resources expended. We
16 will now move to the Pledge of Allegiance. And if I can
17 have Director Bagneris lead us, please.

18 DIRECTOR BAGNERIS: Yes. Good morning. Everyone,
19 place your right hand over your heart and repeat with me.

20 (Pledge of Allegiance conducted.)

21 CHAIR CERVANTES: Thank you. And now we will go ahead
22 and move to roll call. Summer, please.

23 MADAM SECRETARY: Chair Cervantes?

24 CHAIR CERVANTES: Here.

25 MADAM SECRETARY: Vice Chair Rubalcava-Garcia?

1 VICE CHAIR RUBALCAVA-GARCIA: Here.
2 MADAM SECRETARY: Director Ruiz?
3 DIRECTOR RUIZ: Present.
4 MADAM SECRETARY: Director Bagneris?
5 DIRECTOR BAGNERIS: Here.
6 MADAM SECRETARY: Director Aitken?
7 DIRECTOR AITKEN: Here.
8 MADAM SECRETARY: Director La Belle?
9 DIRECTOR LA BELLE: Here.
10 MADAM SECRETARY: And Director Pham?
11 DIRECTOR PHAM: Here.
12 CHAIR CERVANTES: Okay. Thank you.

13 Now we over to Matters of Public Comment. Public
14 comment is allowed on issues not on the current agenda;
15 however, no debate by the Board shall be permitted on such
16 public comments and no action will be taken on such public
17 comments items at this time, as law requires formal public
18 notice prior to any action on the docket item.

19 Speakers are requested to sign in prior to the
20 start of the meeting and are limited to three minutes.
21 Comments will be conducted in agenda items during the
22 meeting. People wishing to address the Board on the items
23 on the agenda are requested to sign in prior to the start
24 of the meeting and identify the agenda items on which you
25 desire to address the Board. Speakers are limited to

1 three minutes.

2 We will go ahead and move directly to the
3 Governance Process. And this is an action item.
4 Consideration of and Vote on Whether Or Not to Cancel the
5 2020 OC Fair. And we can start with public comment on
6 this one.

7 MADAM SECRETARY: We're going to start with public
8 comment. Doctor Horn -- Doctor Horn, if you are ready to
9 speak, please, go ahead.

10 DOCTOR HORN: Thank you very much. I'm Doctor Horn.
11 I'm a veterinarian. I do work with the forage group here
12 in Orange County.

13 I think that holding the OC fair as it normally
14 is creates significant health risks to everyone in the
15 County; however, I think that there's a possibility of
16 having the livestock shows only using appropriate social
17 distancing and wearing masks, for the benefit of the
18 children as long as the Governor, you know, changes the
19 stay-at-home laws by July. That's my comment. I think
20 that's the best situation for the kids. It's to be able
21 to perform (unintelligible). Thank you.

22 MADAM SECRETARY: Thank you. Vincent Pollmeier, when
23 you're ready.

24 MR. POLLMEIER: Thank you, Summer. This is
25 Vincent Pollmeier from Friends and Neighbors of the

1 Orange County Fairgrounds.

2 Just to put things into context, some time later
3 today or early tomorrow, the United States is going pass a
4 grim milestone. In just a matter of few months, we will
5 have lost more Americans to COVID-19 than were lost in the
6 nearly 20 years of the war in Vietnam.

7 And if we're not careful and do not act prudently
8 and we're not serious in our efforts, we are in jeopardy
9 of surpassing the American death toll from the
10 First World War in just a matter of a few weeks or a
11 month.

12 The philosopher and writer George Santayana wrote
13 that "those who do not remember the past, are condemned to
14 repeat it." And the history of the 1918-1919 -- and I
15 emphasize, that was a two-year influenza pandemic -- is
16 replete with examples of public bodies that prematurely
17 opened events and venues only to see those actions result
18 in explosive new spread of disease, in spite of the death
19 toll. And that's not what we want the OC Fair to be known
20 for.

21 We should cancel the fair this year. And with
22 all due respect to the prior speaker, I don't think we can
23 safely and without any risk do any part of the fair. We
24 should cancel it, and we should cancel our other bookings
25 upcoming over the summer if they cannot be held in

1 absolute safety.

2 I just want to go on to then suggest that we
3 should then -- the Fairgrounds should then task the staff
4 to use the time made available by these cancellations to
5 review the events of the past two years, generate an
6 assessment and breakdown of where and how the Fairgrounds
7 is making its money, where its expenses are.

8 And when we have that information, staff should
9 work with our partner like Tandem and Spectra to determine
10 how we might hold events in safety -- in the future -- and
11 what that would mean for changes to the way facilities are
12 laid out, our ways of doing business, and what the impact
13 on profit and loss would be.

14 We need to prepare for a very, very hazy and
15 uncertain future. And that preparation is going to
16 require us to know a lot about our tax practices. That
17 will require agility and out-of-the-box thinking.

18 But we must recognize that we won't be returning
19 to anything like the old ways of doing business for a very
20 long time, if ever.

21 So thank you. And, again, I encourage you for
22 the good of the public and for safety -- which has to be
23 our absolute paramount concern -- cancel the fair. Thank
24 you.

25 MADAM SECRETARY: Thank you, Vincent. Pam Jones, when

1 you're ready to speak.

2 SPEAKER: Mom.

3 MS. JONES: Yeah. This Pam Jones. And I'm a
4 long-time vendor at the Orange County Fair. I've been
5 there for many, many years.

6 And I, too, you know, obviously would like to
7 protect all of us from this virus; however, at this time,
8 more than two-and-a-half months away from fair time, I
9 think it's premature to make a definite cancellation of
10 the fair, but it's not premature to make a definite
11 stipulation with a timeline.

12 Something, like, unless California has reopened
13 its social distancing requirements listed by -- let's say
14 the first weekend in June -- which is still a
15 month-and-a-half -- more than a month-and-a-half prior to
16 fair time -- unless those have happened, then the fair
17 would have to be canceled by that time.

18 So that is just, you know, my suggestion. To
19 make a stipulation of cancellation by a certain date if
20 things have not changed, rather than cancelling at this
21 time. Thank you.

22 MADAM SECRETARY: Thank you. Jeremy Cates, when
23 you're ready to speak.

24 MR. CATES: Hi there. Thank you for giving me this
25 opportunity.

1 First of all, I'd like to echo Doctor Horn.
2 How -- I think running the Orange County Fair the way
3 we've run in the past is a very big mistake. Social
4 distancing would not be possible.

5 But if we could do something for the kids, maybe
6 just something just for the livestock. We've all been
7 affected by this. Students have poured tons of time,
8 money, effort into their projects and giving them an
9 ability to turn these projects, finish the project, and
10 send them on their way.

11 Schools, businesses, have all begun to do things
12 differently. And I think that we can still do an
13 Orange County Fair Livestock Auction just by doing it a
14 little differently. So cancelling outright would be a
15 mistake. Maybe going forward in a different direction is
16 what I would urge us do in this uncertain time.

17 That's all I have to say. Thank you very much.

18 MADAM SECRETARY: Thank you. Gina Montes, when you're
19 ready.

20 MS. MONTES: Hello. I'd like to thank Mr. Cates for
21 pointing out how much the kids have put into their
22 project. I have -- I run La Habra Hilltoppers. We live
23 on three acres from La Habra Heights. I have over 10 --
24 over \$100,000 worth of livestock sitting on my property.
25 My kids have worked so hard and they continue to come up

1 and take care of their animals, practice social
2 distancing, feed, water, bathe -- do everything that you
3 need to do.

4 I've invited Brooke Day who is a student and who
5 also (unintelligible) to be on our call because she was
6 very instrumental in getting the other county fair to go
7 virtual because their fair is coming up this weekend and
8 had an online option.

9 If anything, if we could move in that direction.
10 I know the gentleman who runs the next level camp is
11 sitting on -- on virtual -- and also Ryan Rash is holding
12 a national cattle show.

13 If we can't have just the livestock portion at
14 Orange County, we need to do something for these kids.
15 You know, we can't -- as adults -- tell them we have to
16 give up and we can't find an alternative for them because
17 what are we teaching them as adults? Throw your hands in
18 the air and walk away? You know, they're expecting all
19 the scientists to find a cure. Well, we need to find a
20 cure for these kids. Thank you.

21 MADAM SECRETARY: Thank you. Chair Cervantes, that's
22 all we have for public comment.

23 CHAIR CERVANTES: Thank you, Summer.

24 Okay. So with a heavy heart, I move the 2020
25 Fair be canceled due to the pandemic and the restrictions

1 of the large gatherings and in the safety of the community
2 is our main priority.

3 SPEAKER: Cancel.

4 SPEAKER: Cancel. Yep.

5 CHAIR CERVANTES: Let me know if there's a second.

6 DIRECTOR AITKEN: This is Ashleigh Aitken, and I
7 second.

8 DIRECTOR LA BELLE: Chair Cervantes, if we have
9 Michele put something on the staff report and provide some
10 background as to timing relative to the importance of
11 moving forward, sooner rather than later, in terms of our
12 decision. And this is outlined in her staff report and
13 she can speak to that.

14 And Mr. Pollmeier raised some extra points and I
15 know that Michele is working on a move-forward business
16 plan, and if she can speak to that briefly as well as the
17 staff report. That would be my request.

18 CHAIR CERVANTES: Absolutely.

19 DIRECTOR BAGNERIS: This is Director Bagneris. I'd
20 also like to speak to the possibility of an online option.
21 That would be also helpful.

22 MS. RICHARDS: Chair Cervantes, I'm happy to -- this
23 is Michele Richards -- I'm happy to give that agenda
24 report now.

25 Obviously, all of us have been watching the news

1 and there's lots of new information coming out on a daily
2 basis, both at the local and State and Federal levels.

3 We've been looking at all of that information and
4 we offer two pieces of specific information; one from our
5 government officials and the other from our local public
6 health officer in Orange County.

7 (Multiple speakers)

8 Again, if we could ask everyone to please --

9 (Multiple speakers)

10 -- could we please ask everyone to mute their
11 phones. Thank you.

12 During his April 14th press conference,
13 Governor Gavin Newsom stated, quote, "The prospect of mass
14 gatherings is negligible at best until we get immunity and
15 we get to a vaccine. Large-scale events that bring in
16 hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of strangers are
17 not in the cards based upon our current guidelines and
18 current expectations."

19 The Governor continued specifying that large
20 gatherings in June, July, and August are/were unlikely.
21 He added that the ability to develop therapeutics to meet
22 the demand and the ability to support physical distancing
23 will determine when mass gatherings can return.

24 In addition, the executive management team
25 teleconferenced with the Orange County Health Care

1 Agency's Public Health Officer, Doctor Nicole Quick.

2 During the call, Doctor Quick agreed that it would be
3 prudent at this time for the Board of Directors to
4 consider cancellation of the 2020 OC Fair.

5 She added, quote, "It is not likely that we would
6 be in place to hold a fair in July. Mass gathering
7 regulations will be in place for a very long time,"
8 unquote.

9 In addition, Doctor Quick agreed that it would be
10 nearly impossible to achieve proper social distancing at
11 the Fair and large gatherings like the Fair will likely
12 not take place until effective treatments or a vaccine are
13 in place.

14 Staff would also like to add that we have already
15 received lots and lots of comments on our website and
16 social media regarding the particular item that the Board
17 is considering today. And you can imagine that guests are
18 reacting to the possibility of the Fair being canceled.
19 It's great to see how many fans we have out there. But
20 for the most part, the public is understanding and quite
21 supportive.

22 We would also like to indicate to the public that
23 the staff -- in coordination with the Board of
24 Directors -- will be working on ideas to keep the Fair
25 alive, to keep as much as we can -- present in our guests'

1 mindset as we go through the year. What we can do online.
2 What we can do through social media to bring joy, to bring
3 that piece of the Fair to everyone. We will be working
4 diligently to do that.

5 One of the pieces is looking at how we can still
6 hold a Junior Livestock Auction. We have received
7 information from the State of California about how to do
8 that safely and effectively online, for example.

9 So please know that our livestock team is working
10 on that diligently and we'll be putting information out
11 about that as soon as possible.

12 Happy to answer any questions that the Board
13 might have at this time.

14 DIRECTOR RUIZ: Yeah. Michele, this is Director Ruiz.

15 If -- if during the livestock, you know, the idea
16 has been kicked around about having possibly only the
17 livestock -- you know, some of these kids who have worked
18 very hard on this project can attend -- what would be the
19 approximate attendance if that was to take place, Michele?
20 Would you know off the top of your head?

21 MS. RICHARDS: Doctor -- or Doctor -- Director Ruiz,
22 we're still assessing that. We're not at all certain that
23 that in-person livestock auction would be safe for anyone
24 in attendance, including the kids, the parents, the
25 agriculture leaders -- livestock leaders -- and our own

1 staff.

2 And so until we can come up with those -- assess
3 those guidelines from the State; however, there is the
4 option that the State is giving to do an online option so
5 that the kids can still participate and the public can
6 still participate. So we just received those last week
7 and we're looking onto all of that just now.

8 DIRECTOR RUIZ: Okay. Great. Thank you.

9 VICE CHAIR RUBALCAVA-GARCIA: Michele, this is
10 Director Rubalcava.

11 MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

12 VICE CHAIR RUBALCAVA-GARCIA: Can you highlight some
13 of the things that we might be able to do virtually.
14 Like, some of the contests or competitions that are
15 currently held at the Fair.

16 MS. RICHARDS: Absolutely. Obviously, the one of the
17 highlights of the Fair are the competitive entries where
18 members of the public enter their -- their handmade items,
19 their paintings, their crafts -- into competitions at the
20 Fair. We are looking into how to do that virtually as
21 well, so that people can still enter.

22 We can look at showcasing those beautiful items
23 online. There are other ways that we can bring some
24 entertainment through our website to our guests. So,
25 again, all of these ideas are being developed by staff and

1 we'll be putting more information out as those plans
2 unfold.

3 DIRECTOR BAGNERIS: Director Cervantes, this is
4 Director Bagneris.

5 CHAIR CERVANTES: Yes.

6 DIRECTOR BAGNERIS: Yeah. So if we vote for the
7 motion to cancel the Fair, those other activities can
8 still come about without affecting the vote again? I just
9 want to make sure.

10 CHAIR CERVANTES: Oh, absolutely.

11 DIRECTOR BAGNERIS: Okay. With that, then I would
12 like to call the question into the motion.

13 VICE CHAIR RUBALCAVA-GARCIA: I second. This is
14 Director Rubalcava.

15 DIRECTOR BAGNERIS: It's already been moved and
16 second, so I think we should move to the vote, unless the
17 directors --

18 CHAIR CERVANTES: Summer, will you please. No, we're
19 good. Thank you.

20 MADAM SECRETARY: No problem. Chair Cervantes?

21 CHAIR CERVANTES: Yes.

22 MADAM SECRETARY: Vice Chair Rubalcava-Garcia?

23 VICE CHAIR RUBALCAVA-GARCIA: Yes.

24 MADAM SECRETARY: Director Ruiz?

25 DIRECTOR RUIZ: With a very heavy heart, yes.

1 MADAM SECRETARY: Director Bagneris?

2 DIRECTOR BAGNERIS: Yeah.

3 MADAM SECRETARY: Director Aitken?

4 DIRECTOR AITKEN: Yes.

5 MADAM SECRETARY: Director La Belle?

6 DIRECTOR LA BELLE: Yes.

7 MADAM SECRETARY: And Director Pham?

8 DIRECTOR PHAM: Yes.

9 MADAM SECRETARY: Thank you.

10 CHAIR CERVANTES: Okay. Thank you, Summer.

11 The next board meeting is the 28th. And we're
12 going to move to Director Ruiz. Do you have any comments
13 before we adjourn?

14 DIRECTOR RUIZ: Yeah. You know what, I just -- like I
15 said earlier -- with a heavy heart, I'm going to have to
16 vote yes because at the end of the day, our number one
17 priority is always the safety of the public and anybody
18 who enters our Fairgrounds.

19 This would have been my 25th consecutive year in
20 the Fair, and, unfortunately, it's not going to happen.
21 My heart breaks for all the kids who look forward to these
22 summer jobs, you know, to go work at the OC fair.

23 You know, it really brings me joy when I drive
24 around Santa Ana and I see these kids waiting on the bus
25 with OC Fair shirts waiting to go to the Fair. All that,

1 it -- it breaks my heart. It really does. But at the end
2 of the day, like some of the speakers said, we don't know
3 what this is going to look like two months from now or six
4 months from now. I would hate for an outbreak of the
5 pandemic to come back during fair time.

6 You know, again, the number one priority here for
7 us is the safety and the well-being of the public. And
8 that is the reason why I'm voting no. As much as it
9 hurts, but it's the right decision and it is the
10 responsible thing to do. Thank you.

11 CHAIR CERVANTES: Okay. Director Bagneris?

12 DIRECTOR BAGNERIS: I echo what Director Ruiz has
13 said. And I know I heard these comments, too, as much as
14 it would be. But death is not something that I signed up
15 for and the possibility of it. We don't know who has this
16 virus, and I think our number one concern on this Board
17 has always been safety and security. It's our number one
18 priority.

19 We can't be safer than doing what we're doing
20 today. Even though it's hard, I'm sure that this is not
21 the first time that the Fair has had to (unintelligible).
22 We're going to come back stronger next year than the year
23 before. We have even more reason to do that.

24 So I thank the Board for their consideration and
25 thoughtful consideration and critical consideration to do

1 what we've done today. And I believe that we've done the
2 right thing. So I thank every Board member and every
3 person. Our staff, I know it's hard on them, but life is
4 more important than anything else.

5 CHAIR CERVANTES: Director Aitken?

6 DIRECTOR AITKEN: Yes. Thank you so much to all the
7 work that the staff has put into this.

8 Obviously, we are all heartbroken as an
9 organization. We had to make this decision, and I just
10 want to emphasize, obviously, the public safety is our
11 number one priority and always has been.

12 And because of the timeline where we need to let
13 people know, we haven't dropped (unintelligible) but we
14 had to make a decision. So while I'm very sensitive to
15 the public (unintelligible) wait and see as a business
16 decision as well, we are just not in a position to do
17 that.

18 I am very hopeful. I know that the Board has
19 been very engaged with staff about trying to look at our
20 options. Following the lead with the Department of
21 Agriculture about how we can help out our forage and FFA
22 families. And, you know, look at ways we can still do
23 some of the artistic competitions.

24 We are going to do everything we can to try to
25 keep the spirit of the Fair alive. We're just not in a

1 position right now to make guarantees. But we are really
2 going to do everything we can to have a presence this
3 summer. It will be different but the spirit of the Fair
4 will be there. And I really look forward to working with
5 staff and doing some creative things to -- to keep the
6 Fair in people's hearts.

7 CHAIR CERVANTES: Director Pham?

8 DIRECTOR PHAM: I think Ashleigh said pretty much
9 everything I would like to say. So, unfortunately, yeah.
10 I agree with everyone.

11 CHAIR CERVANTES: Okay. Director La Belle?

12 DIRECTOR LA BELLE: Ditto all of the earlier comments.

13 In the past, we've always had safety first over
14 and above all other properties. I think it's very
15 important that we emphasize that.

16 There are, as we all know, many -- a large group
17 of venues that are currently not operating. And I think
18 we all hope that a process whereby it will be able to
19 control this horrendous virus when it does strike and our
20 ability to then vaccinate in the future to preclude this
21 from ever occurring again.

22 I do thank the staff and my fellow directors for
23 all of their hard work. I know Michele and Ken and all of
24 the staff have worked very hard to secure the facility.
25 And I look forward to the opportunities that might exist

1 or some activities that will keep the OC Fair and
2 everybody's minds and thoughts and process. So with that,
3 I appreciate that. Thank you.

4 CHAIR CERVANTES: Thank you.
5 Director Rubalcava-Garcia?

6 VICE CHAIR RUBALCAVA-GARCIA: Thank you,
7 Chair Cervantes.

8 I agree with all my colleagues as well. This is
9 a very hard decision to make. But I also think it gives
10 us an opportunity to get creative. And I'm sure how
11 resilient Orange County is, I'm excited to see what ideas
12 that the Board and the staff come up with to make sure
13 that we're still representing the OC Fair and bringing the
14 community together, whether it's virtually and just also
15 creating some potential opportunities for keeping up the
16 development, even if it's not at the level that we've been
17 able to contribute to the economy in the past.

18 But I'm excited to see what we can come up with
19 and I'm looking forward to an even better fair in 2021.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIR CERVANTES: Okay. Thank you.

22 All right. So I agree with everybody. This is
23 very, very difficult. And I know that we will be back on
24 track in 2021, as long as large gatherings are permitted
25 at that time.

1 And as Director Rubalcava-Garcia said, I am sure
2 that together we can create a lot of excitement and come
3 up with an amazing virtual concept and keeping the spirit
4 of the OC Fair alive. And with safety first, I thank our
5 staff for all their incredible hard work and wish
6 everybody a happy Mother's Day. Thank you all. This
7 meeting's adjourned.

8 (Meeting adjourned at 9:34 a.m.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned, a Hearing Reporter of the State of California, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings were taken before me at the time and place herein set forth; that any witnesses in the foregoing proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn; that a record of the proceedings was made by me using machine shorthand, which was thereafter transcribed under my direction; that the foregoing transcript is a true record of the testimony given.

Further, that if the foregoing pertains to the original transcript of a public meeting, before completion of the proceedings, review of the transcript [] was [] was not requested.

I further certify I am neither financially interested in the action nor a relative or employee of any attorney or party to this action.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have this date subscribed my name: April 29, 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luis R. Hernandez', is written over the printed name.

LUIS R. HERNANDEZ

[& - businesses]

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