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**From:** Regina Mundekis <reggie\_mundekis@me.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 25, 2022 12:36 PM  
**To:** dlabelle@ocfairboard.com; npham@ocfairboard.com; Robert Ruiz; nkovacevich@ocfairboard.com; Barbara Bagneris; Ashleigh Aitken Board (aaitken@ocfairboard.com); Sandra Cervantes; mrafiei@ocfairboard.com; Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia; Michele Richards  
**Subject:** January 2022 Board Meeting, Agenda Item 8A 3-Year Strategic Planning Workshop #4 to Discuss Property Strategic Direction  
**Attachments:** O.C. Fair Board puts proposed master site plan in neutral for further study.pdf; Fate of OC Fairgrounds CEO Kathy Kramer Remains Unclear After Fundraising Controversy.pdf; OC Fairgrounds Gave More than \$100K in State Money to Private College while Fairgrounds CEO Sat on the School's Fundraising Board.pdf; State Investigating OC Fairgrounds' Sponsorship of Vanguard University Over Possible Anti-Discrimination Law Violation.pdf

Dear Board and CEO,

Let's make a new Master Site Plan because our needs have changed. The 2018 Master Site Plan was shelved for multiple reasons which may or may not have been discussed with you. (See attached: *OC Fair Board Puts Proposed Master Site Plan in Neutral for Further Study*) The consultants claimed many of the buildings needed to be replaced due to poor condition to justify their recommendation to tear the place down and rebuild as a convention center, not a fairground. Former CEO Kathy Kramer came from the convention and meetings industry and sought to convert our fairgrounds to a convention center.

Here is what the public wanted, which I am not sure was provided to you. (Link to [2017.06.05 OCFEC Community Night Notes](#)) Over 70 members of the public showed up for the meeting held in The Hangar. Members of the public wanted reduced impacts from traffic, noise and parking, more use of shuttles instead of building more parking, and more emphasis on community, education, and agriculture. Maps where members of the public, who own this facility, indicated their desires begin at p. 84. Notice that no member of the public wanted the big buildings and masses of concrete desired by former CEO Kramer.

The proposed plan ignored public input and sought to turn our OC Fairgrounds into a convention center which would compete with the Anaheim Convention Center while overwhelming the neighbors around the property. The proposed cost of over \$169 million would force the use of bond financing with the payments requiring revenues to double or triple simply to remain solvent. Bond financing must be approved by the State with approval being uncertain for multiple reasons.

A new Master Site Plan could be guided by a theme:

*OCFEC has spaces which are outdoors, indoors and which bring the outdoors indoors while harmonizing with our neighbors. We are unique among local convention and meeting facilities because we are an indoor-outdoor venue with a community, agricultural and family friendly focus.*

Part of a new Master Site Plan includes updating current facilities:

**Don't Change What Works:** The Kramer Master Site Plan had the Main Mall demolished and rebuilt. The Main Mall was built at significant expense about 15 years ago and has been designed to pay tribute to

agriculture and the Santa Ana Army Air Base (SAAB.) The Kramer Master Site Plan also included moving the main entrance (cost \$50 million) to align with the new main entrance of Vanguard University where CEO Kramer was a member of a fundraising board. Vanguard University is openly hostile to the LGBTQ community and others who do not adhere to their strict religious thinking. (See attached: *OC Fairgrounds Gave More than \$100K in State Money to Private College While Fairgrounds CEO Sat on the School's Fundraising Board*, *State Investigating OC Fairgrounds' Sponsorship of Vanguard University Over Possible Anti-Discrimination Law Violation*, and *Fate of OC Fairgrounds Kathy Kramer Remains Unclear After Fundraising Controversy* and ). We need to get the best deal for our public money.

**Evaluate Sewer and Water Lines:** Scope sewers and water lines to determine what needs to be replaced. Determine if upgrades are needed to meet future capacity needs

**Install Solar Power:** Install solar panels, back up batteries and related infrastructure. Installing solar power on parking lot canopies may allow for a parking tracking system to be installed which allows empty parking spaces to be located to maintain an accurate count of available spaces while making finding a parking space easier. Grants and rebates may be available for this work.

**Transition from Natural Gas to Electricity:** Review appliances and facilities using natural gas which can be transitioned to electricity. Cooking facilities and water heaters are candidates. Grants and rebated may be available for this work.

**Work with Southern California Edison Regarding Electrical Service Upgrades:** Electrical service coming into the property needs to be upgraded to meet future needs needing more electrical power. There is an opportunity to transition away from the use of diesel generators for temporary shore power for events when electrical service is upgraded. Delivering increased electrical power to the facility is a project which needs to be coordinated and planned with Southern California Edison which the actual implementation taking several years.

**Eliminate Use of Portable Lighting Powered by Diesel Generators:** Parking and security staff rely on portable lights powered by diesel generators to perform their jobs during evenings. Lights powered by diesel generators are used repeatedly in the same areas indicating those areas need to have lighting improved.

**Review Infrastructure Analysis to Determine Other Upgrades:** A number of upgrades to bathrooms and other facilities were identified in the Infrastructure Analysis. This work needs to be planned and scheduled.

The need for new facilities can also be addressed in a Master Site Plan:

**Use Our Wonderful Weather as a Competitive Advantage:** Updating and/or developing buildings with walls which can be opened to take advantage of the mild Southern California weather while improving air flow. Ask consultants if it is possible to design buildings which can be opened to the outside to allow the building to be used while we are in a pandemic or flu season. Example: A trade show which should be inside can be in the building which can open up part of the walls to the outside to allow the trade show to occur during flu season with reduced risk.

**Update the Action Sports Arena for Year Round Use:** Action Sports Arena is not used much outside of the OC Fair. This venue can become an equine facility for shows and events. Other ideas are a BMX track, outdoor exercise course and similar ideas where dirt can be moved in and sculpted to form a track. This is an opportunity for increased revenue.

**Build Storage Building and New Machine/Prop Shop:** The Infrastructure Analysis detailed the lack of modern, productive, and safe shop facilities in addition to a lack of permanent storage facilities. While these facilities are not seen by the public, these facilities are mission critical to repairs and maintenance of property and equipment in addition to creation of new props, exhibits, and other items needed on the property. A Machine and Prop Shop which can be used to build new props and exhibits can be a revenue generator because props and exhibits built in the facility can be rented out to other fairgrounds, festivals, schools, and other groups. A Machine and Prop Shop can further become a source of revenue by designing and building exhibits which are traveling educational exhibits for fairgrounds, festivals, schools, and other facilities.

**Consider a Parking Garage at the Corner of Newport Blvd and Fair Dr (Billboard Corner):** This structure consolidates parking while providing a roof deck for use for parties and events. Consolidating parking into a parking garage opens up space for more green space for outdoor events in addition to moving parking away from neighbors. Using Gate 10 off Newport Blvd for parking garage entry further reduces impacts on neighbors by taking cars off Newport Blvd to park instead of cars turning onto Fair Dr to park.

Thank you for your interest,

Reggie Mundekis

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# O.C. Fair Board puts proposed master site plan in neutral for further study

By LUKE MONEY APR 27, 2018 | 3:15 PM



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A rendering shows the redesigned main entrance to the OC Fair & Event Center envisioned in a draft master site plan for the Costa Mesa property. (Courtesy of Johnson Consulting, SWA, HPI Architecture)



Orange County Fair Board members held off on advancing a controversial draft master site plan for the fairgrounds property in Costa Mesa, saying they want more time to review and study the concept.

The decision to pull in the reins until next month followed an almost eight-hour meeting Thursday featuring passionate testimony from supporters of the Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center, which the draft plan proposed to demolish.

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"I don't think we should rush," said board member Gerardo Mouet. "The whole thing about a master plan is, it's going to be with us for a while."

The 10-year master site plan concept presented to the board is the result of more than a year of work by OC Fair & Event Center staff and a team of consultants. The process included several meetings to discuss what administrators, residents and others envisioned for the 150-acre, state-owned fairgrounds.



However, some of those at Thursday's meeting objected to the planning process and said they felt the community wasn't given sufficient opportunity to weigh in.

Others criticized the scheduling of the hearing, which started at 9 a.m. — the Fair Board's typical meeting time.

"It's almost like you don't want input from the public, and I sincerely hope that's not the case," said Costa Mesa resident Anna Vrska.

Local activist Reggie Mundekeis presented the board with a trash bag containing what she said was public input that had been discarded in developing the master site plan.

Speakers took issue with several projects in the plan, including potentially building a parking garage at the corner of Fairview Road and Arlington Drive and relocating the main entryway to the property on Fair Drive.

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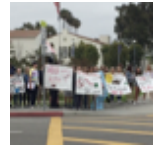
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Others objected to the estimated price tag for the plan, which the draft pegged at \$169 million, and questioned how its seven proposed development phases would affect the surrounding community.

"We want to work with you so that any of your problems do not become our problems," said Costa Mesa Mayor Sandy Genis.

Most of those at Thursday's meeting, however, were there to object to the proposed razing of the equestrian center, which sits on about 7.5 acres on the northeast corner of the fairgrounds near the intersection of Arlington Drive and Newport Boulevard.

As envisioned in the draft master site plan, the center's barns and offices would be demolished and replaced with carnival parking and storage, restrooms, showers and "multipurpose ground space."

Equestrians and their supporters said they've been an important part of the fairgrounds throughout its history and played a vital role in blocking the sale of the property several years ago.

Riding, caring for and interacting with horses, speakers said, is a transformative experience that teaches important life skills such as responsibility, trust and self-control and provides therapeutic benefits to everyone, from veterans to those struggling with anxiety or low self-esteem.

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said Theresa Sears, a member of the Fair & Event Center's Equestrian Center Task Force.

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While the draft master site plan designates space that could support equine programs and events, it would be about 1.5 acres — a downsizing that equestrians found unacceptable.

"This is not integration of which we have talked about," said Fair Board member Ashleigh Aitken. "This is decimation."

Board members said they would like a detailed run-down of the equestrian center's activities, programs and finances for when they next discuss the master site plan in May.

Some said they think it also would be prudent to develop a clear picture of how much money the Fair & Event Center could reasonably afford to spend on projects like those in the draft concept.

"Plans change depending on what money you have to spend, and that's something I think we need to really firmly establish with this board, with the community and all the stakeholders here. How much debt are we willing to take on?" said board member Stan Tkaczyk. "And once we have that number, then I think we can responsibly look at these other things and start making adjustments."

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Luke Money is the Costa Mesa City Hall reporter for the Daily Pilot. He joined the Pilot in March 2016 after more than three years covering education, politics and government for the Santa Clarita Valley Signal. He earned his bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Arizona, where he was the editor-in-chief of the college newspaper, The Arizona Daily Wildcat. (714) 966-4624.

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## Fate of OC Fairgrounds CEO Kathy Kramer Remains Unclear After Fundraising Controversy



BY BRANDON PHO

Published Oct 25, 2019 Updated Dec 8, 2020

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Kathy Kramer has been absent from the Orange County Fair and Events Center Board of Directors' past two meetings. Credit: BRANDON PHO, Voice of OC

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the Voice of OC that Kramer sat on the fundraising board of a private religious college that also received state dollars from her agency.

Fairgrounds spokesperson Terry Moore couldn't say for much of Thursday morning, until after the public meeting that Kramer is, as of Thursday evening, "still CEO."

Yet Kramer's immediate fate seems uncertain, amid Voice of OC's reporting and the announcement earlier this month that she'll be leaving the county for a fair agency in Washington by next year.

While Kramer isn't expected to take the new position for four more months, she's been absent from the OC fairgrounds Board of Directors' last two meetings amid the scrutiny, where she usually sits with the board to help explain policies and contracts brought up by her staff for a board vote. She doesn't make votes, as she isn't a board director herself, but does lead the day-to-day administration of the 150-acre state fairgrounds in the midst of Costa Mesa.

Kramer didn't respond to a request for comment for this story.

OC Fairgrounds Board of Directors Chair Robert Ruiz said Thursday he anticipates that the fairgrounds' board of directors will have a statement on the status of Kramer today – after officials avoided comment on the issue at the fairgrounds monthly public meeting Thursday.

When asked why the fair board has waited this long to react publicly, Ruiz said "all of it will be addressed in that" statement.

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In the middle of that meeting, board directors went into closed session for over an hour to consider an evaluation of Kramer's performance as CEO, according to the meeting's agenda.

OC Fairgrounds board directors came out of that closed session and disclosed nothing in public about what they talked about.

Kramer also didn't appear earlier this week at an emergency fair board meeting on Monday, which the fair board called after Voice of OC reported Kramer sat on the fundraising board for Vanguard University, a private Christian college across the street, since 2017 while the fair agency gave state dollars to the school.

At that meeting, fair board directors in closed session were scheduled to mull over unspecified issues with their attorney under a possible exposure to litigation, according to that meeting's agenda.

Shortly after Voice of OC reported Kramer's membership on Vanguard's fundraising board, the Central Washington Fair announced on Oct. 15 that Kramer had accepted a position there as CEO, and would replace their longtime president Greg Stewart, who was retiring.

Members of the public turned out at the OC fair board's Thursday meeting demanding answers.

"CEO Kathy Kramer was not at the Monday board meeting and is not at this board meeting, and accepted a job at another out-of-state fairgrounds," said

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Fair officials made no mention of Kramer's status with the agency at any point during Thursday's meeting.

"There is no update on Kathy Kramer's employment status at this time," Moore said after the meeting.

*Brandon Pho is a Voice of OC intern. Contact him at [bpho@voiceofoc.org](mailto:bpho@voiceofoc.org) or on Twitter @photherecord.*

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## OC Fairgrounds Gave More than \$100K in State Money to Private College while Fairgrounds CEO Sat on the School's Fundraising Board



BY [BRANDON PHO](#)

Published Oct 9, 2019 Updated Jul 8, 2021

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Orange County Fair and Event Center CEO Kathy Kramer during the Feb. 28, 2019 board meeting.  
Credit: SPENCER CUSTODIO, Voice of OC

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comment — faces a “clear” conflict of interest sitting on Vanguard’s fundraising board while serving as the top executive overseeing state dollars at the fairgrounds, officially known as the OC Fair and Events Center, according to a government ethics expert and fairgrounds watchdog.

“That’s a clear no-no,” said Terry Cooper, a University of Southern California professor and expert on the ethics of public officials, who called Kramer’s affiliation with Vanguard “at least an appearance problem.”

The state Fair Political Practices Commission “is the final arbiter” as to whether or not this is an actual conflict of interest, said fairgrounds watchdog and local activist Reggie Mundekis. “However, it looks bad to the public when you have a public official who is ... not telling anyone that they’re a fundraiser for the group that the fair board is giving money to.”

If the person’s private life and their life as a public employee don’t meet, “there may not be an issue,” Mundekis said.

“The issue comes in when those two paths cross,” she added.

Kramer joined Vanguard’s fundraising board in 2017, according to Vanguard University spokesperson David Vazquez and the fundraising board’s nonprofit filings with the IRS.

The fundraising board is officially known as the Vanguard University Foundation. The board’s mission statement, according to its [nonprofit filings with the IRS](#), is to support the university “through fundraising and management of the endowment. Foundation directors are distinguished

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fairgrounds.

“Prior to Ms. Kramer’s service on the Foundation Board, Jeff Teller, (former) President of the Orange County Market Place, served on the Vanguard University Foundation Board in the early 2000s—not too long after the Foundation was founded,” Vazquez said.

The OC Market Place is a separate entity and tenant of the fairgrounds, operating an open-air swap meet on the weekends year-round. The Market Place is not officially part of the state agency.

Since Kramer joined the school’s fundraising board, the fairgrounds has given the school nearly \$105,000 in state money through contracts and sponsorship deals that are approved by the fairgrounds’ Board of Directors in votes at public meetings. Kramer does not vote on these contracts in her capacity as the agency’s top executive, and she is not a board director. The contracts are brought up before the fairgrounds’ Board of Directors by her staff.

Fair Board Chair Robert Ruiz said he wasn’t ready to comment on Oct. 1 until he and the other board directors gathered more information.

The fairgrounds sponsored Vanguard’s “Fantasia” holiday event for \$5,000 in 2017, according to fairgrounds Communications Director Terry Moore.

In 2018, the fairgrounds entered into a contract with Vanguard for \$75,000 under a sponsorship agreement where the school would cross-promote events and have their theatre program perform at the fair, among other agreements.



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Students who violate Vanguard's policies against same-sex relationships can be subject to disciplinary action, including expulsion, according to the university's student handbook.

The school, located right across from the fairgrounds, is also affiliated with the Pentecostal Christian group known as Assemblies of God, which rejects homosexuality and gay marriage.

It's illegal under California law for state agencies to give money to organizations that discriminate against people for their sexual orientation, marital status, or religion, among other things.

Kramer became the fairgrounds' CEO in 2015. Between 1996 and 2011, before Kramer joined, the fairgrounds gave nearly \$84,000 to Vanguard to use its school facilities to house fair event staff, according to Moore.

Mundekis said Kramer's board membership should have been disclosed "to allow vetting of conflicts."

Kramer's position on the fundraising board is not a compensated one, according to the board's IRS filings, and she has not listed her membership on the form 700 statements of economic interest she's required to file in her capacity as fairgrounds CEO, according to fairgrounds spokesperson Terry Moore.

Moore said Kramer did not list her membership on the Vanguard University Foundation because there isn't any space on the form 700s to disclose non-compensated board memberships.

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the Attorney General's office.

Cooper said no public official "should be doing this sort of thing."

"It's not unusual," he added, "but it's always wrong. I've been at this for, what, 40 years now? And I can just tell you that there's no case in which this sort of thing would occur and would be acceptable."

*Brandon Pho is a Voice of OC intern. Contact him at [bpho@voiceofoc.org](mailto:bpho@voiceofoc.org) or on Twitter @photherecord.*

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## State Investigating OC Fairgrounds' Sponsorship of Vanguard University Over Possible Anti-Discrimination Law Violation



BY [BRANDON PHO](#)

Published Jul 18, 2019 Updated Jul 8, 2021

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Vanguard University in Costa Mesa. Credit: Google Street View

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University, a Christian college in Costa Mesa condemned by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) advocates over the school's views on gay people and same-sex relationships.

It's illegal under California law for state agencies to give money to organizations that discriminate against people for their sexual orientation, marital status, or religion, among other things.

**Students who violate Vanguard's policies against same-sex relationships** can be subject to disciplinary action, including expulsion, according to the university's student handbook.

The school, located right across from the fairgrounds, is also affiliated with the Pentecostal Christian group known as Assemblies of God, which **rejects homosexuality and gay marriage**.

Fairgrounds spokesperson Terry Moore said in an email the state notified the fairgrounds that a complaint had been filed against it, and that "a response is in the works."

Vanguard spokesman David Vazquez said in a statement the university currently doesn't have any ongoing cash contracts with the fairgrounds. The last one, he said, ended December 31, 2018.

**That contract says** the fairgrounds paid \$75,000 to the university under a sponsorship agreement where the school in exchange would cross-promote events, contribute advertising, and have their theatre program perform at the fair.



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\$84,000 for the use of the school's dormitories to "house entertainers, competition judges, etc.," according to Moore.

In 2017, Moore said the fairgrounds also sponsored a holiday event at Vanguard, giving the university \$5,000.

Added up, the fairgrounds has given the university a total of around \$189,000 since 1996.

Vazquez referred all other questions "about OC Fair compliance with state regulations" — such as whether or not the fairgrounds is violating state law by giving money to a university accused of discrimination — to the fairgrounds.

The state investigation is in response to a written complaint filed by local activist and Fair Board watchdog Reggie Mundekis, who called for Vanguard to return all the money the school received from the fairgrounds.

Before starting investigations, state policy said it [screens complaints](#) in a process that includes an interview with the person filing the grievance, typically rejecting complaints that don't substantially allege violations of the laws the Department of Fair Employment and Housing enforces.

In 2014, members of the local LGBTQ community [criticized the Orange County Board of Supervisors for a partnership with Vanguard](#), arguing it violated the county's nondiscrimination policy.

As part of the deal, Vanguard offered county employees a 10 to 25% reduced tuition rate in exchange for advertising on the county's internal web

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And the university in its blog post also called its relationship with the fairgrounds a “partnership,” **despite the fact there’s a clause in the \$75,000 contract strictly calling it a sponsorship**, and that it should not be deemed a joint venture or partnership.

The university at the time also called the money a “grant.”

*Brandon Pho is a Voice of OC intern. Contact him at [bpho@voiceofoc.org](mailto:bpho@voiceofoc.org) or on Twitter [@photherecord](https://twitter.com/photherecord).*

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