

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

31st District Agricultural Association / Ventura County Fair

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Monday, May 4th, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.

Call-in#: 1-669-900-6833 Meeting ID: 862 2372 8824

This virtual board meeting is called in accordance with Governor Gavin Newsom's proclaiming a State of Emergency to exist on March 4, 2020 as a result of the threat of COVID-19 and the March 12, 2020 Executive Order N-25-20. Board Directors and staff of the California Department of Food and Agriculture may attend this meeting telephonically without notice of or access to their teleconference location. Members of the public may attend the meeting and provide comment at the meeting location noticed above. Any item not so noticed on this agenda will not be considered or discussed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

31st District Agricultural Association

Leslie Cornejo (President), Leah Lacayo (Vice President),
Bonnie Atmore, Mike Bradbury, Cecilia Cuevas, Dan Long, Armando Lopez, Shanté Morgan-Durisseau

STAFF

Barbara Quaid, CEO

All matters noticed on this agenda may be considered for action. Items listed on the agenda may be considered in any order at the discretion of the Board President. Any item not so noticed will not be considered or discussed.

1) **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting convened at 11:08 a.m. and was called to order by President Cornejo.

2) **ROLL CALL OF DIRECTORS:** All Directors were present.

3) **PUBLIC FORUM:** Anyone may address the Board on any matter, either on or off the Agenda. In accordance with state law, the Board will not comment or otherwise consider Public Comment matters until such items have been properly noticed for a future meeting.

Due to the anticipated number of comments each speaker is limited to 90 seconds.

4) **NEW BUSINESS:**

- a.) Discussion and possible action regarding the consideration of and vote on whether or not to cancel the 2020 Ventura County Fair.

President Cornejo asked CEO Quaid to bring this issue up to the Board. She advised the Board that this has been discussed for many weeks to determine when would be the most appropriate time to make an informed decision.

CEO Quaid explained that asking the Board to make the decision to cancel the 2020 Fair is possibly one of the most difficult decisions she has ever had to make. The County and State wide stay-at-home orders still exist. Mass gathering bans were also one of the first restrictions put out by Governor Newsom and she thinks events and large operations of our type will likely be one of the very last restrictions eased. She is asking the Board to consider the status of the coronavirus pandemic and the improbability of mass gatherings, like the Fair, taking place. We will start planning and hosting future events once it has been deemed safe to do so by the Governor and by the Ventura County Health Department. She is asking the Board to take a vote to cancel the 2020 Fair.

Director Morgan-Durisseau asked if there has been any feedback from the Governor's Office regarding what direction the Fairs should take.

CEO Quaid stated no and the only feedback that she's had is watching the press conferences every day and we monitor his website and there has been no easing of the restrictions for mass gatherings.

President Cornejo added that CEO Quaid and her participated in a teleconference with CDFA, F&E and other Fairs' staff and Secretary Ross explained that the last thing to come back is mass gatherings and to take that into consideration. Several Fairs asked for a mandate or some sort of direction, but there is none coming. This was one of the reasons we were holding off on having a meeting because we were hoping for guidance and those types of facts to come in through that call with CDFA. There has been a lot of gathering of information by CEO Quaid and she has been in contact with various stakeholders. Other Fairs, including Orange County, have also been cancelled.

CEO Quaid explained that in talking to a couple operators since other Fairs have cancelled its questionable whether they would be able to come for just our Fair. If we continued with the Fair then we would have to hire an inordinate amount of people to be able to make sure that social distancing occurs and sanitizing guidelines are followed. At this point, it is much more prudent to cancel the 2020 Fair and start working on 2021 and be able to build up our interim rentals again once mass gatherings are allowed.

Director Cuevas asked if there was any information from the State whether or not there would be legislation to support the Fairs or any emergency funds.

CEO Quaid answered no and explained that the call her and President Cornejo were on explained that there is no legislative relief in sight.

President Cornejo opened the discussion for public comments.

Comment 1: Alex Flores – Commented that if the Fair is cancelled he recommended to consider an alternative for the livestock department to include health and safety protocols and still have an auction and livestock show.

Comment 2: Julia Solomonson – Commented that it would be great if we could all work together to still hold a livestock show and auction.

Comment 3: Carp FFA - Commented that they agree with Alex Flores.

Comment 4: Salvador Lopez – Stated that he would like to urge the Fair Board to not cancel the livestock show because there is a lot of responsibility that goes behind it and also agrees with Alex Flores.

Comment 5: Serena's iPhone – Stated that she agrees with Alex Flores.

Comment 6: Keri Allen – Commented that she agrees with Alex Flores. She would like to know if the tag in numbers have gone done because that might help with lower numbers at the time of the show.

Comment 7: Joe Long – Stated that he has ideas for the animals if there is no county fair and explained what they were.

Comment 8: Shirley Smith – Stated that she thinks Joe Long and Alex Flores have good ideas. She would like to lobby the health department to put on a show where each species show one day and then hold an online auction.

Comment 9: Travis Smith – Commented that he agrees with Alex Flores and Joe Long as well. If there is a livestock show then it needs to be done with social distancing. Another thing he would like us to look into is if there is an auction is to look into the safety of the buyers as well as the exhibitors.

Comment 10: Jan Becker – Commented that she supports either Alex Flores' idea or Shirley Smith's idea. Anything we can do to brainstorm to make this event happen would be a wonderful thing for the community in many ways including coming back from the fear that so many people have.

Comment 11: Derrick Smalley - Commented that options are being looked at from the livestock side to do either a live show or a virtual show. A proposal has been sent over to CEO Quaid and John Hecht to look at different options. He can reassure everyone, from the livestock side, that the kids will get some sort of exposure, whether it be live or virtual. Just because the Fair might be cancelled doesn't mean we have given up on the kids and the livestock. For many, this is our passion and what we really strive for and working with the kids and bettering the youth in the agriculture industry.

Comment 12: Megan Hook – Commented that she liked the ideas that Alex Flores and Shirley Smith brought forward and appreciates Derrick's comments that there are options in place.

She would like to hear a determination sooner rather than later regarding the livestock show and auction. She also thinks the entry fees and deadlines should be postponed until people can make an educated decision about what is going to happen.

Comment 13: Christy Limon – Stated that she agrees with Alex Flores and appreciates Derrick’s comments.

Comment 14: Becky McCormick – Thanked Derrick for his comments. The 4H and livestock group are really open to work together to come to a resolution as to how to pursue this. She is hoping this could be done in a timely manner so the kids can know what to with their investments and their projects.

Comment 15: Marisa Larios – She asked if the Fair would consider changing the age for the kids who are aging out this year.

Comment 16: Scott Toland – Stated that he wanted to encourage the Board to save the Junior Livestock Auction and show. There is a clear path to do this and there have been examples as to how to do it. Whether these events are done in person or virtual they can be done responsibly and safely and it is owed to the kids to do that.

Comment 17: Commented that she agrees with Alex Flores and asked if the Board was considering upping the age in 2021 for the kids who are aging out this year.

Comment 18: Veronica Lemos – Thanked Derrick Smalley for his comments and thanked all the other 4H and FFA advisors. They are there to support anything and to help ease the process.

Public comments were closed. Ms. Pelle explained that this meeting is to decide cancelling the 2020 Ventura County Fair. JLA will be a separate conversation if the Fair is canceled to figure that out. All these suggestions can be sent to CEO Quaid and Ms. Leach for consideration.

President Cornejo thanked Ms. Pelle and everyone who made a public comment. She explained those are always really important and the transparency and ability to make this decision publicly.

There was a motion made by Director Atmore to cancel the 2020 Fair and it was seconded by Vice President Lacayo. Discussion ensued.

Director Bradbury asked if it was possible to move the Fair back and what the fairground’s financial situation looked like the rest of the year if the Fair was cancelled.

CEO Quaid responded that she does not think move the Fair back will do anything for us because mass gatherings are prohibited for quite a long time. The second issue is, and she has been discussing the JLA for the last several weeks and there are options that have been discussed, but financially she is not sure we will be able to keep the doors open to staff the

auction. With that being said, she is giving an answer off the cuff because she does not have numbers in front of her. She has been laying off employees and the next step is laying off civil service employees. So with that coming, our financial situation is very dim. We make the majority of our money in the spring. Our biggest money maker, which is gatherings on the fairgrounds, has been cut to zero.

Director Cuevas stated that she appreciates all members of the public that are representing the livestock department and that the Board recognizes everyone's investments throughout the years. It is a very difficult issue for all Board members to consider, but the Board is faced with the responsibility of the health and safety of staff and everyone that comes onto the fairgrounds.

Director Morgan-Durisseau stated that there have been articles about other Fairs that may not open in the future and she wanted to know how important it was for the Board to make a decision now to cancel the Fair.

CEO Quaid stated it is very important now to make a decision regarding the 2020 Fair. Any decisions regarding other revenue generating activities will come at a later point based on the Governor and the Public Health Department. Having mass gatherings here will be based on what we are told is okay to have and no one is calling now about building rentals. We are about 90 days out from the Fair and it is the right time to make this decision.

Director Lopez stated that the Board appreciates what has gone into this recommendation by CEO Quaid. He explained that he feels the issue of health is most important. He explained there could be an outbreak and there would be no way to trace it back. There is so much people cannot predict that also makes it difficult.

Director Long agrees with Director Lopez and the rest of the directors. He does not think it is wise or feasible to plan any large gatherings at this time until there is an all clear. He hopes something can be done for the kids, but is supporting the decision to cancel.

President Cornejo stated that we have come to the decision thoughtfully and have talked to many stakeholders. She explained she is heartbroken and angry over this decision but it is a situation that is out of our control. It is frustrating because it effects the local economy, local community, staff and many others in so many ways. It is not being taken lightly by the Board and it is a difficult decision.

Director Cuevas called for the question and a roll call vote was taken.

MOTION: To cancel the 2020 Ventura County Fair.

Board Member Name	Approved (Yes Vote)	Not Approved (No Vote)	Abstain
Director Atmore (Motion)	X		
Director Bradbury	X		
Director Cuevas	X		
Director Long	X		
Director Lopez	X		
Director Morgan-Durisseau	X		
Vice President Lacayo (Second)	X		
President Cornejo	X		

CEO Quaid stated that Ms. Leach is out for a while so she has brought in Chris Garmon to handle livestock. If there are any comments regarding livestock or any other area of the Fair please email CEO Quaid and Mr. Garmon. She thanked everyone for being on this call and explained this has been the hardest decision she has ever had to make but it is the right thing to do for our customers and business partners.

5) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:19 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Heidi Ortiz, Executive Secretary

Approved by: _____
Barbara Quaid, CEO Ventura Fairgrounds

Approved by: _____
Leslie Cornejo, Board President