

# Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Ventura County Fairgrounds

31<sup>st</sup> District Agricultural Association – 10 W. Harbor Blvd. – Ventura, CA 93001 – (805) 648-3376

Website: venturacountyfair.org Contact: Barbara Quaid, CEO

**September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021**

## **I. Call to Order**

The meeting convened 10:07 a.m., and called to order by Leslie Cornejo, Chair.

**Directors present:** Leslie Cornejo, Chair, Leah Lacayo, Vice-Chair and Dan Long, Member

**Staff present:** Barbara Quaid, CEO, James Lockwood, Publicity, Jason Amelio, Sales Manager and Heidi Ortiz, Executive Assistant.

**Guests present:** Sarah Pelle, F&E, Karen Peters, Beth Mansfield, Robert O’Riley, Chief of Staff to Supervisor Carmen Ramirez, Scott Toland, Megan Hook, Alex Flores, Angel Garcia, Breanna Berrington, Brianne Whitcomb, Brianne NLN, Carla Alvara, Carol Lindberg, Cruz Benitez, Emelly Ortega, Jaritza Nunez, Joe Stayton, Julie Salomonson, Karson Chavez, Kathie Moore, Kinsie Flame, Logan Fogata, Louis Cunningham, Mariana Esquivel, Michele Nunes, Natali Gonzalez, Paula Estrella, Rayen, Dawn, Robert T., Shirley NLN, Stacey Peters, Justin Peters, Theresa Pellerino, Brianne Schwabauer, Heather Waters and Kimber Wilkerson.

President Cornejo advised everyone of two changes. One being that she spoke to legal and the chat function will be disabled due to Bagley Keene laws and secondly, due to the number of participants, public comments will be limited to three minutes not five.

## **II. Public Comment**

Kathie Moore – Explained she had a breakdown from Troy Rutherford of the livestock items that will be needed for the next fair in large livestock. She wasn’t sure of the protocol to be able to get these items purchased.

Megan Hook – Made a request to see what legal said about the chat comments so she understands why their voices are being shuttered. Also, she wanted to know if the request to have the chat comments included in the minutes from the last board meeting was being acknowledged because she stated there is no response or accountability when things are asked or brought up at meetings or sent into the fairgrounds. She would like to understand the rules and how it applies to Bagley Keene.

Scott Toland – Explained that he requested information a week ago from the fairgrounds and found out this morning from the legal department that they have not received the information from the fairgrounds yet to pass on to him. He stated that the board refers to Bagley Keene a lot and it says he should get that information right away without delay. Explained that a lot of their communications don’t get responses which is not right. He

wanted to know why he hasn't gotten the information he asked for a week ago, that is supposed to be readily available and provided without delay, has not been given yet.

Sarah Pelle – Stated that there is a difference between Bagley Keene and PRA's and explained what they were.

### **III. Discussion and possible action regarding 2022 Fair dates**

CEO Quaid – Explained that she has been working on dates for a few months now and looking to see where we fit into the schematic of other fairs so there is no overlapping. This is a policy issue and that policy says, "The Ventura County Fair shall be twelve (12) days long during the month of July/August." She would like to bring this to the board and add September to that to give us the leeway to be able to move our dates around if it is at all necessary. This will affect our concessionaires, carnival operators and exhibitors. As far as the larger departments go, we may do some of those events prior to the fair dates to give everyone the largest audience that they can. So, she is asking the board to amend the policy to include September.

Vice President Lacayo suggested not having a specific month but to just have a policy that there will be an annual fair.

Director Long agreed and thought it was a good idea but wanted to hear from the public first.

There was a brief discussion regarding specifics and President Cornejo clarified process of changing policy.

Brianne Whitcomb – Explained her and her family's history with the fair and the impact it has had on her life. She urged the board to have a fair in 2022 and stated her thoughts on the dates.

Kinsie Flame – Explained that she has had some of her fondest memories at the fair and explained what some of them were. Commented that there are plenty of other events happening and that there are ways to have a safe event. She gave some recommendations on what to do or have at the fair. Stated her feelings about the communication and transparency between the board and the community. She encouraged the board to keep the same dates.

Alex Flores – Explained that having discussions about even having a fair in 2022 put a smile on his face. The date change would make things tough on the kids and explained why. He mentioned that if the fair did change dates that the kids could do field trips. Stated there are a lot of pros and cons.

Brianne NLN – She wanted to add to what others said and one of the most important things is a sense of community and rebuilding what that is. It is vital to keep in mind the academic school year because the kids have missed enough. She gave her thoughts on why she doesn't feel moving the dates would be good. She explained that if the policy is changed there needs to be written criteria regarding length of time or time frame provided to the public.

Megan Hook – Explained that it is disappointing because the board/staff has said they have talked about dates for months, but the planning meetings were never scheduled that were supposed to happen. It is the end of September, and a policy change means now the end of October. The livestock community needs to know now because there is a lot involved. She encouraged the board who is serving the community to listen to the public and hear their needs. Explained it would be a huge problem if the fair was pieced apart into separate events. Stated that this is a business as well and wouldn't have sales and asked to take public comments into consideration.

Kimber Wilkerson – Explained she was a concessionaire with Palapa Taco and the Cookie Jar. She explained she has felt out of the loop for two years. Suggested possibly doing the fair in October like it was years ago. Thanked CEO Quaid for taking concessionaires into consideration. Mentioned she found out about the Summerfest via Facebook. Stated that if there is anything she can help with to let her know. She has ideas for food concessionaires that she can troubleshoot with CEO Quaid.

Theresa Pellerino – Stated that one board member mentioned letting the kids know 60 days prior to tagging and that is not nearly enough time. She has been breeding for years and has been involved in the fair for over 40 years. Explained that if the dates are going to be changed then they will need to know a year in advance and in some cases with some breeds a year and a half.

Michele Nunes – She agreed with what Theresa and Megan said, the animals are a big part of the fair and everyone needs to know when to breed their animals. 120 days is not sufficient and explained some details of what all is involved.

Emelly Ortega – Stated that she part of Carpinteria FFA and thanked the board for the meeting and for considering the fair. Explained her involvement with agriculture and her experience as an exhibitor. Stated her thoughts on the fair dates.

Scott Toland – Explained his thoughts on setting the dates and have people work around those. The board mentioned before that it takes a year to plan the fair, but the public hasn't heard anything. Stated that if the board waits until October then they are also missing out on potential sponsorships. Commented on his frustrations with the lack of communication and respect with the public. He would like to be a part of the solution and not the problem.

Julie Salomonson – She explained she is with 4H and that families are starting to enroll now. They are trying to decide whether or not to buy an animal and waiting until October is not great. She was hoping to get dates today so they can announce and get the enrollment numbers up.

Robin T. – Explained she is a club leader and reiterate what Julie Salomonson said that they are doing open enrollment and having the dates is a really big component as to whether or not families sign up, start saving for fair, etc. She explained the dates in August are really important and explained why. She asked that the board consider school and breeding schedules when deciding on dates.

816-7363 – Explained she is really confused why the board is trying to push the fair dates. 3 months is too big of a window and doesn't think much thought has gone into this. Ask to consider waiting another full year if changes dates so people can plan accordingly.

Heather Waters – Explained that it is frustrating to hear the board is planning on having fair during school. Feels it is asking a lot of the kids and it should be a summer event. Explained the problems of putting off deciding on the fair dates and stated we need to figure something out and all work together to move forward with 2022.

Natali Gonzalez – Explained she is with Carpinteria FFA and she is a senior this year raising a steer. She applied for college and not knowing the date is difficult because it is hard not knowing where she will get the money.

Breanne Berrington – She is an Ag Teacher at Santa Paula High School and wanted it clarified that there will be a fair in 2022 and that is why the board is discussing dates.

President Cornejo stated that it is the absolute intent of the fair board to have a fair next year.

Justin Peters – Stated that he was looking at other county's dates and challenges the fair board to see if there really is a conflict. He wants to know what the real reason is behind changing the fair dates.

Public comments were closed on item 3.

Director Long appreciates all the comments and concerns, the board has them all as well. He wanted to remind everyone that the board really wants to put on a fair and it was COVID that really caused us to need to be more flexible. He does like the flexibility to allow the CEO to figure it out because she has been doing it for all these years to see where we fit in. He suggested the board and staff do their best in getting the dates out there if possible.

Vice President Lacayo stated that she concurs with Director Long and we are only looking for flexibility. The vendors follow a fair circuit and because we don't overlap some fairs we do overlap other fairs. This also affects carnival operators, suppliers, etc. and we try and take it all into consideration. With that she made a motion.

Director Long seconded the motion with comments. He would like to do our best to find a date and if CEO Quaid has by next week any idea of when that might be that would be great so at least the board can say that is what we will try and get done until it can be solidified. He appreciates how hard this is and knows everyone is frustrated and its not about business as usual. We have minimal staff and there is few people trying to make all this happen and they have been exemplary in getting things done and having a fairgrounds that is still open. The board is stewards of the fairgrounds and charged with keeping the fairgrounds operating and open and it's been all that they can do to keep the fairgrounds open. The board is doing all that they can do and will continue to do that to serve the community as they are all volunteers trying to do the best they can for all of the county.

Vice President Lacayo stated that she appreciates Director Long's comments and feels the same. Explained that they are discussing other changes that they might make to

accommodate other students and will do their best to embrace the entire community and make it as welcoming as possible and still be fiscally responsible.

**MOTION:** To recommend to the Board to make a policy change on the Fair to eliminate specific dates and number of days of the Fair and just have an annual Fair.

<b>Board Member Name</b>	<b>Approved (Yes Vote)</b>	<b>Not Approved (No Vote)</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Director Long (Second)	X		
Vice President Lacayo (Motion)	X		
President Cornejo	X		

**IV. Gun Show Policy Discussion**

CEO Quaid explained that two years ago, there were many discussions and many meetings, and the board set a policy which they are bound by until the policy is changed. In a conversation this morning, the board must hold the gun show unless the policy is changed. The last time there was a gun show was February 2020. She is advocating for the board to follow their policy until the time comes that they wish to change it.

President Cornejo clarified that this is not being voted on, it is just a discussion on what was learned by consultation with legal. It's been made very clear that if the board does not follow their policy, they are putting themselves in legal jeopardy. She briefly explained the history with Del Mar and what's at stake for the Ventura Fairgrounds. The board has discussed constitution and it is the board's duty to preserve those rights for the fair. In doing so, the board would need to change their policy in order to not have a gun show, but in changing the policy the board still can't break the law because it will leave the board open to litigation. The board is in a terrible quandary at this point because it is the board's duty to preserve the law and rights of those we are involved with. It is up to the legislators to change the law because the board are not legislators, they obey it. The board did not jump into changing policy because they were waiting to see if legislation would come through to support making any changes in our policy. She explained the legislation that is currently taking place. She feels that for those who want the gun shows to stop on fairgrounds that their advocacy has failed with the legislators and to keep trying.

CEO Quaid stated that she had a conversation with Senator Monique Limon and she was very disappointed and CEO Quaid let her know her and the board were as well because when the Governor says you can no longer have gun shows on state property we obey that. That has only happened at the Cow Palace and Del Mar. She stated that we can hope that legislation goes through next year, if that is the wishes of the board, and we would follow that. Senator Limon did understand the problem that the board is under and why we have to follow our policy.

Director Long thanked CEO Quaid and President Cornejo for the information and doesn't think that the Governor has signed the one bill that has passed. He believes the legislators are trying to bring legislation back next year and stated that for those that want to end gun shows at fairgrounds should keep advocating and ask their legislators to do it. This is where we ended up a couple years ago and nothing seemed to happen but finally something did. Not everything always gets through on the first push so maybe next year it will, and the board will follow that.

President Cornejo stated that it will allow us to at least open a debate because the board is interested in preserving the rights of everyone in our community and will take special care of them all. At this point, the board does not have a lot of choices that don't put us in jeopardy if we don't go forward which is the understanding with discussions with our legislators and legal.

Vice President Lacayo thanked CEO Quaid and President Cornejo for having those discussions. She is disappointed that the legislators can't do anything, but there is a policy in place and the board is bound to follow that policy.

President Cornejo reminded everyone that there needs to be a legal basis to change the policy. There has to be a thoughtful process to make sure there is a foundation to make a change.

Public Comments was opened at this time.

Karen Peters – Stated she does not agree with 99% of what was said. She explained she tried to refresh her memory of the last two years of meetings, minutes, committee notes, etc. and stated that it was disturbing. She explained that the board voted on the contract through the end of the year and to include some education, but it was not sufficient. It was referred to the Executive Committee to work on a policy, but that never happened. She suggested a policy.

Beth Mansfield – Explained who she was and that she is currently working with the State and local legislators on legislation banning gun and ammo sales on state owned property, as directed by the board earlier 2 ½ years ago. While her hope is that no gun shows are allowed on the fairgrounds her focus today is ending the sale of ghost guns at future gun shows held on grounds. She reminded everyone what ghost guns were and that they are allowed to be sold at gun shows. Explained that when she attended the last gun show there were hundreds of untraceable firearms being sold on state property. She had explained some facts that have come out from LAPD and lawsuits regarding ghost guns. While ultimately, she is asking the board not to allow the sale of any guns or ammo at the fairgrounds, today she is requesting a compromise for the board to end the sale of ghost guns at the board approved gun shows. She is also requesting that metal detectors be required for the gun shows at the fairgrounds that everyone has to go through during the annual Fair. She stated that she submitted a public records request for the last five years of gun shows and looks forward to receiving it.

Robert O'Riley – Stated he was Chief of Staff for Supervisor Carmen Ramirez and he wanted to make a statement on her behalf. He understands the comments that were made earlier about legislation that need to be changed so he will make this statement for the record and future consideration. "In its Mission Statement, The 31st DAA proclaims, in part, "...to promote, support, educate, celebrate and preserve the diverse *culture* and *traditions* of our County..." and it is my hope that the Board does just that. The culture and traditions of Ventura County which we should be promoting, supporting, and celebrating are health, safety and human life, not the sale of and profit from firearms. California saw a rise of more than 40% in firearm homicides in 2020, and a 39.2%

increase in assaults with a firearm. The increase in firearm deaths accounts for 91% of the overall jump in homicides in our state just last year. In my district of Greater Oxnard, almost every day someone is arrested for illegal firearms. Yes, the gun shows do not allow illegal firearms to be sold but indeed gun shows tell our county and especially our youth that guns are okay. This is not appropriate for a state agency such as your Fairgrounds board. There are private businesses that cater to people who want to purchase guns and that is how it should be. To repeat, the state should not promote guns or gun culture in any way. Nearly half of the deaths reported in our county are from the Latino community as they make up about 40% of Ventura County's population. African Americans, while making up a mere 2% of the County's population, made up a third of all deaths in the state. These are our friends, our neighbors, and family. We must do better at protecting all of us from gun violence. Easy access to guns, acceptability of guns and promotion of them makes it easy for the despondent and desperate to take their own lives with a gun. Let's all do our part to make it harder to take lives away by gun violence. Not long after the horrific Borderline shooting, cities within the County, including Oxnard and even the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, adopted policy statements opposing gun shows at the fairgrounds. I hope that today your board will agree. I urge the Board to consider discontinuing gun shows at the fairgrounds."

Public comments were closed. No action was presented, it was advisory only. Item 4 on this agenda will be on the board agenda for Tuesday's board meeting as well.

Director Long asked for more details regarding ghost guns.

CEO Quaid asked legal to see if we are able to make a change to the contract and if the board wants to eliminate ghost guns. Once she hears back, she will pass that onto the Executive Committee to present at the board meeting.

**V. Future Agenda Items - None**

**VI. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.