

# OCFEC Board Meeting

12/14/23

Nick Kovacevich Good morning everyone. Thank you for coming in today I want to call the meeting to order. All matters notice on this agenda in any category may be considered for action as listed. Any item not so notice may not be considered items listed on this agenda may be considered in any order at the discretion of the chair person. Item two, the mission of OC FEC is creating equitable community access to agriculture, entertainment, cultural and educational experiences. Now, item three, I would ask Director Bilezikjian to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Everyone I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Nick Kovacevich Thank you, moving to item number four Roll Call.

Summer Angus Chair Kovacevich?

Nick Kovacevich Here.

Summer Angus Vice Chair Bagneris?

Barbera Bagneres Here.

Summer Angus Director Pham?

Newton Pham Director La Belle?

Doug Le Belle Here.

Summer Angus Director Rubalcava-Garcia?

Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia Here.

Summer Angus Director Ruiz?

Robert Ruiz Here.

Summer Angus Director Bilezikjian?

Tanya Bilezikjian Here.

Summer Angus And Director Jackson?

Dimitria Jackson Here.

Summer Angus      Thank you, Chair Kovacevich as a matter of business. For those of you members of the public on Zoom and would like to make public comment, please use the chat function to identify which items or which item or items on the agenda you would like to speak. Please list the agenda item number in the chat. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you Summer. Next item five. Call for the minutes from last board meeting. Do we have anybody willing to make a motion to approve those.

Doug Le Belle      Moved to approve.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you. Director La Belle. Good. Okay, Summer, Please do roll.

Summer Angus      Chair Kovacevich?

Nick Kovacevich      Yes.

Summer Angus      Vice Chair Bagneris?

Barbera Bagneres      Yes.

Summer Angus      Director La Belle?

Doug Le Belle      Yes.

Summer Angus      Director Rubalcava-Garcia?

Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia      Update. I was not at that meeting.

Summer Angus      Director Ruiz?

Robert Ruiz      Abstain.

Summer Angus      Director Bilezikjian?

Tanya Bilezikjian      Yes.

Summer Angus      And Director Jackson?

Dimitria Jackson      Yes.

Summer Angus      Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you. Item number six matters of public comment. Public comment is allowed on issues not on the current agenda. However, no debate by the Board shall be permitted on such public comments, and no action will be taken on such public comment items at this time. As law requires formal

public notice prior to any action on an agenda item. Speakers are requested to fill out and submit a comment card to the meeting Secretary prior to the start of the meeting and are limited to three minutes. comments will be accepted on all other agenda items at the time. Each item is listed on the agenda. Speakers wishing to address the board on items on the agenda are requested to fill out and submit a comment card to the meeting Secretary prior to the start of the meeting and identify the agenda items on which you desire to address the board. Again, speakers are limited to three minutes. We do have one general public comment if we get called Gibran Stout.

Gibran Stout

Good morning board, and everyone else here for being here today. Thank you. Thank you. Um, my general comment is, is that you're in charge. And you've taken on and taken oaths for being in charge of this great agricultural public asset. And there's lots of rules and requirements for that job. And one of those things is giving the public a seat at the table. And we have been begging for years. And we've been promised public workshops, transparency, study sessions, and the most we've gotten was some study sessions with zero board members. And we were told what we couldn't speak about with the promise of future meetings. So I think today is a perfect example of the reality that the public does not have a seat at the table. We would like an ad hoc committee for the Equestrian Center, question, whatever you want to call it. There is a committee we can have meetings and not have this. None of us want to be here. And you guys don't want to sit through this today. So please, how many times do we have to beg Please, can we get our seat at the table that we are entitled to that is required by law All, please bring us to the table. We just want to have conversation, because there's 100% solutions to every issue that's on the agenda today. 100%. If you're only getting information from one source, and you're not getting all the information, you cannot make informed decisions. So please, nothing else today brings to the table. Some of us are crazy. Absolutely. I can't imagine why. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you.

Summer Angus

Chair Kovacevich, we did have one general comment on zoom.

Nick Kovacevich

Proceed.

Summer Angus

Samuel Brown when you're ready?

Samual Brown

Yes. So I just wanted to introduce myself, I'm with the Winona ranch house, which is a coalition of equestrian and agricultural communities in southern California. And the reason I wanted to submit my public

comment is because, you know, I think that, obviously, there is the agenda item 8B, but I think more generally, I wanted to discuss the fact that the you know, the role of your board, as an Agricultural Advisory Board, is to really be consistent with the historical and consistent land use planning of Orange County, Orange County is really a part of the previous Rancho system, which was, you know, at one point under Mexican rule, and prior to that it was a part of New Spain, this was Alta California, this is something that really reflects in many ways, the indigenous and native equestrian traditions that were pioneered in Southern California. And I just think that before you guys, you know, contemplate any decision making, you know, any sort of decision on on that agenda item, that you guys really do the research and really familiarize yourself with, you know, an equestrian tradition and culture that is native to the southwest that really predates the state of California, I think it's rather reckless to preemptively make a decision on this matter, without first considering the impact on communities of color, many that are also employees at the Equestrian Center. And I think that, you know, you really have to take into account that you know, the once you eliminate this space is part of a larger tradition of displacement. And so it's really imperative that we do the steps necessary to address this. And to really try to stand in solidarity with communities of color that really want to keep the space open. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you.

Lisa Bacha      Um, this is Lisa Bach. I'm on the telephone. I'm not on Zoom. Can I be recognized for public comments?

Summer Angus      For general public comment, yes. If it's has to do with an agenda item. What if could you list the agenda item?

Lisa Bacha      Yes, it's general public comment. I apologize. I could not. I tried three times to get on the Zoom link, and it just didn't work where I'm at. My name is Lisa Bacha, I'm with the Los Angeles equestrian coalition. And I just wanted to go on record that opposed to having the center close to be developed for office space in this day where people are telecommuting and downsizing. I think revenue streams that should be looked at which are not on the agenda item today, but perhaps could be brought in at a future date. Our therapeutic riding programs and Equine Assisted programs. In Orange County is ground zero for autism. One in 68 kids have been diagnosed with autism and UC Irvine has a department dedicated to this bringing in I work volunteer with a head with horses which is a 55 year old therapeutic riding program in the Sunland area. It is a way to generate revenue and also fulfill a need for developmentally disabled youth. And you have Newport high school you have Orange Coast College adjacent. Teen suicide is another issue that is not discussed

or highlighted. It is impacting communities of color in big numbers post COVID. There is lots of mental health dollars available both at the federal level and at the state to provide therapeutic riding for not just autistic and cerebral palsy, children but also teen emotionally struggling youth. So I would like to add revenue You're generating marketing specifically for the Equestrian Center, given the need of Orange County being ground zero in the nation for autistic kids, one in 68 is a very, very high number. And it could leverage the Equestrian Center going forward to be profitable.

Since looking at your finances from the 2021 report, you are very top heavy with staff and administrative overhead. Basically, this is a care of livestock. That is not an office job. And your general manager getting paid over \$100,000 is really, really high. We manage where I'm at much smaller numbers. And there's a way to do the whole budget much smarter by contracting out your cleaning of the bathrooms to the service and your landscaping and your facilities staff. You don't need four people on staff, you can do it with one person or two people for the number of horses that you have there. You're not full, it's a lot of waste of state taxpayer dollars. This is a state facility. It is not a private facility. It is a state operated facility that boards horses for the public benefit. So making every dollar count.

Summer Angus      That is time.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you. Any other general public comment? Okay, general public comments closed? We will move.

George Medina      Excuse me, excuse me, I wanted to make a public comment as well, but I couldn't get my card in. My name is George, I'm calling from LA County in conflict that make a quick statement.

Nick Kovacevich      Sure.

George Medina      Hi, my name is George Medina, and I'm an equestrian rider here in Compton. And I wanted to just thank the other speakers that spoke they said they said it well. But I just want to ask each of the members of this committee to think what you would do if you were eight years old. 10 years old, what would you vote on? Would you vote to close an equestrian center in Orange County, for offices. I mean, that's a decision that you're making for families. That's a decision that you're making for other children...you're making for kids with cerebral palsy, kids any therapy. And again, this is an attack statewide. Folks are doing this in Los Angeles, we just saw that we went through that in LA, they've closed down facilities throughout the county. And I want to ask each and every one of you to think of the children that you're representing office space over equestrian news is really not something that anyone would want to do. So I just wanted to get on here and jump on and lend my support to those that are doing the good work in Orange County. Thank you very

much.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you

Summer Angus      Chair Kovacevich. We have one more on Zoom for general public comment.

Nick Kovacevich      Okay, and then this will be the last general public.

Summer Angus      Sorry. They said they had to leave

Nick Kovacevich      Okay, thank you. All right, perfect. We need to move on. So moving on to item number seven, the consent calendar. All matters listed on our consent calendar are operational matters about the which the board has governing policies, implementation of which is delegated to the CEO, they will be enacted in one motion, there'll be no discussion of these items prior to the time the Board of Directors votes on the motion, unless members of the Board staff Republic request specific items to be discussed separately and or removed from this section. Any member of the public who wishes to discuss Consent Calendar items should notify the chair of the board at the time requested and be recognized by invitation the chair to address the board. So you won't have any questions or any specific items on the consent calendar.

Michele Richards      Yes Chair Kovacevich, staff has one rental agreement to pull at this time. It's the third one. Sorry, fourth one listed on the agenda R026-4. That is for an upcoming student robotics competition event that will be held here at the OC parent Events Center in March. Unfortunately, an incorrect rental agreement number was assigned to that contract. So we'll bring that back next month for approval.

Nick Kovacevich      Okay, great. Thank you.

Doug Le Belle      No further comments, I would move the consent calendar.

Cora Cordova      Thank you.

Robert Ruiz      Director Ruiz, I second.

Nick Kovacevich      All right, Summer, Please do a roll call.

Summer Angus      Chair Kovacevich?

Nick Kovacevich      Yes.

Summer Angus      Vice Chair Bagneris?

Barbera Bagneres Yes.

Summer Angus Director La Belle?

Doug Le Belle Yes.

Summer Angus Director Rubalcava-Garcia?

Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia Yes.

Summer Angus Director Ruiz?

Robert Ruiz Yes.

Summer Angus Director Bilezikjian?

Tanya Bilezikjian Yes.

Summer Angus And Director Jackson.

Dimitria Jackson Yes.

Nick Kovacevich Okay, that completes Item number seven. We're gonna move to item or to Agenda Item eight. Starting with 8a. And this is a review of year to 2023 strategic plan initiatives and update on status. I'm going to turn this over to CEO Richards to take us through the update.

Michele Richards Thank you. And I know we've got a long agenda so I'll be brief board policy 4.03 under organizational planning requires that there's an annual review by the board of their strategic plan at the end of each fiscal year. So I will report out on what the year two initiatives where we're concluding year two of that three year plan. So the plan was organized under several major categories, the first being the annual OC fair, the strategic direction that the Board gave was that the annual OC fair will establish public private partnerships designed to benefit and increase accessibility to lower income residents of Orange County so that all who are served are provided a full fare experience. Specifically for year two, the initiative was to increase the board directed donations of fare admission tickets from 2,500 to 5,000. And we did that in fact, there were 5,000 for donated admission tickets to various nonprofits. And you can see some of them on the screen. The second part of that was to use board assistance to identify other nonprofits that could help round out the fair experience by donating \$50 gift cards to all the recipients. Unfortunately, we weren't able to make that happen in 2023. But we'll, we'll look at it again. Also under the annual OC fair, the strategic direction was that the annual CPL will create an opportunity each year for increased local business participation for merchants and concessionaires and specifically

for year two to develop a portable concessions operation or pop up concept that local restaurants could participate in. So our team has created a concept for a Container Park, basically, that would allow local restaurants to come in for a day at a time a week at a time. So we are continuing to develop that a lot of restaurants are struggling right now to just keep their brick and mortar locations open. But we're will continue to pursue that in year three. Also, under strategic direction for the fair was to work toward making the OC fair, the number one destination of choice for family activities each summer. And there are several metrics that we look at to measure sort of the affordable family fun. We featured that in nine eblasts, seven press releases, and 61 social media posts. There were nearly 47,000 carnival ride wristbands sold on those discount days, we sold out more days in 2023 than 2022. And our patron survey score overall value didn't increase in 23. But we are still well within the acceptable or slightly higher than normal range. So that's a key goal for us for next year as well. Also, under the OC fair, we had a goal to achieve guest satisfaction ratings of 4.0 or higher and you can see the scores now to introduce at least one family friendly exhibit or attraction. We introduce to actually for those of you that came to the art of music exhibit, you saw what a wonderful connection that was over 223 visitors came to see that exhibit. The initiative also included the CEO making a state of the fair address, which I did in June, and then holding focus groups so that we could understand what our guests are looking for. And we did that on July 26 and 27 with 34 Fair guests participating. Regarding our year round events program, we had a year to initiative that in addition to imaginology our fall craft beer festival and Veterans Day to introduce a new self produced event focused on agriculture education, we weren't able to introduce but we are under development for something in 2024. So we'll come back to the board on that in year three. We had a goal to book two to three additional Pacific amphitheater performances outside of the 2023 OC fair dates we introduced seven additional shows this year and it was a very successful series. On the year round event side as well, we had a goal to increase mid week business events. So these are not public events, but rather private business events. We introduced the six that you see there so we continue to work with the business community to promote the OC fair and Events Center as a destination as well. For our educational assets and foundations. The goal was to introduce a nutrition component to the junior farmer tours this year at Centennial farm. And we did that by partnering with the California Dairy Council, you might remember the \$5,000 grant was given to the Centennial farm by the Dairy Council, and that has been integrated into our junior pharma tours. There was a goal this year to work with each foundation to identify annual fundraising opportunities. The board might remember that the Heroes Hall veterans foundation separated from the 32nd Va and is operating as an independent foundation right now but they continue to support Heroes Hall on a continuous basis through programming and and funding and we

received a \$28,000 Check this year from the centennial farm foundation so that's going very well. Also under educational assets. The goal for Heroes Hall was to work with the OC Department of Education to host at least five high school tours of Heroes Hall we've done 13 So far this year so Heroes Hall is becoming a nice destination point for high school education. We also partnered with veterans and active military to interact with students during imagine ology the OC fair and Veterans Day. We also had a goal to launch a speaking tour focused on our contributions to the community targeting at least five outside bare dates. You see the four speaking opportunities that I completed this year and then Director Pham spoke on behalf of the board when we did the ribbon cutting during the fair for for the serenity walk at Heroes Hall. The next category is for the Equestrian Center. So the board was very clear in their strategic planning process about what their expectations were for the organization regarding the Equestrian Center. In year two, they wanted us to start development of a public tour program of the Equestrian Center led by volunteer docents with educational components and hands on activities by the end of 2023. Similar to what we do at Centennial farm and Heroes Hall. And we do provide tours of the facility as requested but a broader public tour program is on hold pending the outcome of the RFP process.

Unknown Speaker Yeah, I'm sorry to interrupt you can't hear out there. The speakers aren't working.

Summer Angus Okay. Jason, can you look at that for us.

Michele Richards We also had a goal this year for 20 year to have the plan to develop a revenue generating horse show program for the public by the end of 2023. With the goal of hosting at least two public horse shows, we have launched research of that for potential horse shows but we're running into space issues even some of the smallest four shows need much more room. We also had a year to goal that the OC fair Events Center agricultural education team will work with equestrian center users to develop a public equine education exhibit. And OC vaulting did participate in imagine Knology this was part of a broader strategy that the programming for the equestrian center would be integrated into other OC fair and Event Center activities. And then lastly for the equestrian center that the business model for the Equestrian Center will balance the requirement to operate so...

Unknown Speaker there is no mic in the other room.

Michele Richards We understand we're trying to work on it right now.

Nick Kovacevich I believe if everybody has a smartphone, you can you can do the Zoom

link and you would be able to hear through there. So it is accessible outside of this building with a smartphone.

Unknown Speaker I would say let's take like a short break to figure out the speed.

Nick Kovacevich Okay, we're gonna take a short break to try to figure out the Speaker.

Nick Kovacevich Thank you. Sorry for the delay. We are back up and running with audio in the hallway. So let's jump back in. I've requested for CEO Richards to Rewind a few slides so that anyone who missed some of the content can can get a rerun.

Michele Richards Okay, and as a reminder, this is a recap of the board's three year strategic plan. These are the strategic initiatives that the board developed for the equestrian center that the OC fair and event centers equestrian center will serve as a true public asset. To ensure greater access to a broader group of constituents throughout Orange County. It will be operated as a Best In Breed equine venue, with the highest standard of care for boarded horses and animals in need of shelter during emergencies. Our year two initiative was to develop a public tour program of the Equestrian Center led by volunteer docents and staff provides tours of the facility is requested but the broader public tour program is on hold pending the outcome of the RFP process. strategic direction number two, OC fair and Event Center staff will operate the Equestrian Center planning and executing programming to the maximum benefit of the public. The programming will be focused on equine education and entertainment for the public. The initiative was to develop a revenue generating horse show for the public by the end of 2023. And while research by our staff was launched for that initiative, we are running into space issues with horse show promoters who need more space. The third initiative the Equestrian Center programming will be integrated into other OC fair and Event Center activities throughout the year including the annual OC fair and imagine Knology and we were happy to welcome OC vaulting participating in imagine ology 2023 this year. And the last initiative regarding the Equestrian Center is that the business model for the Equestrian Center will balance the requirement to operate as a public benefit venue with the need to be financially sound. The year two goal was to develop a detailed p&l to determine true operational performance with specific revenue and expense targets including all maintenance expenses not previously included in the Equestrian Center budget. And staff did develop a detailed budget capturing all of those related expenses. It was part of the 2023 budget approved by the board and we review P&L statements on a monthly basis. And the last category involves community support. So the board set a direction that the OC fair an event center will mobilize stakeholders and partners to complement the organization's efforts in supporting the community. We with the help of our board, as I mentioned

previously, there were over 5,000 donated tickets to Southern California nonprofit organizations. Centennial Farm continues to provide harvested produce to local food banks and the general public and local first responders use the fairgrounds parking lots for their vehicular training. In the past, we have served as a food distribution site COVID testing, vaccination super pod and large animal evacuation location. And currently, we are working with the state on the public safety power shut off initiative and large docking stations and transfer switches are being installed on the fairgrounds for generators to be used in case of large evacuations or emergencies. And lastly, so no one more after that the OC fair and Event Center will ensure that proper resources are allocated for responding to emergencies including adequate funding, equipment and staffing. We completed our annual review of those emergency plants and meats and we included a Um, support, materials and personnel in support of those operations in the 2024 budget which was approved. And then lastly, that the OC fair and Events Center will be accessible to nonprofits, community groups and public officials conducting official business through rental fee waivers or discounts. The initiative was to reintroduce the community engagement program that we had started several years ago. And unfortunately, we have been precluded from continuing with that. However, we did gain approval to trade discounted rental fees with nonprofits and community groups, as long as the district receives documented benefits of equal value. So we're moving ahead with that. So I know that was a very quick summary, but there you have it.

Doug Le Belle

Chair Kovacevich I have a comment and a question if I might proceed. This is Director La Belle. I wanted to for the benefit of everyone in the room. This process was not done in a vacuum. We just didn't wake up one day and say, okay, here is our strategic plan. Under the guidance of then chair Rubalcava-Garcia, and obviously, Michelle, there was a very extensive process where we involve stakeholders. My recollection is there were a number of meetings that took place to develop the strategic plan, where we sought input from literally everyone. Could you comment a little bit, Michelle, on what the process was that we use to develop the strategic plan?

Michele Richards

Sure, it was developed over I believe, four, four sessions. It was during the COVID shutdown, however, the board met in the hangar building the public was invited to attend. We once the strategic plan was drafted by the board, we posted it on the website and saw it public input, integrated some changes into the strategic plan. And then it was approved by the board and, you know, staff went to work on those initiatives beginning last year.

Doug Le Belle

If I might have had the process now, as we move forward, and your four, five and six, we will repeat the same process in terms of updating the

plan, is that correct?

Michele Richards

Correct. And that's by board policy that we do that annual review. It's a three year strategic plan. Year three is 2024. So beginning in the spring of 2024, will work on the next, the next plan and the board might remember those that were on the board then that we chose to do a three year plan, because things were so uncertain at that point coming out of the pandemic. But my recommendation is that maybe the board do a little bit longer look moving forward.

Doug Le Belle

And I know that Natalie worked very hard to keep us on track and keep it moving forward. And it was an extensive process over a number of months. Okay, thank you very much.

Michele Richards

Sure.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you for the comment Director Le Belle. Any...

Summer Angus

Chair Kovacevich, if I may, just for the record, Director Pham has joined the meeting via zoom.

Nick Kovacevich

Wonderful. Welcome Director Pham. Okay, we have a full house. All right. Any other comments from the board on the presentation? Thank you, Michelle. That was that was good and good progress toward, you know, a lot of the things that we laid out a couple years ago. Okay, so that was an information item. So we'll move on to a big item on the agenda here. Item number eight, B. And this is an, I'm gonna read this verbatim. This is a discussion regarding the development of public programming at the equestrian center, and a vote on next steps. So we do have a lot of public comments for this item. I'm going to want to make sure to address the board here because this was an item that was put on the agenda from the leadership committee. So I want to kind of explain how it got on the agenda. And then also, I want to make sure that the folks that do provide public comment, stick to this topic, right. There's a lot of folks and we we have, obviously, three minutes per speaker, so we want to make sure we move through but it's got to stay on topic, right. And we're talking about again, discussion regarding the development of public programming at the equestrian center and a vote on next steps. So I'll give a little bit of background. We did meet as a board a couple of months ago, because we believe that there was an issue with gift of public funds with the way that the Equestrian Center was currently being ran. So there's private borders and private businesses that are operating out of there. We are staffing, that facility and operating we had been operating at a loss, right, as you guys are aware. So there was a decision made to to launch an RFP. Now, what we've heard in the last few months is a lot from the public, a lot from people that are here. We appreciate that input. And we've gotten a lot of emails, we've even heard from elected officials. And based on that

information, it's the stuff that we even heard today, right? From speaker saying it the general comment that, you know, they want, they would like to see therapeutic riding programs for developing mentally disabled youth, teen suicide, communities of color to have more access to this facility. Veteran therapy referred, we've heard the stats on how many autistic kids are in Orange County and that better public programming could assist there. We've even heard from OC supervisor, Katrina Foley, in a direct quote that says, It's so cost prohibitive, the more it gets privatized, the less the general OC community can afford to use it. So kind of hearing all this prompted us at the leadership committee to say, Hey, does it make sense to revisit this item because we had voted to bring in a private operator to continue sort of business as usual. And we've heard so many comments about from the public that want to open this up for more public programming. So we felt that it was prudent for the board to have this discussion. And as we were kind of preparing for that, we were also reflecting on what our attorney advised us in terms of last meeting around this issue of a gift of public funds. And we've never really had a proper debate on that of, you know, going through the analysis to determine if we were to give our funds to the current business model, right, with private borders and private businesses. Is there enough public benefit to justify that as being a use of funds for the public benefit? Or are we giving public funds for private benefit? Right, and I, we've talked about it, but we've never kind of gotten to a board decision on, you know, what the current model really means in terms of that question. And then, you know, I also want to clean up some facts right. And I know, you we've all seen the emails and reading the emails and engaging in the public discussion in previous meetings, right. And people have said, you know, we've seen the headers and don't turn it into a parking lot, you know, and I'm like, where did they get this news? Because we just looked at the strategic plan, no mention of a parking lot, right. We've never said that at one of the board meetings that I've been at. So, again, I want to avoid people going on, you know, when we have the speakers here, off topic, because we've got to stick to the agenda item. Right. And it is a discussion of public programming, not a discussion of Should we turn it into a parking lot, because that's never been something that's ever been put out there to be discussed. Right. So we've got to, we've got to, again, align around some of the facts. We also hear that this is, you know, no different than Centennial farm or Heroes Hall. But you know, especially because we do have some new board members. Let's also kind of just lay out the differences, right? We could say there are similarities, but there's also clear differences. For example, you can go to Heroes Hall, pretty much any day of the week, and walk in as a member of the public. You can tour. You can also go to Centennial farm and interact with the animals there. But I don't believe members of the public can go and interact with the horses on their own. Yeah. Okay, so that's a fact. We also have heard. We've also heard, we've also trying to make sure we have facts on the

table here.

Doug Le Belle

Excuse me. Excuse me, excuse me. You're all going to have an opportunity to make public comments. The chair is trying to provide an overview of where we're at. So no, wait a minute. So your courtesy and allowing him to complete his comments, he's going to give you the same opportunity to make your comments. So please, in view of all of us being here devoting our time to doing this, let the chair complete his comments, and then you'll have an opportunity to speak. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. And I think you know, what I mean is, you know, you do have to pay to ride a horse. That's not the case at Centennial farm. So I'm saying there are differences. There's also similarities, I'm not denying that, but that's a discussion that we need to have as a board. But we've heard these talking points and just want to make sure that, you know, we can kind of clarify the reality. We also have heard that 1000s of people benefit from this facility on a yearly basis. Yet, there's an insurance requirement that everybody that actually enters the facility has to sign a waiver. And staff has only identified 150 waivers that have been signed. So again, 1000s of people, not hundreds of people coming 1000s of times. So just let's make sure we know what the facts are, that there's actually only 150 sign waivers, which, if business has been ran properly, that would mean that there's a maximum of people that have actually entered that facility, totaling 150, not 1000. So they also mentioned, there's also a mention of equine therapy. And we also, to our knowledge, do not know of a licensed equine therapist operating out of that facility. So a lot of these things sound good, and they're good buzzwords, but we've got to deal in the facts and the reality of what is actually occurring. And again, the reason that we're here, and we're getting a lot of, I think, you know, comments that are coming from a certain negative tone. The reason that we're here is because we're trying to make the best decision for obviously, our grounds and our fairgrounds, but the community at large. And the reason we're bringing this back on the agenda, after we already voted on it, and we've already launched the RFP is simply because the leadership committee thought, Is there a better way to do this and get more access to the community. And that's the discussion that we're going to have here today, none of us have our mind made up, we're going to hear from the public. Because it's important to hear from them. I think what would be helpful is if the speakers could identify whether or not they are a private border, or somebody who trains at the facility versus just a general member of the public that wants to have public access, I think that'd be helpful, because we sometimes it's hard to tell the difference if the speakers were willing to do that. But I want to get going with public comment. I wanted to set the stage, I wanted you guys to kind

of understand the context of why this came back onto the agenda. And I can't stress enough, I really want to stay on the agenda item. And if people if speakers are unable to stay on the agenda item, I'm gonna have to stop and request that we get back on to the agenda item. So I'll read it one more time before we start public comment. The agenda item is again, a discussion regarding the development of public programming at the equestrian center and a vote on next steps. With that I will go through...

Doug Le Belle

Chair Kovacevich, if I could, I might ask that maybe Michelle could kind of review the public benefit portion relating to Centennial Farms, Heroes Hall. Imagine all of very good facts in the staff report. And for the benefit of the audience that might not have had the opportunity to review it. I think a very brief overview of those three uses where he would be helpful. And then obviously the public comments.

Michele Richards

Sure. And there are copies of that staff report at the back of the room if anyone's interested. So in comparing other assets that are currently operating at a loss at the OC fair and an event center, Centennial farm being one so Centennial farm has a budgeted net deficit in 2023 of \$701,449. So in that approved budget for 2023. The board, you know, knew upfront that there was going to be that deficit. Hundreds of 1000s of students, teachers, youth and families have visited Centennial farm so far this year and benefited from the free educational programming. Centennial farm is open free to the public Monday through Friday from one to four because we do free school tours in the morning and on weekends from 10am to 4pm. Likewise, While Heroes halls budget budgeted net deficit in 2023, is \$308,588 10s of 1000s of students, veterans and members of the public visit Heroes Hall, attend public events and tour museum event exhibits each year for free. Heroes Hall is open free to the public Wednesday through Sunday from 10am to 4pm. And in 2023, while the budgeted net deficit for imagine ology was \$70,166, nearly 15,000 students, their families and members of the general public Enjoy two days of free science, technology, engineering, art and math exhibits and activities.

Doug Le Belle

Thank you, Michelle. What is the current projected net deficit for the Equestrian Center?

Michele Richards

It was originally budgeted at 1.3 million, but we've been tracking it very carefully. Each month. We expect it to come in and add a net deficit of about 960,000. This year.

Doug Le Belle

And at full occupancy that net deficit would be approximately what...

Michele Richards

Yes, we presented a model to the board of full occupancy with OC fair staff. You're managing the facility, and it was a net deficit of 223,000. Looking at Melissa, yeah...

Doug Le Belle

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Michelle, since we went through kind of Centennial farm and Heroes Hall, just again to kind of lay the groundwork for the board discussion. Now, what is the difference in how the equestrian centers currently being operated?

Michele Richards

So the Equestrian Center, there's no doubt the Equestrian Center is on public property. This is state property. But there are six trainers force trainers who rent offices and rent stalls at the center. And then there are borders that also rent stalls. So the activity that takes place on a on an annual birthday daily basis. Is those trainers offering lessons to their, their clients.

Summer Angus

Yep.

Nick Kovacevich

And, and again, I think, for our discussion, right, it's not to say that that's not a benefit to the public, certainly right to have a space to board your horse. It's just we have we have a threshold that we have to to answer in terms of a law that says, is that enough public benefit to justify the use of funds. So any other comments from here? I'll take the public comments, we can hear from them and then we can start the discussion. Okay. All right. Thank you. We have lianca. Zola's.

Erin Simon

Hi, my name is... I'm okay. My name is Leon because always we the question is who's not in the Master Site Plan. If you watch the flyover thing, it looks like a parking lot. It is a parking lot. We have PTSD from 2018 when it was voted to become a parking while I wish to address the issue of maximum public benefit and share a personal story. The current metric that the district is using to measure maximum public benefit is the volume of people served. And that's great hundreds of 1000s of visitors to both Harold's Hall and Centennial Farms. That's an impressive statistic. And they provide an important and educational experience and fun outings for the community. I worked for a scholarship program for first generation college goers and we started out with a million dollars we discussed maximum benefit. And we could choose to give a million kids \$1. Or we could choose to give 100 Kids \$10,000 to build their futures through education. Both options provide benefit, but we chose depth of impact as a metric. The public is welcome at the Equestrian Center before staff put up signs saying that they're not. And it's a busy place for many of the experiences simply educational or fun outing to come and see an authentic working equestrian center to take a tour or a school field trip or watch a special event. But for a significant portion of those visitors. The experience is transformative. You've heard them public comment, and you're going to hear more about the parents of neurodivergent children testify the miraculous changes. They're the horses, the trainers, they're out there, they're doing the public benefit. They're providing free and reduced

programs to ensure us access and they're not making a lot of money talk to them. They're doing it for love, not purpose. My own experience I moved out here with my husband in New York from New York City, and within a week we abruptly split up. I found myself here alone. I work alone and literally did not know anyone except my real estate agent. I wasn't about to go back to New York or Canada in the middle of winter. It's way too cold. So I went online and I saw that there was a public equestrian center two miles from my house. And then I didn't even need to own a horse but I could go there as a rusty adult and take lessons again. Lesson horses have gotten me through teenage years, but I knew that place in my neighborhood was where I needed to go but For I headed down a dark spiral, so I reached out to one of the onsite trainers. And I wrote and I cried, and I wrote and I cried, and I wrote and I cried. And I found this amazing and welcoming community of horses, and people and support and friendship, the depth of the impact of this place has had on me and everyone else. That is maximum public benefit. If the district simply had a horse in the pan for me to come look at which has been suggested by board members in the past, it would not have been the same experience and definitely not the same benefit. Your vision is to be Orange County's Town Square, the safe place where the community gathers and finds value. You have that it's at the Equestrian Center. This is maximum public benefit. Don't ruin it, make it better.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Next speaker Reggie Mundekis.

Reggie Mundekis

Hi, good morning. I'm Reggie Mundekis and thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I do not conduct any business at the fairgrounds and I have no monetary interest down here. Although I do attend the annual OC fair and other events. The Equestrian Center and buildings are and facilities are public asset and work with public money. The users of the Equestrian Center include trainers who are profit seeking businesses, who have employees and pay taxes. Private borders are persons with private horses they own and use at the Equestrian Center. The Equestrian Center and users are separate and have different goals. Having borders and trainers is not required to continue to have the Equestrian Center as there are other models to have an equestrian center, which serves a wider portion of the public has horses and is an actual public assets. A lot of the horses that they questioned center privately owned by the borders and trainers. None of those privately owned horses can be accessed by the public without permission of and payment to owners. Using these privately held horses can cause 1000s, if not 10s of 1,000s of dollars a year, which puts this activity out of reach for many in Orange County. programming at Centennial farm Heroes Hall and imagine ology sets the standard for what is considered public programming regarding availability, body content, and the ability of the public to access the programming without asking for permission. There is

no programming at the Equestrian Center which meets this criteria. There cannot be public programming at the Equestrian Center while the facility is occupied by borders and trainers, changing the use of the Equestrian Center to public programming such as that offered at Centennial farm Uris Hall and imagine Knology is aligned with the fairgrounds mission to serve the broadest segment of the over 3 million people who live in Orange County. About 10% of Orange County residents live in poverty and about 30% Use Cal optima. The public health insurance for low income senior low income persons, seniors and the disabled. The board has expressed concerns about crisis at the OC fair being out of reach for many OC residents. crops grown at Centennial farm have donated to local food bank to feed local families needing food assistance. The current border and trainer model at the Equestrian Center does not serve these residents. Borders and trainers are not needed to have horses at the Equestrian Center. All you need are horses. Changing the Equestrian Center into a facility which only offers public programming to serve the residents owner of Orange County is the right and just decision. The Equestrian Center will continue to be a public asset and be better for the change in our actual public programming. Cancel the RFP and move forward but public programming at the Equestrian Center. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Reggie. Next up we have Diana Silveira

Diana Silveira

Hi, good morning. Thank you for your time. As you will hear from my I'm a public resident of Orange County I do not own a horse and I do not pay to board a horse. As you will hear from my daughter Mackenzie she has a love and passion for horses she's ridden since she was two and road restaurant from five to seven and excels in a jumper program at andI almost just love and passion was fostered through a lesson program as a public attendee. We are not a private horse owner, though have heard and seen a lot of commentary on how the fairgrounds only benefit private horse owners and borders were the result of an incredible lesson program of a woman owned small business. My daughter started riding with Lisa rathfelder Three years ago a two days a week and has grown her love and passion for riding and her care of horses and now is down at the barn. Whether riding or not six days a week. She's an honor roll student at Madera Ranch Elementary School has played other sports throughout childhood. And more recently has focused solely on riding, competing two years ago and equitation and a year ago became a jumper. She has aspirations to join the high school equestrian team and will be applying for the CDP Foundation Scholarship Program next fall, lesson programs and community outreach specifically for agricultural programs are critical to this community. Your banner in this room states that you provide accurate equitable community access to agriculture, closure of this critical facility blatantly disregard...

Nick Kovacevich Let me stop you there. We're not discussing closing the facility. So getting access. So no, we're discussing actually public programming or continuing with the RFP. So we're not going to go off topic and talk about something that's not being discussed here. Thank you.

Unknown Speaker It specifically says here, to direct GAAP returns recommend the property does the same thing. It says they can choose to either continue the current RFP process or direct staff to research recommend how the property can be used to serve the public purpose going forward. So it sounds to me like you're canceling the RFP and finding something else.

Nick Kovacevich Finding a public use for the facility. If we want to discuss that, let's discuss it let's stop throwing out parking lots and closures that have never been discussed. It's it's it's just false. Okay. And it's we're not going to have that in the public. Please continue. Sure.

Diana Silveira So as again, a public citizen who does not own our border horse, the access to these facilities that my daughter has now taken part of in three years has been critical to her growth. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich Thank you, Diane. Next we have Claire McKenna.

Claire McKenna Okay, hi. Thank you for holding the space today. My name is Claire McKenna. I do not own a horse and I do not board a horse at the fairgrounds. I've been riding at the OC Equestrian Center since the summer of 2020. You already... today I'm going to share my personal story about learning to ride and how it's a public good. First, I should say that I was adopted out of the foster care system and I have some significant learning disabilities. I cannot visualize which makes mental math difficult for me. It also interferes with my ability to read. So school has been a struggle most of my life. When the pandemic hit, I had a really hard time handling online school. Online Teaching methods did not work for me and the isolation was really hard, mentally and physically. I was introduced to riding through my friend and began riding that first summer of the pandemic, learning to ride and take care of horses was life saving for me. I mean this literally being outside exercising working with an animals finding a community of people who loved animals and horses as much as I do, changed my life and brought me back from a deep depression. The fact that the Equestrian Center is here is amazing. The physical and mental challenge of learning eventing, dressage Jumping cross country was exhilarating. learning the basics of horse management with Pony Club and with the help of the trainer's successfully passing the tests was a huge boost to my self confidence in school. Within a year I was volunteering at summer horse camp. And

soon after I began teaching beginning riding lessons. I also started volunteering with a nonprofit organization called Changing strides, which is a program helping young people like me from the foster care system get a chance to challenge themselves and bond therapeutically with horses. This last summer I ran the entire summer riding program, managing 20 students, 10 instructors, five to 10 volunteers and around 10 Horses every week. At the OC equestrian center I've not only found something that I'm really good at, I have found people who believe in me and support me to my very best self. I'm planning to go to Pierce College in Los Angeles and major in stable management so that I can come back and take over the question center and a couple of yours. But for that to happen the Equestrian Center which is a public good still needs to be in existence. So please, please do not take away this public resource. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. Next we have Isabella Cortez Dominguez.

Isabella Cortez  
Dominguez

Hi, everyone, I'm sorry, I didn't expect to be called so soon. So I'm a little nervous, I'm not gonna lie. I did want to say that, I guess for sharing our stories here. And I have been someone who had struggled with anxiety for most of my life. As well as depression. I know that everyone here, I'm not alone when I say that we had a very difficult past three years, including starting with the pandemic, I've been on medication for most of my life. And I understand where the idea of horseback riding being something for wealthy people, privileged people came to be I have the same thought I never had horseback riding lessons in my life, I thought it was something that I couldn't afford, and would never have access to. And then when I moved here to Orange County, I want to say two years ago, I was having a really tough time, I was again, just trying to find a way out of my anxiety, my depression at the time. And I was, I thought what was the one thing I haven't tried yet. And I tried to throw myself into hobbies, which was when I started doing spec writing at the Equestrian Center. And I am happy to say that it's only been a couple of months, I think I've been driving there for six months, you cannot imagine my surprise, when I first reached out and to the team at probably venting and found out that it was actually something achievable, something that was affordable, something that I could partake in, it became part of my, you know, day to day. I am happy to say that, you know, after a couple of months, this is actually the first time in my entire life. And I'm sorry, it's too much information, but that I'm out of any medication. Drawing myself into these hobbies and these activities has really helped me in ways that I never thought possible. And I'm only there once a week. I've been multiple times, multiple days, on the different days of the week, I've been there Mondays, Thursdays, Saturdays, Sundays, every time I go, it fills my heart to see how busy it is. How many people are around the sense of community that there is

there. I've never done any sports. And I felt very welcomed by a majority female community of horseback riding that welcomed me took care of me when I needed the most. And it's become my favorite weekend activity. Whenever I have family visiting from out of town. I take them there to pet the horses and hug the horses and give them treats when allowed. And it's become like one of our favorite activities to do. So it's, again, just a pleasure to be able to attend such a place and feel so welcome and to live so close to it and to have access to it. And I would really appreciate it that was not taken away in any formal sense. So I appreciate it. That's a sign.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you, Isabel. Next we have Hilary Redland. Okay, next we have Clay Harper.

Clay Harper      All right. Hi, my name is Clay Harper. I'm a Master Horseman. I've trained throughout the world for over 50 years. I train here also occasionally, I come in and I donate a large percentage of my time to clients all the time. And or I'll be with working with a horse and people will walk up just from the park or in the parking lot and they'll want to touch a horse or see a horse or ask questions. And I know that all of the trainers here that are here today donated their time and they do the same thing that I do. I say this because I understand that the private factor. The trainers that we that you have here I have here, very rarely with the full time trainers that are here are top professionals, they offer a safety factor that is worth its weight and in any type of monetary value that that could pose these trainers like I said give of their time. They donated their time. The fact that they are private trainers enhances the facility because Have their professionalism. The safety factor enhances the facility because of what they offer, their expertise, their years of knowledge. That is something that I feel is very necessary that we maintain that professionalism. There's a balance that can be created. I sit on the board of equestrian centers throughout the world. I've seen the same situation multiple times. Sometimes it has worked out sometimes it hasn't. But having seen this, this opportunity, I know that it can be figured out and a balance can be maintained. And that's all I ask. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you Clay. Next Cora Cordova.

Cora Cordova      My name is Cora Cordova, I need to express my support for the OC Equestrian Center and its impact on the community, both as a senior living enrichment director, and on a more personal level as a newly divorced woman in search of healing. I do not own a horse. I have been taking groups of seniors to the Equestrian Center since 2019 for their annual Halloween costume parade. This is a free event. Some of my residents used to own horses and hadn't seen one in years. Many of my residents got to touch one for the first time in their lives. Residents who

have suffered from depression because of health issues or loneliness or cognitive to deterioration, lit up with happiness and wonder in being able to watch and interact with the horses. One lady in particular was suffering from dementia and was losing much of her memory and was talking about the event months afterwards. This wasn't just an entertaining outing. For these residents. It was a moment that brought meaning to their lives at a time when so many of them had questioned the point of living. Every year when I bring my residents, whether they were content or in an emotionally dark place, returned with their spirits renewed and looking forward to more days ahead of them. I always look forward to sharing a special place of mine with my residents. As for my personal story, I was new to Orange County when my husband was 16 years and I split. It was an ugly marriage and an even uglier breakup. To say that I had healing to do as an understatement. Being new to the area. I didn't even have friends or family to lean on. I didn't attend church or have the opportunity to pursue hobbies outside of the home while married. So I really was starting from a lost and lonely place I decided to look for some community rec classes and I came across horse yoga. The classes were held at the OC fairgrounds and the questions in the equestrian center with the OC equestrian Folsom club. To do acrobats on a horse was a challenge. But I will never forget the freedom and power I felt while standing on a horse while moving. I never thought I would ever do anything like that in my life. It took strength and courage and I felt great knowing that I still had it in me. That success was a key experience in transitioning like chapters. I knew that if I could do it, I could get through my divorce.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Cora. Next we have Avery Aguirre. Sorry.

Courtney Aguirre

Im Avery's mom Courtney. And this is Avery and she just had a little something she wanted to say...Here

Avery Aguirre

Hi, my name is Avery. I'm nine years old. I have loved horses my whole life. I actually started riding because of the trot ponies at Irvine Park. Ever since I started I made a strong connection with horses. Three months ago I discovered Walton and Gigi she is the best horse and we all love it. I'll be so sad to lose Gigi and my Walton family.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you I'm gonna go ahead and call like five speakers in a row so you guys can get ready. First we have, we're gonna have Katie and Maddie Farrell followed by...We'll have Alice Haug, Mackenzie Silva, Rena, and Wiebke Olamendi, and Aspasia Zouras Stasia. Okay, so first Katie and then Aspasia.

Katie Farrell

Hi, thank you for allowing us this opportunity to participate in the meeting today. We appreciate it. My name is Katie Adams Farrell. I'm the

mom of Maddie Farrell. Maddie wrote a letter that she would like all of you to hear today. Hi, my name is Maddie. And I love horses. So does everybody else here. I've been riding for about four years, and I actually started riding with Sabo eventing. Just recently I started vaulting with OC vaulting, everybody I met here has been so welcoming, kind and just overall amazing. It would break our hearts if we weren't able to participate in programs at the OC Equestrian Center. I just like to add also that what Maddie didn't include in her letter is that she has often debilitating anxiety. Last year, she missed 32 days of school after spending time at summer camps. As a junior counselor this year so far, she's only missed two days of school. So being around horses is so helpful for Maddie. And I think, you know, this program, the programs the borders, the trainers serve so many little girls where they don't get access otherwise. And the lesson programs offered at OC Equestrian Center are very affordable compared to other barns in the area. It's also accessible, being in an urban center instead of out in suburbia. So it's really important to understand that while yes, these are private trainers, this is creating a much more accessible horseback riding environment for girls like Maddie, than any other barn in the area. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. Aspasia? Sorry.

Aspasia Zouras

Yes. Okay, thanks. Hi, my name is Aspasia, I do not own a horse or board a horse at the equestrian facility here, I take riding lessons. And I had ridden a bit when I was younger, and then took a huge break from riding and only started up about four years ago, taking lessons again, a lot of adults feel like they can't, you know, do a lot of things or their dreams have to end from something that they did when they were younger. But, you know, I'm proof that you need to have something like the equestrian center open so that everyone can follow their dreams, in terms of what's up here as public, you know, facility that helps the public and is an asset. I mean, it is an asset because it has been proven scientifically that being with animals and being out in nature offers mental and physical health benefits, you need to offer that you offer other things or Orange County offers other things like skateboarding parks, and like swimming, you also need to offer like horse riding and that is what this does. You know, it is a yes, it's a very unique situation. I think that's what we don't understand here we're talking about something you need, you cannot take the data or under or you know, information that you know, of other sports or other activities or other public areas. And exactly, you know, quantitative or qualify them for the Equestrian Center. Horses take a lot of work, a lot of money and a lot of work and a lot of time to manage and keep healthy. And that's where you have these trainers spending all of their time and energy making sure that that they're doing that so that those horses are available to the public for riding lessons. There's a lot of pro bono work being done here at the Equestrian

Center. Yes, some people do pay for lessons because we're happy to do so so that others can benefit from the horse that I ride every week gets ridden by many, many other people. So you were talking about how many people signed the waiver. I mean, the you can't just say that because lots of people are benefiting even walking in and petting the horses and giving them treats like my husband or my friends when I bake bring them by. So I think what has been Holding back more people having access to this is the fact that your signage is, is again opinion very negative and keeps people out your signage. You could take pictures of it, you could see it. It's holding people back saying Oh, this must be a private facility, and therefore I wouldn't have access. You are not helping us as horse lovers, or you're not helping yourself, because you are tasked your job is tasked with keeping this public land as an opportunity for all and horse riding.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank You, we have Alice or Alice or Elise.

Alice Haug

Hello, good morning. My name is Alice Hogue. I am a horse owner. But first and foremost, I'd like to tell you guys, I'm also a critical care registered nurse. I am married to a local homicide detective here in the area. But first and foremost, I'm an immigrant. I was born and raised in Germany, I came here as a teenager, the equestrian stables gave me and my family and opportunity to find a sense of community access and affordability. When we came here, my parents had nothing we lived out the back of a Uhaul truck. Nothing, absolutely nothing. I began volunteering at the local equestrian centers that gave me an opportunity to learn about community value, responsibility, team building growth. And most importantly, I learned how important it is. We as women, being able to go somewhere in our life, had it not been for those abilities that I had coming here as a teenager, I would have never gone to college. I am the face of PTSD. I am what spent three years during the pandemic in the hospital, caring for the death and the dying while the rest of the community worked from home. I am that that is something that I now provide to the community. I provide that to students to my fellow co workers, my co workers who are one Brink away from leaving their careers, or worse yet doing something unfathomable we provide therapy equine therapy. I know we talked about There's nothing specific about equine therapist at this facility. My stables my barn with my trainer, we moved 14 Horses last week to this center to provide access to the community. We moved because we knew that the discussion was being had a potential closure and we all made a decision. We said you know what, load them up. We're going to Costa Mesa, if they want community access, we're going to give them community access. But to put in a chain link fence around a Community Access Center that says user access only doesn't say hey, the public is welcomed. It doesn't. We need to do better as a community as your sign says a place where the community gathers

and finds value. Thank you very much.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Next we have McKenzie Silveira.

McKenzie Silveira

Hi, good morning board. My name is Mackenzie I'm 12 years old. And I just want to start off by saying thank you for letting me speak. Horseback riding has always held a special place in my heart is not just a hobby or sport for me but a passion that has shaped my life in countless ways. Today I stand before you to share how important Horseback riding is to me and the profound impact it has had on my personal growth, physical well being and emotional resilience. First and foremost, horseback riding has been a transformative force in my personal growth. It has taught me valuable life lessons such as patience, perseverance and responsibility. When I'm with horses, I'm reminded of the importance of building trust and developing a strong bond. These lessons have translated into my everyday life helping me navigate challenges with grace and determination. Moreover, horseback riding has greatly contributed to my physical well being riding a horse requires balance, coordination and lots of core strength is a full body workout that not only improves my physical fitness, but also enhances my posture and flexibility. The connection between a whole horse and rider is a symbiotic one where both parties rely on each other strength and agility. Through regular riding, I have witnessed a significant improvement in my overall fitness and stamina. Beyond the physical benefits, horseback riding has been a source of emotional resilience for me. Horses are incredibly intuitive creatures capable of sense Seeing and responding to human emotions. When I'm in the presence of horses I feel a sense of calm and tranquility. They have taught me the importance of being present in the moment and embracing the power of mindfulness. Reading allows me to escape the stresses of everyday life and find solace in the beautiful beauty of nature. In conclusion, horseback riding holds immense importance in my life, it has shaped me into the person I am today, instilling me in valuable life skills, and proving my physical well being and providing me with emotional resilience. The transformative power of horseback riding is not limited to the confines of a riding arena. It expands far beyond influencing every aspect of my life, and how I see things. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to share my passion for horseback riding with you today. And I'm so grateful that the Orange County Equestrian Center is being so welcoming to us. And I hope that we as a team can inspire more people around the community to start riding horses, and interacting with them, and help grow the equestrian program so that more people can feel the same way that I do about horses. And none of this would be possible without public facilities that are crucial to the community. Thank you for your time.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you next we have Wiebke Olamendi and followed by Aaron Simon and Kylie Simon.

Wiebke Olamendi      Hello. My name is Wiebke Olamendi, and I'm a mother of two loving daughters. I'm an equestrian. I'm a youth coach and volunteer with OC vaulting. And I am not a horse owner. However, I volunteer six days a week at the Equestrian Center. I am deeply concerned that we will lose and I'm pointing at the sign your safe place where the community gathers and finds well you. It has a long tradition and a vibrant history in Orange County. So you're asking is the equestrian center serving a public purpose? Absolutely. Most of the visitors and parents and riders are not private horse owners. We are the public. All of us here. The Equestrian Center offers us not only the chance to ride horses, but so much more. Since decades, our center is a place for everyone. To be with animals to spend time outdoors, to learn responsibility to meet all the new friends. Being around horses does not only encourage fitness, but it also provides stress relief builds confidence and courage. Kids learn teamwork, cooperation skills, hard work, how to pay attention and bond emotionally with horses. Very few people can afford to privately own horses. But the OC Equestrian Center makes them accessible and affordable. So yes, it's correct that the Equestrian Center is different than Centennial farm. We see that but it's simply not safe for anyone to just walk in and ride a horse needs those people in between. Anyone is welcome to the Center for free. There are many volunteers like me happy to help and introduce the horse world to anyone interested. It takes the presence of dedicated nonprofit organizations and trainers to make the OC horse experience accessible, safe and affordable to everyone that you know that the Equestrian Center is the home of one of the FBI community outreach organizations in the United States. OC vaulting provides multiple on site free exhibitions and demos, horsemanship classes, equine safety courses, barn tours, as well as classes for local scouts for age and other local underprivileged youth groups and we can make this bigger. This programming that we have is a vital component to including and serving all socially, racially economically underserved communities. The Equestrian Center is welcoming and inclusive place for all and an essential part of the horse heritage.

Nick Kovacevic      Thank you. Next we have Aaron Simon

Erin Simon      I'm gonna go quick because that one wants to talk to so good morning fellow board members. My name is Erin Simon I'm a person who considers themselves many things a wife, a mother, a professional and an equestrian. As part of the equestrian community gathered here today, most certainly a part of the public who benefits directly and indirectly

from the Orange County Equestrian Center. I benefit most recently as a community member whose horse crazy daughter took after herself required finding affordable and local lessons. A community member whose daughter finds friendship camaraderie, respond sensibility and community at the Equestrian Center, the equestrian center that we spend nine hours a week at more if my child can find extra chores, stand around and fight and play with her friends afterwards, or asked for more days that she gets to do horse chores. We don't own a horse currently, but we have and we know that the work, the time, the effort, and the money that goes into such a responsibility. In fact, I'm intimately aware of what it takes to run a barn and how it can be both positively and negatively managed. You see, I've grown up in equestrian, taking lessons at both public and private facilities. I showed my horses from the time I was nine years old until I was well into my 30s. I grew up knowing the OC Equestrian Center as a high school show facility, and later on as a safe haven during a flood. And again during a fire. California has a beautiful and quickly fading history with agriculture and especially the equestrian community. We're watching facilities fade and I beg or maybe more so demand that we remember to look around and decide what is it that we really find important, hundreds of children flowing through a place where urban meets suburban, where they can build memories, competence, friendship and trust away from computer screens and social media. And as adults and community pillars, you guys represent the fight to do just that. And then it seems that we're obscurely giving up when faced with the task of managing a space to do so. I would ask that you give full consideration to this public who's asking you to look at this facility as something that we benefit from allowing my child to arrive late to school today as a parent and as an equestrian. As a member of your community wondering how this property can generate the amount that it does, while daily having hundreds of people who represent the public come through its gates, benefiting greatly physically, mentally and emotionally from animals they don't own. Well, I got ahead of myself. I was one of the parents who walked through the gates, the pesky public who drove in and asked where to sign up for the vaulting lessons. Since then, we've been here 10 short months, and I've directed no less than 20 others looking for different barns where they could potentially take lessons that please consider finding a real qualified equestrian management to bring the OC equestrian facility back from potential destruction by hearing this part of your community speak to its very public benefit.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Kylie Simon, followed by Angela Hone, and Debbie grant.

Kylie Simon

Dear board members, my name is Kylie Simon. I am part of the public I do listen to with OC Balton. And I can tell you that the Equestrian Center has helped me so much. I don't currently own a horse. So the Equestrian

Center has helped. So I can connect with horses without having to buy with some other things that the Equestrian Center has helped me with is make friends and learn so much about horses. So I hope you decide to keep this equestrian center alive.

Nick Kovacevich

Angela Howe?

Angela Howe

Sorry, that was great. I'll wait for that. Okay, it's going. Alright. Hi, everybody. I'm Angela Howe, and I'm a member of the public. I do currently board publicly at the facility. And I allow children in the community to come in anytime they come in, they come up and I asked if they want to give my horse a treat. So they all can interact, define who they run into. So first, I'm just going to quickly share my personal story. I'm a former foster care youth. I'm currently a master's student at University of California, Irvine, I just graduated in spring. So yay, I started my life out in a car. I lived in a car with my mother, I'm not from a high income background. And I somehow made a way and found a way to make this part of my life because as a child, this was really important to me. And it obviously still is because I'm still around. There are kids that I helped when they were eight years old, who are now calling me and contacting me about college applications. And these are bonds that we never would have formed to have these types of places not existed. And I know that I found the same when I had the same questions about college applications. I had this community that is built here to go to. Of course, there's a lot of research about why horses are good for people of all backgrounds, physical, mental, the skill building and then just the general community benefits of youth having a place to go. Right now there aren't any places for our teenagers and our kids to just be for free. There's not a lot of them. This place does allow people to come in they can come in and they can be around for horses. The fact that they have to discuss before touching horses is a smart choice. If you think about it. I Dog Park, if you walk up and touch a random strangers dog without asking, it could bite you, right. So it's just a matter of safety, you want to be careful about these things. But this place will continue to serve the public in the ways that it does. So just to wrap up, I think that as a former, you know, low income individual and still am struggling my way through college, all kids deserve to grow up around horses, because in this room, I see some that I've seen around the barn. And it's wonderful to see you all here today. And the kids that are currently anxiously awaiting the decision here today, and they are in their final exams today. They couldn't be here, but they wanted to be. And they will be getting this news, following their exams from me and their parents. Other than that, these are our future community leaders. These are people these are kids that are going to be leaders in the future, we want to keep this resource for them and the way that it is currently exist in last thing, current management chose to run this at a deficit and not properly track

who came in and out. That is not our fault. The fact that individuals did not go in and sign the waiver, because the signage isn't great. That's not something that was our issue. And that all. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Bob Yates. Sorry, Debbie Grani, and then Bob Yates, and Brian Sabo. First we have Debbie Grani.

Debbie Grani

Hi, I am Debbie Grani. My daughter is an adult and she's been riding since she's been five. The reason she rode in Huntington Beach. But I saw such a warm that she commented, I want to go to the Orange County Fairgrounds. And we moved her over here because of the camaraderie, the closeness, I got familiar with the office, because I own companies, and they were running the prior lease holder was running with a profit. That's why we have this. So it's like anyone, if you're going to operate a business, you have to know about how to operate a business. I'm in healthcare. The people in the questions that are couldn't come in and operate my cute hospital or a skilled nursing facility. So they're learning and they're doing really well. But the cost factor is you're making when you make mistakes, then your profit goes down. So all I'm saying is please this, this, this is a public facility that people need to keep open. It's providing strength and unity to the general public.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Bob Yeates.

Bob Yates

Well, I'm Bob Yates and I have frequently been a photographer here at events at the Equestrian Center. First time I came here many, many years ago, it was a pony club event. This is neighborhood kids, kids from around the community coming to get acquainted with horses. And I look through the lens of my camera and what do I see, I see wonderment in the eyes of these children. I see sort of a magnetic attraction going on. And I'm impressed with the closest the children have to horses and the meaning that they have in their lives. This huge, huge animal. It has transformed these children into wonderful beings and wonderful sentences later, like I've come many times since that. I've taken pictures of kids from orphanages, disabled children, home, foster homes, children, and special needs children. They all have this same magical attachment to a horse. I don't see it in any of the other sporting events I shoot pictures of. It's different here. And it's a very magical thing. And it is going on right here at our pony club in our community riding Center at the Equestrian Center. The same thing goes with the adults that right here. Many of them started as children with this same wonderment that existed when they were young. Now they're older and they still have it and they're still participating. And all this is done in a facility here that's quite unique. It's very unusual formula that private businesses running

here in a public facility and providing a fantastic community service. This is a jewel of our community, this writing academies and Senator that's going on here. And I plead with you not to make major modifications to it, or shut it down, or change the nature of it. It's doing wonderful things right now. It's capable of making a profit as it has done for many years. And it is our job all of us to come together and to maintain the wonderful benefits that are being derived from this Equestrian Center. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you, Brian Sabo followed by Lisa Sabo, and Melissa Cremo and then we'll take a break.

Brian Sabo      Hello, my name is Brian Sabo. Thank you for having this meeting. Little bit about me. I'm a lifelong equestrian. 2008 silver medalist at the Olympics is a bit of a because we coached also coach for the Mexican Olympic team at both the Pan American Games and the Central American Games. I'm married to Lisa Sabo who runs Sabo eventing. I just wanted to talk briefly about my experience. I was chief liaison officer for the 1984 Olympics between the International Olympic Committee and Los Angeles, Los Angeles Olympic Committee. And as you may know, the Olympics classically runs at a huge loss except for 1984. Why? Because we made great relationships between the public and the private sector. And through that we ran one of the first non last Olympic Games truly amazing and I will bet you that this happens again in the Olympics after Paris, which will be back in Los Angeles because we do have the ability to work together and we as a questions want to work with you guys and make the question Senator profitable. On that note, I just wanted to read a letter here quickly from one of the people who's done a tremendous job in his career. His name is Reed el bano. Read wrote a letter he couldn't be here today. But read is a an American veteran and disabled veteran. He was injured in Afghanistan while in the army was hit by an IED and lost his leg and his letter goes as follows. I am Captain retired Reed Albano, and I'm writing this letter in support of the preservation of the OC fairgrounds questions. I'm a combat disabled veteran, US Army and amputee. I first began taking lessons at the Equestrian Center in early 2002. The opportunity to work with horses at the center has been vital to both my mental and emotional health, as well as my physical recovery from wounds sustained during combat in Afghanistan. The site itself is unique and being an equestrian center located in an urban area, and provides numerous benefits not only to disabled veterans such as myself, but individuals of all ages, genders races, socio economic statuses, who would otherwise not have the opportunity to interact with horses or each other. The center provides a community for diverse for a diverse group of people drawn together by shared love of horses. The availability of horses and trainers at the center also provided me with the ability to train for the Mongol Derby, the

longest horse race in the world, which I completed in August of 2023. I am the only rider with a severe disability to enter into or complete this grueling 1000 Kilometer horse race across a Mongolian step. The awareness I was able to bring to the issues around both disabled veterans in pair athletes more broadly would not have been possible without the ability to train with experienced coaches and suitable lesson horses at the OC fairgrounds. Since completing the race have used my experience training to and competing to speak to groups of youth riders at the center interact with Pony Club members and perform similar outreach. Likewise, my experience in the race and the publicity from the competition inspired another amputee rider to apply and complete the...

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Brian. Sorry. We have Lisa Sabo. We're gonna do Lisa Sabo and then we're gonna have actually representative of OC supervisor, Foley's office and then we're going to take then we're going to take a break so two more speakers and then a break. Lisa Sabo.

Lisa Sabo

Hi, I'm pleased to say well, so and I just get tears in my eyes as I think about that and read and everything that's happening. And this is fine. Once it's gone, it's gone forever. And the people that were around in the December surprise of 2009 will know that they tried to auction this property, and it was the equestrians. 200 of us were out in the parking lot with our horses rallying it wasn't the fairgoers it wasn't the events people you remember. Why are you here? You're here, right who was here for that? There's a handful of people in this room but we're here for the December surprise and here we are again with a number another December surprise. Michelle, you were around. Right they turned to auction this property And the people that stood up for this property were via questions. We traveled to Sacramento, we had a two and a half year battle, eventually suing the state winning the lawsuit enable Jerry Brown to be able to take the property out of the budget bill. And then I'm a trainer here and I am a horse owner. I own a ton of horses. People ask me how many horses I say I can't even count. Because I stay up at night trying to balance my books, because I love what I do. It's a passion. You can't just when I saw this, I'm just way off my notes. But when I saw this on the agenda today, or last week, before the details came out, when I first saw this, I went into the trees in the office and said, Can I apply for a job? Because I thought maybe you could hire me to do what I do so I can make more money. Right? You know, but I own the horses because I love it. I love people that come in and ride my horses. I know half the people here, Angela, Matthew, Claire, our game and think are my instructors that we've trained. I wouldn't say my instructors, we we work as a group as a team. They're Pony Club trained. They read their manuals, they they, you know, half of them can't afford it. They work and that's how they pay for it. And yes, we have to charge some people. And that's the other day the daily but there was a man actually standing in the middle on kind of

in the parking there. Like right in the middle of the arena's. He had a big camera, and I just said to him, that your phone the daily pilot, and he said yes. And he goes, I've been doing this for 15 years. Every day I take pictures. He goes, there is something magical about this place. I have never He just went on about what it how magical it is. And for us there is no place to go. You understand that? There is no there. There is no place for me to take all my horses. I am stuck. It's posted. And up there. Right there. Last sentence private boarding and Training Center. Private you look on your website for the equestrian center right now everywhere. It's private this private that last year prior to you operating it. It was not private. It was public signage out front public, come on in. Okay.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you Lisa. Before the break. Will be OC supervisor Katrina Foley. Oh, you're here. Okay.

Katrina Foley      Yes,it's me in the flesh. Hi, good morning. I'm Katrina fully County Supervisor representing the Fifth District, which includes Costa Mesa and the OC fair and Event Center. As many of you know, I'm also the former mayor and city council member for the city of Costa Mesa, and was part of that whole coalition in 2009, to help save the fairgrounds. And so I, I too, am concerned about the direction that this is going. I do feel concerned about conversations about eliminating the fairgrounds. And I'll briefly that...

Nick Kovacevich      Sorry, that's not on the agenda, I'm sorry, the equestrian Yeah, we're that's not on the agenda. And that's not that's not that I could finish sorry, the topic needs to be on topic, which is about public programming, not elimination...

Katrina Foley      I was getting to that.

Nick Kovacevich      Okay.

Katrina Foley      Thanks. So, when my kids were little, they did the ranch program. They came over here for other different programs. They participated and learned about the horses that are here. When I was a little girl, I was in a very poor rural area, and I even had a horse. And that horse taught me how to be independent, disciplined, empathy, care for nature, and animals. And these are all the same qualities that I think are learned here at the Equestrian Center. My office is here and ready to partner to develop programs after school programs, riding programs, equine therapy programs, we could partner with the health care agency with our Mental Health Service Act funds, we could provide equine therapy programs like I'm doing in South County at the Shay center, we could do programs that relate to food distribution and holiday gifts like I'm doing

at the CHE Center in South County, we could partner to provide after school enrichment programs, which I'm doing with other communities and equestrian facilities in South County. So we really want to protect our equestrian community. Our equestrians are part of Orange County's history. And as we see in South County, we're bringing the Olympics, the equestrian Olympics to Orange County in 2028. We're working on that right now. Having the OC fair and Events Center and the equestrian community right here as a partner in that effort would be fabulous. So there's so many ways that my office can help to support the effort that the county of Orange can help to support the effort. I would encourage you to include us in any kind of working groups because I'm here to help and to serve. And you know, I'm a lifelong fan of the fairgrounds. I love everything that happens here. I live right around the corner, I could walk here. And so I really hope that you will strongly consider having a robust equestrian community here at the fairgrounds and nothing more. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you. At this point, we're gonna take a break, and we'll be back in five minutes or so.

Nick Kovacevich      Hi, everyone, we're back and going to get started. We do have, some people are asking about time, we don't know the time, but we do have a very long list of public comments. And as you guys see everyone gets three minutes. So, again, it's gonna be a little while. First up, we have Melissa Kremel. And then we'll have Sheila Ferguson and Suzanne Leskobar, Melissa.

Melissa Kremel      Hi, everyone. My name is Melissa Kremal. I'm a longtime equestrian we started when I was about four or five. I've been a part of this equestrian community and part of the fairgrounds for over 10 years or probably more. I actually specifically moved to Costa Mesa across the street from the fairgrounds in order to be closer to the Equestrian Center and to be part of this community. This facility provides a very unique experience and boarding facility for people in urban areas. It's been great for the kids in this community as well as outside. I've brought friends in from out of state who participated in these programs. I've worked with Lisa and Brian Saibot. And they provide a lot of services for you know, in UNMISS unfortunate kids, and even adults too, and I'm one of them. I suffered a severe anoxic brain injury several years ago. And I wasn't able to, I had to learn how to walk, talk, everything get my balance back. And being with horses was the one thing that brought it back it I was able to be physical again, I was able to ride again. And it took me out of a really deep depression because suffering a brain injury is not just one thing, it affects you deeply, personally, emotionally. And you battle it every

second being with horses, I know for me is calming, and gives me a sense of purpose. And I know from numerous students and numerous adults that they to feel the same way these programs provide exercise, entertainment freedom for these kids and these women. I've met women that were coming from abuse situations on how situations even to children. And we're all still connected really closely are trained the trainer's here, students, we're all connected, we're all close. And it's a brave community. And it's welcoming and having these horses for the community as well. It gives them a sense that the city isn't closing in on them that we're not having all these buildings and having all this traffic and we get one piece. We get one peace of mind in this busy city to have these horses and just check out and you know not focus on all the issues going on in the world right now. And and same with these kids. They don't have to focus on what's going on at home. It's going on at school. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. We have Sheila Ferguson.

Sheila Ferguson

Thank you for letting me speak. I earned my first pony at nine years old. Couple years later, my family owned a rent string and boarding facility we owned up to 65 Rent horses. My experience with the public in horses is unbelievable. The public wants interaction. I used to run the pony ride at Irvine park my best day was 400 rides a day. I think that we could incorporate bringing we can rename it since it's politically uncool to say pony ride the pony experience and bring the public in for their first experience as a as a positive experience. And it also promotes our trainers and all the other programs my children also did for a chair and raise their hogs here. I haven't seen a hog since we got kicked out because of one bad for each leader that didn't teach our children that being honest was good. It said that if you're bad we all lose. We don't want to lose this facility. We want to use it for future generations to raise hogs and the goat program. Those kids are there homeschoolers, there's more homeschoolers is now they don't can't keep goats and hogs in their backyard, we can have one or three stalls or that area where they park the trailers and do some forage programs. I think that the Hero's Hall isn't, is an introduction to these programs. But the real programs are the trainers and four h leaders and the in the public business owners, and we get to do it here we'd like to have the privilege of continuing to use the facility to bring the public in and share our passion. So thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Suzanne, Lezcobar and then we're gonna have Tricia Rhaegar. Ann Mase...Senior Oh, sure. What oh, what's your name, Joy Gould.

Joy Gould

...I never admitted. My name is Joy Gould. And I'm here I am the manager of the Whittier Narrows Equestrian Center, which is owned by Los Angeles County. And I was very interested in the discussion that you

are going to have today because you have an RFP that's out here and have a discussion. Do you have a manager? I think you have an art committee. And what I want to say is that you can add an addendum. Now this discussion for the next manager, we already are surfing, I don't think mine should have listening to everyone here. I don't think you're getting the information. I don't think you have the data. So that you know what was served at the center now. I was asked in May 10 by Los Angeles County, if I would assist them with their western incentives. I've managed three of them. What are your narrows is a 25 acre facility with 196 horses. And we've had this discussion about that. And I'd like you I think someone from this group sent to you a presentation, a video of this police supervisor from that district. And he told us at least talked about fit. And there are a number of ways to look at it. But basically LA County how they saw it was in the narrowest sense, which was having a boarding facility for 20 years was not what they felt was a public benefit. And I I think that's small sided. The larger picture for them was having events, having shows, having riding lessons, trail rides, all of those, all of those things. And so 20 years that facility didn't have it, the county repurposed that entire facility to pour it down. They wanted me to be there because they thought maybe I could handle all the horses because none of the horses left during all that construction for two years. It was quite an undertaking at but no one was going to put in any other kinds of services until after that construction. So today, we have riding lessons in English, Western massage, Western massage, English, massage, with a lot those things can happen. You have an opportunity in Orange County, I went to your, your facility. And it's actually it's very inviting. It's small, it's compact, and it's looking in good shape. So your trainers on that facility and your releases. They're one of your biggest resources.

Nick Kovacevich

Okay, thank you. Thank you. So just to ensure Suzanne Ezcobar is gone. And we have Anne Mase.

Ann Mase

I've been riding horses since I was a preteen. Oh, that's okay. I've been riding horses since I was a preteen. And I can still speak Okay. Okay. I'm looking at this more as a business up what's happening out there and I know that the cost centers had some problems and making money. We have a lot of vacancies right now. Unfortunately, I think if we don't keep the center open, we're going to see businesses that are trainers are going to be losing their businesses. We're going to be seen The jobs that are gonna be lost with the people that are working there, we're going to be destroying for the young kids their learning ability and for the seniors to be out there. And even middle aged people, okay out riding with people and friends out there. As a business environment, we have everything it set up out there. We have the barns, we have the arenas, we have the bathrooms, we have the office, we have the feeding storage for the animals. And we've even had money spent for a new tractor, new water

truck, we redid the office and we did refitting for all the arenas. So there's nothing that we really need to add financially out there, except we need to get a better management and get more horses and more trainers on that property. And definitely, there's a lot of vacancies right now. I think the reason why we do have a lot of vacancies is because there's been a real negative state and straightens out about closing it has gone to you know, all the things that are going to happen and it's not going to go forward. And I think what's happened is that people are afraid to bring the horses to relocate. And there's they're afraid to relocate because of the all the stalls you have, if it does close, for some reason, where they gotta go, there's really no way really a lot of places to go. I mean, we're in Southern California. So I mean, you know, this is not particularly horse country anymore, you know, so I'm just saying that, you know, so to stop the damage, we really need a better management managing the area for us and for our horses, so that we can have the personal experiences with the horses, with the trainers, businesses jobs, and for the horses lives too. So let's keep it open. Let's keep growing and let's get under better management. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, we have Holly Jarvis, followed by Claudia Bergland and Stacy Kendall.

Holly Jarvis

Board, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am a longtime local resident, I do not have a horse here. I do not ride here, but I feel compelled to speak on this matter. There are many aspects of the equestrian center that might not bring a monetary gain, but it still serves the public in many ways. Here are some of the points I'd like you to consider. fairgrounds serves as an important emergency evacuation center for horses and other animals in the event of a wildlife and it was recently utilized as such in October and December of 2020, along with other times, this is a very important need that cannot possibly be quantified nor met by any other facility. The Equestrian Center has more uses than just the public stabling of horses. However, having available public stables is an important need in our county, as land is developed and equestrian centers are forced to close down. Many of our youth ride take lessons and partake in animal care. And as many people have given personal stories, it's a very important activity, and one that gives children a sense of responsibility, confidence along with needed exercise. The question of whether subsidizing the Equestrian Center is an improper gift of public funds, not an accurate interpretation. Every person who has a horse stalled at the center is paying full market rate for their boarding. There is no subsidizing of any individual. Horses are perceived as for the rich, but the reality is they're mostly enjoyed by adults and children working very hard to have an opportunity to be near horses. Please don't underestimate the benefit this provides. In item eight A, you mentioned having gallery carts as I don't know anything about it, but you it was on

the agenda today. And it talked about having gallery cards for local restaurants, and mentioned that was going to be a cost of 600,000. So you'd be bringing private businesses in that you are paying to have here. So I'm wondering, public cost benefit on that. At any rate, please keep in mind, this is an important part of the Orange County community and we just would like you to continue its operation. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Claudia.

Claudia Berglund

I'm short. I am also Claudia Berglund. I'm 68 years old. I do not own a horse at once in my life I've owned as many as five or six. But as a semi retired person. I can no longer afford to own a horse. Orange County Fairgrounds Equestrian Center has provided me with the opportunity to continue riding and be part of the equestrian community. That is part of my life since I was six years old. And I'm not sure where I would mentally if that were not the case. And this is a little bit in the hot button zone. But riding is a sport, like Golf is a sport. And tennis is a sport, no sports, comm three, they take place at facilities that are either publicly or privately. And the coaches in all sports make money. I have personally kept books for several horse trainers, none of them make much money, they are not doing it to make money. Their ability to conduct business at this facility provides opportunities for all of us, and subsistence and at best for them. It's not a gift to them, it's an opportunity to do what they love and need. And particularly thought is it's a girl dominated sport. It's a women dominated sport. And the community has an obligation to consider riding that opportunity as much as the new opportunity for boys to play Little League, which certainly happens on public property. And men play golf. And, and and, and you know, air is a incredibly safe empowering place for girls and women. And we need to keep that in mind. For all of us, thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you we have Stacey Kendall, followed by Mary Capallen, and Chrissy Kruse.

Stacy Kendall

Thank you fair board members for your time to introduce myself. My name is Stacy Kendall and I'm going to be celebrating quite a few milestones within this next year personally, as an equestrian 50 years as a horse show exhibitor 45 years as a professional horse trainer 40 years as a professional horseback riding instructor. And 15 years ago, I founded a network of volunteers called the Southern California equine emergency evacuation network. And while I'm not currently in Orange County resident, I live in San Bernardino County, I do teach horseback riding lessons at two facilities in Orange County. I do not personally benefit financially from this equestrian center. But I want to stress the fact that it is a very important facility to keep for the community because it does provide huge public benefit. Additionally, I'm the president and CEO of a

nonprofit organization which uses horses and equestrian therapy to help military members both retired and active duty to help first responders suffering from PTSD and to help disadvantaged children using horses and Equestrian Therapy. We're always looking for additional locations to help take our populations to come visit courses and have other outreach in the community is throughout Southern California. And this Equestrian Center, I believe is one of the facilities that we're looking at currently. Last I want to express how important this facility is for our network of volunteers and the community at large for evacuations during emergency incidents. There are many public benefit uses of this historic facility and more can be developed to conclude it really is of vital importance to continue the RFP process to find an experienced operator to have a self sustaining facility. Thank you very much.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Mary's capillary.

Mary Capalleni

Yeah. Good morning or good afternoon. My name is Mary Capalleni. And I am the Executive Director of save our youth right here in Costa Mesa. We are a nonprofit organization that has been here for 30 years. We serve the underserved children. Most of them would love to be here but they're in class right now at Coastal with high school, a stanzi high school, Newport Harbor High School, early college, T Winkle Middle School, and NC Middle School. All of our students live within a mile or two of this facility. And the reason I'm here today is because of this public benefit aspect, and as a public or nonprofit that serves a purpose. Like all of our students receive everything for free, we provide and try to level the playing field for our mainly 99% Latino youth that do not have the access often to be driven to facilities to be driven to sports activities and things and we want to make sure that we have an opportunity to collaborate with the community. I want to thank a Fair Board for providing us last few years free tickets for our students to come to the Orange County Fair. We've had great collaborations with you. And we've had great collaborations with net many nonprofits, including two of the facilities right here at the fairgrounds in the Equestrian Center have opened the doors beautifully to our youth. When I hear all of this young students talk about how the horses mean to them and how it's changed their lives. I saw that in the eyes of many of our girls in our soy girl program. We brought two or three four carloads of girls over here. Thanks to you, Braun, who set it all up. We were able to have students with both all about horses and OC equestrian vaulting, to allow the students to come on to the facility and to get on a horse for the first time to pet horses for the first time. And one of the things that I saw was, first of all, the safety issue, I value the idea that we have professionals and trainers that are making sure that the students are safe. We all signed those waivers. I'm sure that maybe a lot of people that are coming to

visit, maybe haven't. But when we were here that afternoon, it was a busy busy place. And I was nervous ... What do you mean are going to stand on top of that horse and to see those girls stand up on top of the back of that horse and participate. But these are children that actually just were really also like many others having some mental health issues and it gave them confidence. We have worked with Orange County Supervisor cucina Foley through the Orange County health initiatives through arts programs through dance programs, I think we could work with them also through more horse programs for our students. I think there's a lot of opportunity. I've worked with Michelle's come and spoken at soy before. We really appreciate all the collaboration that we have with the board, and we get to encourage you to provide more opportunities to collaborate for the youth in our community at the Equestrian Center. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Chrissy Kruse and followed by an Frietes and Carolyn Beaver.

Chrissy Kruse

Good morning, my name is Chrissy Cruz. I came to horses in the center at a later stage in life. So from equine feeding and health care to lessons to daily trust training sessions with a young horse. My trainer, Mackey, Hamlin, and the others throughout our barn have been invaluable in sharing their knowledge and instruction on a daily basis with me. I've learned more in three short months than I could possibly even imagined. Eventually, my goal is to work with individuals, some women that I mentor, one on one who have suffered traumatic circumstances in war zones around the world. As you've heard today, horses heal. Having a safe, accessible public space available 365 days a year. It's key to having to make it impossible for me but for so many people to learn and grow daily within a community of supportive force minded people, the people you've seen before you they're committed to being open and available to anyone on the public desiring force to human contact, help us help others. And in order to do that we all need to work together. But let me emphasize at the stables at the Equestrian Center. All are welcome, regardless of age, sex, race, creed, religious convictions, or political affiliation. This is a safe space of freedom, learning, and above all else, love of all things equine. How many spaces have you left recently, that you can truly say, Come on come on mindset exists. That the center is open to the public women of all ages make up 99% of the participants. I can think of no better way to impact Orange County's community by supporting an educational space, helping to guide empower, and support men, women and children of all weight ages, but in particular women. Learning to successfully manage an equine relationship can help import critical life skills, hard work, dedication, responsibility and mental toughness. You know those words bring to mind another organization's mission statement. The Girl Scouts of America their mission statement reads Girl Scouts, Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and

character who make the world a better place. Mr. Church, I understand that you are a member at large at the Orange County Girl Scouts Board of Directors so you completely understand the value investing in our women and girls. I'm asking you, and all the board members to consider this Equestrian Center. It's a center for change positively impacting the lives of Orange County. The public in particular are women and girls. Please don't take that away, look favorably upon this program and allow the RFP process continue in a fair and efficient manner. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Anna Freitas.

Anna Freitas

Hi, my name is Anna and I'm a member of the public Equestrian Center is a great place to connect with horses. Horses are my favorite animal and have been part of my life since I was four. Now I'm nine and I'm very good at riding horses because I go to the stables on a single week. I love the horses there and I have a great instructor Angela, she picks great horses for me to ride every time. I like our two waffles, serene Frenchie, and they're all great horses. cantering is my favorite thing to do while riding. It's a slow gallop and even then it feels like flying. The Equestrian Center is good for the community. And I hope I get to go there for a long time. A long story made sure I love the question. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. Carolyn Beaver. And then followed by Cameron coming Cummings and Aileen Anderson.

Carolyn Beaver

Oh, my goodness, how do I follow her.

Michele Richards

Carolyn, could you just hold one second? Just for the record. Director Pham has had to log off of the meeting. Sorry.

Carolyn Beaver

I'm Carolyn beaver. Why? That's the question that the public and the board should be asking about this agenda item, the details of which were posted late just last Friday. A year ago, management chose with board approval to hire Lopes works knowingly causing a loss of approximately \$100,000 A month this year. Despite our advice not to. Why was that acceptable a year ago get now once again, we're questioning the public benefit of the Equestrian Center. Why did management choose to refer to the facility as a private boarding facility on its website and its sons. It is a public facility and boarding is a public amenity which is fully paid for by the borders at market rates when costs are properly managed as they should be. The costs were not funded by the fairgrounds when the Equestrian Center was properly managed for two decades. They were only funded this year due to the choices of management and the board. Why has fairgrounds management chosen to restrict public access by requiring visitors to check in and displaying signs which are unwelcoming to people driving or walking by although horses are privately owned by the public, we welcome other public members to

come and see the horses and learn about horses. The private owners are doing public good, both private borders and the trainers that provide so much benefit as you've heard today from so many people. The signs on the gate were much more welcoming before fairgrounds management took over and visitors could easily schedule docent tours. The board should be asking management why there have not been events planned by fairgrounds staff over this past year since they've been responsible for the Equestrian Center. trainers have suggested various events of public interest, yet staff have not pursued holding any events that we've seen. Furthermore, the public has not been made aware of the events to welcome them to the Equestrian Center for tours and events that we planned as members of the public to showcase our horses and welcome others to come and watch. Why did the fairgrounds management not want the events to be successful in providing public benefit? Why do our contracts only go to April 14? Where would we be able to move our horses to for us? It's a way of life here at the Equestrian Center. You've heard Claire and Cora and so many others speak about the benefits that people receive by having horses here. It's a symbiotic relationship between the borders, trainers and public benefit. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you, Camren Cummings.

Camren Cummings      Hello, I am Camren Cummings. Happy to be here today. I have been riding at the fairgrounds for seven years five of them using the program offered by the say Bose, and years ago I rescued and off the track thoroughbred helps to train for the last two years. Today I would like to tell you a story of one of the students that I trained working with Lisa saiba. During my two years as an instructor, I have taught a variety of students with a range of comfort and experience levels. My nanny and Saturday lesson is an example of how this experiences impacted me. When I began working with the students six months ago, he was extremely hesitant. It was a challenge to get into him to touch his horse to go at a pace faster than a walk, dismount from his horse without the assistance of a mounting block, or to even give towards a treat. After a couple of weeks that old adage you can't even lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink was really hitting home. Everything changed when I finally broached a topic that he was truly passionate about. Okay, now, I don't know the first thing about Pokemon but nonetheless, this became My breakthrough strategy for teaching him, I began connecting all of the skills he needed to learn or actions he needed to move through Pokemon. A week or two later we found a breakthrough strategy after his or spooked as big as like a mini panic attack stemming from the biological programming of horses is Ray and mysterious ways on observable to the human eye lampposts become for us personally. rustling trees reveal tigers, experienced writers take these perceived transformations in stride, however, we can end up anywhere from

unsettled to on the ground. After one such spook, I found that this student responded well to having a chance to voice his concerns. This morphed into the modeling and action that he could visualize before attempting it made him more willing to tackle as yours and try new things, and eventually allowed him to go faster than a walk and dismount on his own. After several months of teaching the student he fed a horse a treat for the first time. That sounds small, but it was huge for him. And I'll never forget the look on his mother's face. It was then that I learned from his parents that he had a sensory processing condition, and that his physician had recommended horseback riding as a means to improve it. They were thrilled, and I was grateful to have been a part of this progress. And all these experiences taught me to be more respectful of the strengths and challenges that different students bring with them. And to have more empathy for the people around me. This is something that fairgrounds brings a lot to different people on the opportunity for different students to be able to access horses and work through different mental or physiological issues with it. The access of horses is astounding and amazing. It taught me that even though you can't make a horse drink water, you can change the way they look at it. And through this, the fairgrounds has helped shape the lives of many, many people around the community. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Aileen Anderson.

Aileen Anderson

Good morning. Thanks for the opportunity to be here. Today I am going to present the results of a petition that the taskforce on the clusterings here put together before I do that I just want to take a minute to introduce myself. I'm Eileen Anderson, I work at University of California, Irvine. As such in the UC system, I run a multimillion dollar program for the third largest employer in the state, I am subjecting everything that I do to all of the same regulations that you deal with. I'm very familiar with them add on to that federal regulations that we have to grapple with as well. Public Access and community service is a huge part of what we have to manage. And do I respect that. In our in our petition that we put together we asked for four basic elements to formally recognize that the Equestrian Center is a resource that is of benefit to the public, to invest in the maintenance and improvements of that center that had been deferred for well over the last decade, including putting in items that will make it easier to bring in managers and boarders covered arenas resources to be able to make this work better to work in partnership with the community and potential operators to preserve the Equestrian Center and expand public access programming. And last of all to actively pursue a reputable and responsible bidder in 36 hours we have over 3800 signatures from this community. If that's not respect for the public value of this resource, I don't know what it is. How do we get to 3800 signatures? Well, we get there in a number of ways. The first is about impact. You have heard a lot

here about public programming. The number of times I have heard members of this board or this staff say that there is no public programming here quit frankly boils my blood if there is no public programming. I don't know what I did two weeks ago when I spent Saturday and Sunday here with changing strides making sure that public programming for underserved kids went off okay. My daughter has participated just heard from in pony club here for over seven years. That is also public programming, just as Girl Scout says I heard today in terms of impact their own 150 waivers. I personally assist the trainer's here in compiling 3000 individual waivers that have been signed by individuals that have ridden at the center over the last two years. Why is that because they have the records in their offices, and that has not been centralized. So if you take his fact that there are 150 writers who come here, your facts are an error, and that generates the upset that you heard earlier. I have personally also looked at the magnitude of those riders. So the 80 horses that are currently here, if we do that tally by 3000 waivers, that's a 35 fold impact in terms of public access. And it comes by virtue of having educational and training programs here the summer camps that already run, changing strides, which is already in operation and the trainers in their individual lesson programs, you cannot get that magnifier by putting a pony in a parking lot. I want to read for you a couple of the comments that have come in, I'm not going to run out of time, you can look at them online. I would like to end by just saying the impact that you have heard here is absolutely dependent on substantively maintaining the current structure. If you change it, you will lose it.

Nick Kovacevich

Okay, next we have Patti Stones, and followed by Deborah Hoffman, and Tracy Underwood Eddystone.

Patti Stone

I've been at the fairgrounds at the stable for almost two decades. I offer a free tour. And I've offered it for many years I talked about safety and rules and services that are offered and horses of course, and in January, my sign for my free tours was taken down and they put up a different sign needless to say, my business is slacked off with that. I also do a free horsemanship class on Saturdays. I have my own horse. I have to say that his name is Ajax and he is the real teacher of my horsemanship class. If the administration really wants to promote the stable, why haven't my two free things free? I'll do them for the rest of my life. On the website, offering my tours and class Centennial Farms is not a petting zoo. It's an education center. So is the Equestrian Center. Thank you very much.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Debra Hoffman.

Debra Hoffman

Good afternoon my name is Debra Hoffman and I have zero financial interest with the Orange County Equestrian Center. My daughter started riding at six years old. She was a shy, introverted, very insecure, low self

competence little girl. And horse riding really gave her a sense of community friends a sense of belonging. It protected her from the mean girls in high school. And, you know, I know there's talk about, oh, is this something for the rich, we're not rich. But my husband and I, we both decided that horse riding lessons were cheaper than therapy for her. There's something about riding horses and getting dirt under your fingernails that provides the best mental health therapy that money can buy. The definition of public benefit is subjective and open to interpretation. The CEO previously spoke about additional concerts added to the Pacific amphitheater. Is this an additional public benefit? It kind of depends on who you ask. I am a homeowner in Mesa Del Mar, right over there. If you ask residents, my neighbors, the surrounding communities, if additional concerts are a public benefit, you might get some different answers. US for example, it's loud, we can hear it, we can hear it on our kitchen, the traffic the congestion, you can't go down to Newport Boulevard you have to loop around. So I would just simply suggest that public benefit is a subjective definition. The OC fairgrounds measures this public benefit of additional concerts based on ticket sales and revenues. I would ask that we all think outside of the box to find a mutually agreed upon system of measurement for public benefit outcomes of the Orange County Equestrian Center. For example, How is my daughter's success story recorded over the last 12 years that she had ready? How was that recorded as a public benefit? success story? I don't think it ever was recorded. Or all of the inspirational stories that we've heard today, how have each one of those been recorded as a successful public benefit outcome? I would request that we're all adults we can all agree on. We need a working group, or an ad hoc committee, or some type of a public workshop be assembled to formulate a more thorough and effective system to be able to track the enormous public benefit that the OC equestrian center produces on a daily basis. We need a two way system of communication with the public having an equal seat at the table for measuring outcomes for the equestrian right, thanks.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. Tracy Underwood, followed by Lisa Mays, Alex Swanson and Susan Klein.

Tracy Underwood

Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm Tracy Underwood. I'm an attorney and a small business owner. For approximately 20 years I owned and operated Santa Rosa equestrian center 100 stall boarding training Showgrounds five arenas, trainers an extensive lesson program that included therapeutic riding, I want to address the board's concern of providing public programming to the maximum benefit of the public. There's tremendous opportunity here. As brightly discussed, there is the therapeutic riding, partnering with wounded warriors through your Heroes Hall, Shay center, but in order to do this, you have to have the infrastructure. For example... I built a 38,000 square foot indoor arena

with stalls attached. But that also helped me have more shows opportunities for sponsorships and brought in considerable income. You're right next door to Orange Coast College, I attended Orange Coast College, I really urge you to reach out to them. Start an equine science, animal science classes. I sat on an advisory committee at Santa Rosa Junior College. And it's doable. That has tremendous impact on the community. You can compost bag and sell manure at Centennial Farms. educating the public on the importance of recycling animal waste, and it also allows you the opportunity to make some money. You can grow fodder for horses and livestock at Centennial Farms. This can educate the public how it's possible to reduce their carbon footprint by growing food hydroponically. Then, I could go on but time will not allow for it. But it's an exciting opportunity for the fairgrounds. i This is Orange County or you should be setting the standard for urban horse keeping. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Lisa Mays.

Lisa Mays

Thank you so much. I'm so glad to be going after another attorney. My name is Lisa knees. And my line of work I advise hundreds of businesses from Fortune 50 is down to new startups. And that often requires a macro not a micro approach. And that same macro approach is really necessary here today to fully understand the revenue that the OC Equestrian Center and the benefits that it brings in economically to Orange County as a whole. We understand the sound financial foulness the Equestrian Center had some question. So we're glad to quantify this for you and point to seven massive ways that the Equestrian Center improves and increases Orange County's revenue. The first being visitors and residents. So you've heard a lot today from people who live in the area and visit their Equestrian Center. This Equestrian Center is actually a huge driver to home owners as well. I'm an example. I own a home in Costa Mesa with my disabled veteran husband. And we sought out this area in large part because of the existence of this Equestrian Center a public facility in an area with fantastic schools and worse ocean beach access and this really doesn't exist anywhere else in this area. Definitely be driving people to LA County, if not further. The second way that the Equestrian Center or drives revenue to Orange County is increased taxes. So the quality of public amenity that the OC Equestrian Center is actually does improve housing prices in the area. This is a huge draw. when housing prices go up property taxes higher, more money and more related local income tax come in and support this entire community. So that's not at all a benefit just to those who ride or visit or benefit from the therapy. This is another way it supports the entire county. The third way that equestrian center drives revenue is economic growth. We have many businesses like the feed barn, right on Newport Boulevard, and all the shops and restaurants that people who come to the center and frequent

visit and contribute to. We also have increased employment, we have staff, and many of the men who work and help with the labor positions have been working for decades at the center. And if you were to close it, they would lose their jobs. And, of course, that would greatly impact them and their families. The fifth way the Equestrian Center improves the revenue is by crime reduction. The sixth is community building, which we've heard a lot about and seven is health, as we've also heard today. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Alex Swansen.

Alex Swansen

Hello, my name is Alex Swansen. I'm a rider and trainer with SIBO venting. I've been riding for six years prior to when I started taking lessons at Saibot. My brother wrote there for about a year. It was he started there when he was diagnosed with Crohn's disease is very hard for him mentally and physically. Horseback riding really helps him out of that bad mental state. And you went on to college, when he went on to college, I started riding, so you could afford both of us. After a few years, I had some really difficult issues with my mom. And it affected me very negatively mentally. But I was lucky enough to have the opportunity, right, a very sweet old horse named lady. And she really helped me with that. And her owner went to Australia. And so I started going to take care of her. And I had to ride my bike because my parents couldn't drive me because they were working. And I rode my bike an hour a day, not a day, but most days to go take care of lady. And I did that for about two years, until I turned 16 And I got my driver's license. But I remember sometimes going in the morning at 6am for lesson, and I'd ride my bike at 4am for an hour. And I always thought is the best time to ride my bike. But now I realized it was just because I got to ride my horse. I have been riding with me club for the last two or three years. I love it so much. But in my time with Pony Club, I haven't just learned the parts of the tack how to groom a horse, how to take care of a horse I've learned so much more than that I learned responsibility. I learned to keep an open mind. I learned to take care of things to be selfless, to pay attention to how the worst is feeling to feel how the worst is feeling at all times to I've learned to lead and to guide I've learned to teach and I teach and I love teaching. I love being able to see how much the students grow and how happy they get from it. I love teaching. I plan to do that for the rest of my life. And on behalf of the horses and my friends who aren't able to be here today. I say please don't take our second home away from us. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Susan Klein.

Sheila Ferguson

Sue Klein had to leave to go get on an airplane and she sent me her statement. Is it okay that I read that?

Nick Kovacevich      There's no, I don't believe we can do that.

Sheila Ferguson      Can someone else read it?

Nick Kovacevich      Someone else? Yeah. Because you've already spoke so someone else could.

Sheila Ferguson      All right.

Josh Kaplan      One second, for the Board Chair, just for allowing consistency. If you let a member of the public speak for somebody else, they need to allow other members of public that can't be here to elements that are near the surface.

Nick Kovacevich      So okay, sorry. We're gonna we're gonna cancel that because we're just short on time. My apologies. So we're not going to open up the door there. Thank you, Josh. Moving on, we're going to have Marsherie followed by Jeff Olson, followed by David Chapman.

Marsherie      Good afternoon Fair Board. My name is Marsherie Brooks Bay, and I don't own horses. I have a 15 year old daughter who rides horses, she just started riding a year and a half ago. And I might get kind of emotional up here, because I wasn't supposed to be here today, I asked my daughter who has finals asked me to come begged me to come to speak to you guys to understand so you could understand the public benefit for her. And she's a young girl who has loved well, who had low self esteem, who didn't do well in school who went to school. Maybe in all before she started riding, she might attended school 62 days out of the whole year, because she has anxiety and other things going on. Riding was something that was presented to us by her plethora of doctors, they said that they that this might help her? Well, it did. In the last year, she has been to school, she has missed maybe 30 days of school in the last year, in 2020 to 2023, I can count maybe 10 days that she's missed school, her grades went from all s to now she is B and C students. For so it very is very heartbreak for me to hear, when I hear the board say that this land is not used for public use, or it's not getting used properly for public use. Because we are public. We are the public. And I can tell you now that I am not wealthy at all. I'm a mom of eight, a single mom of eight. But I knew that in order to make the community better, I had to do something for my child. So in she could because she's going to be a future leader. And so the Equestrian Center helped me do that. So she might be sitting in your chair one day, but the question Center helped her get there to sit in that chair. You know, not anything else. I feel like the board should take in consideration. Collaboration between the public and the private and come together and provide more information for the public because when I looked at the website, also, I thought it was a private entity. It doesn't say public, it doesn't give me the open mind that

oh, this is available to the public. No, I thought it was private by your verbiage that's in your on your website. So before you just look at the OC, fairground or the Equestrian Center as the problem maybe we need to all sit down and see that where the real problem is. And that's not what the Fed not what the Senate Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Jeff Olson. Jeff Olson Jeff. Okay, we have a date with David Chapman. David wants to go first. David, so David's gone. Jeff might be here. Sharlee Van Vliet. Okay.

Sharlee Van Vliet

Hey, guys, hi, everybody. Second, I gotta build up I swear. Hi, guys. My name is Shay. That's my daughter brand. She's actually named after the shirt you're wearing over the back. She named up her run sooner. Um, so I'm not normally one to be open about my personal life, but I thought no better day... to how it happened. I got on the horse for the first time when I was only eight weeks older than my own daughter. And I remember it like it was yesterday. Since I have learned since then I've grown to learn that horses are far more than just a hobby. They're beyond that and more. They're not just my passion, but they're also my family. No one will ever have your back the way that a horse does. And I don't mean that in the way that you mean your dog has your back. These horses bond with their people and that bond can't be broken. You know exactly the feeling If you've spent any genuine time with horses. Close closing this barn is more than just having a smooth closings barn breaks the spirit of the community and genuinely farms many individuals. Here's how this decision would hurt us not just me. and where things kind of get when people tell you that postpartum healing in the depression that comes with it, they've had the time they'll tell you that often comes during pregnancy as well. At six weeks pregnant, I found out that I've had HCG, which is hydrolysis. I was sick. From the moment that I woke up into the moment that I went to sleep my entire time of pregnancy, I was not at seven pounds. When I was five months pregnant, she almost didn't make it. Honestly, there's many days that I couldn't leave the house, but the days of I could, the only place that I could actually get to was the one. Without these horses, I wonder how I would have survived. Not only not only did they help me find the light and all of the sickness, but even before she was born, Ron had a connection with them as well. She can't read, they sniff and when we just relax at the barn, and try to focus on the grid in life, she'd be calm, for the first time, literally, all these horses and these moments saved my life. Now that baby is here, and I'm exploring my new role as a mother, I've started postpartum dead in the I've stared postpartum depression dead in the eye. But this time, it can't get me because I have horses and because I have the OC programs. Without this routine, I would be completely lost. And I can say with 100% certainty that I'm a better mother because I can be around these animals. And it's a constant reminder. Yeah, sorry. It's a

constant reminder of the good in life. And that even though I'm not the main character in my own life anymore, my dreams don't just go away until the barn is gone. And my opportunity to ride and love on the horses is taken away from me. My dreams cannot be crossed. Until then. Thank you. Thank you for allowing me and my family to enjoy. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you last call for Jeff Olson. Last call for Jeff Olson. Okay, we're gonna go with flow Martin, followed by windy lease and followed by Tiana Tiana Terry for Martin. Okay, next we have Wendy Lease. And we have Tiana Terry. We have Claire Graves. And it's going to be followed by Emma Kelly and Denise... there yet.

Claire Graves

Hello, my name is Claire graves. I'm 16 years old for more than 10 years now. I've been riding at the Orange County Equestrian Center. I began as a toddler with my sister taking lessons during in summer camps. I mean, able to take lessons and volunteer and help educate other members of the public of all ages firsthand. I've seen the impact horses can have on kids, especially kids on the spectrum. My sister Shelby at the age of four had skills and speech communication skills of a two year old with equine therapy by the age of five or twice a week equine therapy, and daily speech therapist, she was completely caught up. Now at the age of 17. She's able to drive a car, make friends and share the love of these amazing animals. If she didn't have equine therapy, I believe that she wouldn't be the person she is today. My message to the board is that the Equestrian Center plays an important role in the lives of many like myself, who live in Orange County horses are immensely therapeutic, I wouldn't have the same benefit if it wasn't for the trainer's providing these opportunities to allow me to do so safely. It is a place of relaxation and enjoyment for the adults who work here, and even more so it is a place of learning for the children. It has been my pleasure, for example, to introduce riding to foster kids. Through the changing strides program. I have participated in many summer camps that teach young people not only about riding, but how to take care of the horses, what we feed the horses, and what kind of beddings they sleep in. Many young people my age are immersed in a virtual world. So them looking at it from their cell phones or commute computer screens. Working with horses provides a real hands on experience for the youth. It gives them an opportunity to learn life lessons about hard work isn't about hard work and is an excellent opportunity for exercise. The Equestrian Center has has been important to me and so many young people over the years. I urge you not only to keep it open to the public, to board horses and trainers to offer services to the public, but invest in it so that it becomes an even more valuable resource in our community. Thanks for your time.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Callie.

Callie Rutter Hi. Can you hear me?

Nick Kovacevich Yes.

Callie Rutter Hi, my name is Callie Rutter. I started riding at the center in about 1970s. I'm 60 years old now. And I'm just gonna share some really personal information. First of all, this is not just an equestrian center. They rescue people, they rescue horses. This is a gym. I've lived here since 19. When I've been here 54 years. So I'm 60 I don't want you to feel sorry for me, but I'm a cancer survivor. I have PTSD where I'm scared to leave the house. I have epilepsy. They suffer from depression. I have terrible anxiety. I have attempted suicide and the horses saved my life. This isn't just horses. This is a working farm. You have people that have jobs here. It's a good pleat, clean place for kids to be. There's an opioid epidemic. Kids are living a virtual life. They spend about nine hours on their phones a day. Out here. People can ride they can brush horses, they can do so many things. Take the signage down, fix the website, get I mean, you've got smart women here. And speaking of women, I want you to know there are IPv DV or sa survivors here as well. And we owe it to our community to do better and to be better. And that includes making a better choice as far as management is concerned. And I need you to know, this is a place for children, for teens. For adults. I can't ride the way I used to. But I can I can walk and I can trot I can go and brush the horses. I can't breathe like I could before because of my cancer. But you should see Melissa, she spoke earlier. You should see her she's a rock star. You have the Sabos here, they're a Olympic class writers. You have people like Carolyn Beaver and, and, you know, LeAnn, because all this I mean, these are smart people. Listen to them. Listen to me. The person that I ride with, she gets it and she can help me. And it's that one on one. That helps. I don't leave the house often. But I will to go to the stable I will to be with a horse. And I don't just get on a horse ride and get off. It's not like that you're establishing a bond. And everyone deserves to have that bond and take down the signage. And let this place grow. It's a gym.

Summer Angus Thank you, Callie. That's time.

Nick Kovacevich Thank you. So do we have Emma Kelly? Okay.

Emma Kelly Hello. Hi, my name is Emma Kelly in 2020 and 2022, I was in a riding accident falling into the Back Bay due to a very unsafe equestrian program. The horse was helicoptered out as I rushed to the hospital, thinking my riding career was over. I moved to the Orange County Equestrian Center and was able to come over my fear due to the support system I was able to make at the Equestrian Center. If it wasn't for my

trainer who taught me how to be safe and how to communicate with the horses. Now I have become a confident rider and been able to give back to the community by volunteering with changing stripes, a nonprofit organized by Sara Khalipa and Lisa Saibot. I have the opportunity to educate foster kids about the horsemanship scene, how excited they are to learn about how to brush them, care for them and be around them safely and learn to communicate with them has pushed me to become a better role model for these kids. These vulnerable foster kids come to me and the horses for comfort in a safe space. I can confidently say that during my time at the OC Equestrian Center. I've seen the positive impacts it has on these kids. I've seen firsthand how much their personalities grow, how much they come out of their shell. Parents have come to me and told me their kids have hard time socializing and they see how it affects their mental health. These same parents have come to me and said that they haven't seen their kids this happy and excited after being at the barn. These horses really are therapeutic for these kids. Taking the Equestrian Center away would be would mean forcing these risk factors and back into play, causing their mental and physical health to deteriorate. They would be forced back into the vulnerable that they were forced that they faced when and would be right back to square one. This also has been a safe space for me personally, as well as my friends. I have close friends who struggle with anxiety and they always say how being at the barn is able to help them and in their unique ways it has made them feel safe. It's a place that my friends get excited about going to and I'm so grateful. I have such a special place to spend time with my friends. Speaking of the Orange County Fairgrounds mission statement is, and I quote, creating equitable community access to agriculture, entertainment, culture, and educational experiences. And I believe that OC equestrian hits all the marks with that mission statement. Thank you for your time.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Denise. Followed by Antonia, Antonia, and Tonina. It's I can't read that writing. And I can't read and Penelope n is after that. So go ahead. Sorry Denise.

Denise Xagorarakis

Hi, my name is Denise Xagorarakis. I am a member of the public who boards a horse at the Equestrian Center. And t I've been hearing a lot of terminology today regarding the Equestrian Center being a public first private entity. And my biggest issue is with the board accepting or acknowledging rather, that the Equestrian Center is servicing the public currently in the operation. That we have, and I, I've heard that that we are private borders, we are members of the public, who take part in the in that we are members of the public who who take part in the opportunity to board our horses at a public facility. We're not private borders. That's a huge miscommunication to the public and to the board.

The trainers who operate their businesses at the Equestrian Center are members of the public who offer a service to the public. And that's important to acknowledge rather than saying that we're private borders and their private training, we are all members of the public that are utilizing this public resource. Um, and we'd love to see how that can grow, and how the board and the trainer's can, and the community can all work together to offer more amenities to the public. And I agree with so many others who have said we need to take down the signs that say that we don't have access to the public so that we can welcome everybody in. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. Antonia.

Antonina Styclen

Hello, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Antonia Styclen, and I'm a member of the public and I thank you for this opportunity, I will share my personal story. As an immigrant that also Equestrian Center holds a special place in my heart. It was an is my refugee, a place where I found support and motivation among like minded individuals passionate about horses. I was one of the public walking from the streets seeing the banner on the side of the road. At the time, I was struggling with PTSD and depression and I was disconnected from the social life being an outsider and non American. I came to the Equestrian Center to ask about the ways how I can reconnect with my passion to horses, and I had met with an amazing support and warm welcome from the trainers, orders and clients at a Equestrian Center in the late 2019. I started out as a volunteer as I couldn't afford many things as a newcomer and fresh immigrant. After a while I was able to get a job as an instructor at stable eventing, which helped to put me through the graduate school. And finally now I'm able to fulfill my lifelong dream of co-owning a horse with one of my friends that I met through Equestrian Center and boarding him at this facility. We were planning recently to provide the access to our private horse to one of the nonprofit OC based horse therapy programs, but with an unknown fear of what it is to happen to the facility. I can't make these decisions which impacts directly to community not even mentioned the other horse owners that wanted to relocate to this facility, but were discouraged by the same reason. Preventing existing businesses at a Equestrian Center in providing professional services and enriching programs to the public not only means giving up a symbol of American cultural heritage, tied to the history of horse domestication, but also poses a threat to the diverse social fabric of our city and county. The absence of stables and professional trainers would mean separate these vital connections, depriving our youth adults and seniors of all the backgrounds of valuable opportunities. is restricting access for the disabled to therapeutic course related activities and removing a crucial support system for those battling mentally mental health challenges like myself in a safe

environment provided by professional trainers. Such loss contradicts with the mission of the OC fair, and even senator in the state of California commitment to environmental protection and supporting agriculture. Let us not forfeit this valuable space that plays a crucial role in fostering community bridging social gaps and aligning with our state's policies. The people and horses of the OC Equestrian Center are my new American family. I know that a Equestrian Center has much to offer in the future. And I would love to see many more people coming through these gates and starting their urban Equestrian adventure with the stirrup Eric marisnick animals. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Penelope.

Penelope Ann Alvord

Hi, my name is Penelope. And I'm in seventh grade. Horses have been dear and close to my whole family for a long time. And the time close my heart was the first list was my first lesson. But not because I was learning something new. But because of the horse Godiva. She was so sweet and gentle with me. But that was the last time I would see her. Most people take months to connect with animals. But I connected with Godiva immediately. So when my teacher told me I was going to, I was never going to see her again, I cross cutting back to the now I see my little sister who is now nine years old, connected with horses every day as well. I'm really proud of her. I may have moved on from riding horses to acting and singing. But that doesn't mean that I can't stop. I can't stand up for love for such loving horses. My family means the world to me. So if my sister loves this place as much as she says, so do I. I hear people saying that this place isn't benefiting or serving community. But it's just by making people happy, giving them friends to rely on and actually serving our beautiful diverse community is actually serving our beautiful, diverse community. If you want to shut this place down, you would be hurting so many relationships in the process. So please don't make all of the people in this community let go of this beautiful place. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Next we have Quinn, Quinn Alvirdt, followed by Amy Desarro and Alex Albert.

Quinn Alvord

Hi, my name is Quinn Alvord and I'm in fourth grade. I don't own a horse, but I love them. They make them feel like anything is possible. I love being with the horses, friends and family. Friends and coaches. They support me in anything. And I love them. Everyone there. I love doing chores for horses. I just will do anything to see them. I do volting and I love doing it. It's my favorite thing in the world. I've been riding for about five years and to lose. That would be heartbreaking. If you never see beloved Gigi again, once last week, I brought one of my friends to practice. Everyone took her in like she was part of our team.

This is a great place that I want to invite my family and friends. Oh see has taught me how to be brave and responsible. I love the bomb. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you, Amy.

Amy Desarro

Hi, my name is Amy. And I'm responsible for these four wonderful children. And I grew up with horses on a ranch and I was involved in a ministry that dealt with inner city kids having a mountain experience and I could tell you stories of Joker, but all heartstrings but I'm sure you guys have heard enough of that. So I guess I just kind of want to talk about how horses have impacted our life a little bit in the fact that, you know, we've been trying to find horses we've been driving all over South County doing lessons, go into the shady side it was one of our children has autism. But it wasn't until I was researching volting that I actually saw this in our backyard. I was like how is this five minutes away from our house and I've never heard of such a thing. So I really just think the vaulting program for getting that message out there. And as we've been here, it's only been like three months but I saw this little group just grow as the children are expressing to their friends how great this program is. And so they brought more friends and you know, the group got so big they had to open another group. And I just I'm really kind of confused a little bit about the situation that's going on because to me it seems like there's a lot of people here who are worried that you're going to shut this down. And I think that I might pretty competent and you guys that you can To keep this going, and also make your program bigger. I mean, I'm just so sad that like, so many people don't know about you guys. And I think that's more of your responsibility to like make this program known and like, maybe even develop more programs to reach the kids that are out there. But I mean, from what you've seen, it's impacting this community and I hope that it impacts that more. So, good luck to you guys. And I hope you make some great decisions and develop your program. Thanks.

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you, Alex, followed by Archer Xagorarakis , and Audrey Xagorarakis as well.

Amy Desarro

this is Alex and he just drew you guys picture which I'm sure many of you have surround.

Nick Kovacevich      Solid. Thank you. Thank you Alex. Archer.

Denise Xagorarakis

Alex is not feeling comfortable to speak in front of you guys. But Audrey would like to take her turn.

Nick Kovacevich      Okay, great. Audrey.

Audrey  
Xagorarakis

My name is Audrey Xagorarakis. I'm eight years old. I go to Davis, I ride here. I don't. I don't own a horse. I live in Mesa Del Mar. We visit the barn all the time. Thank you. We serve people. Horses are people's best friends.

Sharlee Van Vliet

All the time. Please share your picture.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. Next we'll have Noelle Anderson, followed by Marina Pearsall, and Irene Dunlap. Noelle.

Noelle Anderson

Thank you so much. Hi, my name is Noelle. I'm a member the public and I participate in Lisa CBOs lesson program. It has been such a joy in my life. And the barn is such a special place for adults such as myself, who don't have the time or financial means to purchase their own their own horse. Sorry, my of can't read because I ran. But I won't belabor the point. I know you guys have heard from a lot of folks here. There is a ton of public programming happening on this property every day. The fact that this is a question seems like there might have been a lapse in communication between what's happening at the barn, and maybe some perception on behalf of board and staff. So anyway, all this to say is I really advocate for establishing some sort of committee that would allow ongoing communication between our group and yours, we can help with decision making, make sure there's no more bad deals, mitigate financial losses, and just protect this gem of a place. And on the record too. I'd like to thank Lisa and Brian for all they've done for the community and I really love their horses and I don't know where I would be without them. But thank you very much.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Marina. Marina Pearsall.

Marina Pearsall

Hi, thank you so much. So my name is Marina Pearsall. I have the pleasure of being a riding instructor for Lisa and Brian Saibot. I was adopted from Ukraine when I was only six years old. Both my parents only spoke English and I spoke only Russian. I had a hard time assimilating to a new country where I was taken from the only place I've ever called home, which was inside an orphanage. It is actually thanks to Lisa Ryan Sabo, and the riding program that I was able to find, sorry, my biological family in January. Unfortunately, pretty much my whole family has passed away due to the war. I only have my cousin left and she now hopes to come to the United States to ride. I came here two years ago from NorCal. And when I was looking for a place to ride because riding has saved my life more times than I can count. I could not find a riding place until I found Saibot event teen and the OC Equestrian Center. They provide less than horses with the lesson program. Same thing for OC vaulting. Same thing for all about horses as well as saris

barn. I do not know another equestrian center that provides the lesson program where you do not need your own horse. I do not have the financial means to afford my own horse and luckily I am my riding instructor and I pay for my livelihood through my riding lessons. I am now currently a nurse or going to nursing school and I have seen firsthand the impact mental health has on a person's mental and medical condition. This question center means the world to me. It has given me a place to call home you has given me a support system. It has also provided me some of the best friends I have ever had. And I don't know where I would be without it. So I just wanted to personally say thank you to Lisa and Brian Sabo. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Irene Dunlap followed by Alex Roman and Peneploe Ely-McGregor.

Irene Dunlap

Hi. thanks for the opportunity to speak this morning. I don't have a horse at the stables here and never have I've been in the community since 1968. When I moved from the Central Valley of California to Costa Mesa, and was in culture shock, because I lived at the staples that growing up there and came here and didn't know where what I was going to do or how I was going to reconnect with horses. So thankfully, a friend in Mesa Del Mar neighborhood here had a friend had a horse at the the equestrian center here and I was able to come over and just connect. So the misnomer is out there that you can't just come over and have a benefit as a public person. By just being around horses it was at the time was enough for me. Thankfully, as time went on, I was able to get a horse and I had him at Costa Mesa High School back when there was an agricultural program there. Ironically, I used to ride my horse where this parking lot is, I would come across and ride when this was just a dirt field. So I've been around this area a long time long enough to see the closure of so many opportunities to be around horses and have horses stabled in Orange County and especially Newport Beach, Santa Ana river bed, Huntington Beach, smokey stables, you just look around even what has happened in the back they have commercial zoning now has closed out so many opportunities to house horses there, that this is an asset for this community that you can never replace. And so thank you for continuing to consider how you can maintain this. As a parent in this community bringing my kids up in the schools, I was a coordinator for after school programming along with the BTFO responsibilities that I did for years. We put classes together to give kids opportunities to not go home and be alone after school to have additional opportunities to learn something other than what they're doing in school. When I did those classes, I brought in a lot of different people with different kinds of skills. And we did have to ask for nominal amounts of money so that the kids would have access to these I can see that happening here. I can see you working with the Newport Mesa Unified School District to do after

school coordinating classes for kids. Bring them out here show them what it is to see an animal of the nature of a horse to learn about what it means to care for one to understand the nature of a horse as a flight animal, which people don't understand about them. And it's an I think it's a way of creating community and empathy and all kinds of skills that you can't learn any other way. There's the Newport navigator that has classes through the city of Newport Beach, and I think that probably Costa Mesa does something similar. If you in your budget could put one person together to coordinate and teach people to be docents out here, you can bring in so many more people and bring access to them through other ways that the community is already connecting to the public. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Alex. Oh Alex Creelman next we have Penelope Ely McGregor, followed by Jeff Vickman, Harper Hilterbrand, Andrew Whitefeather.

Shelby McGregor

Hi, my name is Shelby McGregor. I'm 13 years old. I'm part of the Newport Mesa Pony Club. The horses Elsie fair had been a part of my life and many children in the area we learn responsibility, perseverance and discipline. This is a partnership between horse and rider it is more than just having a relationship it takes strength, power and so much skill. It gives so many people around the area a place to belong, a place to learn a place to be safe and have a connection with powerful animal like this. Just being around horses gives you peace of mind. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Jeff Dickman.

Jeff Dickman

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Jeff Dickman, I'm a resident of Orange County. I live in Santa Ana. And I'm the county's past trail and Bikeway planner. I served in that position for a really long time from 1992 to the end of 2017. And my job at the county was to help it implement its master plan or regional riding and hiking trails. The county board of supervisors adopted it The plan in 1965, it had I think, maybe 25 or 30 trails. The county then did a general plan amendment in 1980 To edit a number of other trails, and now it's a fairly robust document with 54 regional trails, 350 miles, at least masterplan of those about 75 or 80%. Done. So all the trails not are complete, but many of them are mostly complete. And one of those trails that serves this neck of the woods is the Santana heights regional adding and hiking trail. And it's one of our shorter lengths of trail. It's planned from upper Newport Bay, to follow along the Delphi channel facility, not along Santa Ana Avenue. And then Mesa drive over to the Equestrian Center. It's had not a whole lot of attention over the years because we have a lot of trails and not a lot of staff. And we also have bikeways and other things that county works on including regional parks. But this is one of the more

important trails because it was specifically added to the master plan by the county board of supervisors likely working with prior boards, and certainly the equestrian in the trail using community to give people access to what is one of the most important facilities in the county, and that is the fairgrounds and the Equestrian Center. The trails were designed to go from the mountains to the sea, from sometimes east to west. It touches many if not all of our regional parks or coastal facilities, many municipal facilities and parks. It's a wonderful system. And I was part of a group of people that built many miles of trails, including a short segment of it, kind of between Irvine Avenue and Santa Ana Avenue. It's along a portion of our existing flood control facility. And we put in some decomposed granite some railings, fencing signage, but we still have when I left the county in the early part of 2018. We still had such sections that still needed to be complete. And I don't know if the county has followed up on the work a lot of work that was still left to be done when I retired, but I would encourage the board to maybe contact the county you had supervisor cold fully here to speak about her interest in the Equestrian Center which I also support. Getting the county's interest in the the Equestrian Center and developing the trail I think would bring value not only to the fairgrounds, but particularly to the Equestrian Center. Trails are multiple use in that they're used by equestrians and pedestrians, walkers, joggers, and as of 1991, mountain bicycle lighters. And it's the equestrian community that I know well without their support domestic plan would not exist. I'm here to help and participate in any way possible.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. Thank you Harper Hilterbrand followed by Dan Whitefeather. or Drew Whitefeather, sorry.

Harper Hilterbrand

Hi, my name is Harper Hilterbrand. I am 11 years old. And I've been riding for two and a half years at Sabo eventing. And I started riding at the summer camp at Sabo. And after that one week of camp, I didn't want to stop because it was so much fun and I got to hang out with a lot of friends and ride all the fun ponies. Riding has taught me a lot of responsibility and how to take care of animals. I'm also in Pony Club pony co teaches you horsemanship and you have to study for it a lot and commit to it. Horseback riding has taught me a lot of commitment and perseverance. I want to become a really good rider when I grew up, so I have to keep committing and being confident. I love riding so much and I have a lot of my friends from the fairgrounds. It is so much fun and I think that it is very healthy for you because you get to learn how to take care of animals and other people. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Drew... All right, moving on. Well, Jeanne Haliska, followed by Shannon Eli McGregor.

Jeanne Haliska

Hi, I'm just an ordinary mom. Nothing special. My daughter in 2016 suffered a very serious blockage in her intestinal tract. And she basically almost died during surgery. They told me she had a very slim chance of making it. She survived but she had an ostomy bag afterwards, which she said I wish was a nightmare and I could just wake up so it was really hard on her confidence. On top of that she's on the spectrum. No self esteem she wouldn't she had such PTSD after the hospital says she finally got reconnected two years later, thank goodness. But they said if you don't find a way to get her whooping her colons, especially, she will end up with this back permanently for life. And I knew that for her would be a decimal. So it was just, it's a lot. And it's not fun. It's it's literal, literal hell, taking care of an colostomy bag, especially with the child. And she always had a very good attitude about it, but it was hard. So she was home schooled. had no friends, who was dealing with all this aftermath. I got cancer from the stress in 2016. I'm now a cancer survivor, healthy. I had a friend I asked was asking people what is something she could do with a good group of girls not mean girls, a good group of just sweet girls. And we had tried gymnastics. We tried all these things. She would lose interest in a short period of time. It was hard on her she didn't have any string and she had lost all that ability to use her poor from the surgeries. So somebody said, Why don't you try pony club. It's like Girl Scouts with horses. I'm like, That sounds fun. I think I like it. So we found Sabo eventing. We didn't have a horse. We've never ridden a horse, we knew nothing about it. We get in there we were immediately treated like family. One thing I will say about the OC Fair Grounds is it's a very close, tight knit. group of women strong women that support one another strong girls that support one another. My daughter made best friends that she has, to this day, she we went from no horse ownership to buying a horse to now she's jumping with a horse. I went to school for massage therapy for horses. I'm now equine massage therapist. I wanted to find a way to support her in this field. She wants to be a horse trainer someday. She now has so much confidence. She's lost over 50 pounds. She carries herself differently. People used to ask me how come she never speaks. She never looked at speaks. It was just Claire. Now she'll look dead. My eyes shoulders high up hello. And she just introduces herself. And she's now presenting today. She wanted to be here. But she had a presentation where she's public speaking at a public school, something I never ever, ever thought my daughter if you had told me this back in 2019 when we started I never would have believed you in a million years. But that's how much versus impact your life and can make such a difference. Thank you. I appreciate you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Shannon Ely-McGregor followed by Mackay Hamblin and Ashley Danielson.

Shannon Ely

Wow, thank you. Um, I am speaking for my daughter, Penelope who just

McGregor

spoke. And just the confidence that she came up here and spoke is a testament to what the horses have done in her life and placebo event during which we passed out letters to some of the staff members here. We collected over 250 letters in two weeks. and oh, yeah, did you guys go did you have the packets so they can go to the board members. Okay, and they are just their letter is just with all the different experiences and just so you don't have to sit here today and listen to all of us. So I just want to say that my daughter she attends a local public school. She has played sports on local public soccer fields and basketball courts. She's loved horses her whole life. And she's ridden at a few different equestrian centers, but it's found a special place at the OC Equestrian Center was Sabo eventing. We do not own a horse. But Penny is part of the Newport Mesa riding club with Lisa CEVO, where she learns all things, horsemanship and horse care. She has a community and it's been so healthy just to watch her interact, volunteering at summer camps and making friends and learning responsibility and discipline. And I just think it's really important for kids. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. And just for the record, Director Pham has returned. So he is logged back in on Zoom next we have Macki Hamblin.

Macki Hamblin

Hello there. Thank you for letting us speak today I'm reading my letter that is in that nicely large packet of community members. So I just want to make a point that Orange County is such a special place within the jewel of California. As residents here we get to enjoy a county with a deeply rooted agricultural history. Though many of the orange groves and Strawberry Fields are now in the past that we can only see in photos we still have that rich agricultural history. The ability to learn meat and heal from horses is something else. We treasure an area. With such a history. BOC fairgrounds is centrally located a residence permit a massive urban sprawl. The equestrian center the way it is, offers the public the opportunity to ride horses and learn about animals that most people can only dream of. And it's such an amazing recreational opportunity that is offered in the heart of the city. Their school horses accessible and trained to teach anyone how to ride and handle the horse. It is so amazing to see kids and adults from all ages working towards a common goal. To love and learn from these amazing 1200 pound animals that make every person feel special. I feel honored to get to see so many riders find joy in the horses and the riding to get to see the personal growth that each and every person that encounters a horse at the OC equestrian center feels it is so easy to break the world down into dollars and cents. But horses offers so much more than anything that can be quantified. I beg you all of your board members, staff members along Everyone, please come to the Equestrian Center, touch her horse ride a horse have a lesson come meet the 80 year old that cares for her dying husband's forced to the teenager who's being bullied at school that gets to

be a part of a group that embraces certain. Anyone you ask will tell you that horses are healing a healing balm that makes life struggles bearable. These animals are empathetic by nature and lend an ear to each and every one that comes into contact with them. Anyone who tells you their story will tell you how these animals saved them or got them through struggles in their life. They aren't a basketball or baseball that is used and thrown away. These are horses and animals that people of all ages love and cherish. Without the centralized location of the fairgrounds. Many of these kids and adults lose access to horses forever. Since horses are healing for everyone. There are many nonprofits that run out of the OC equestrian center. There is no limit to the outreach that they provide their kids and adults with learning disabilities, muscular disorders, PTSD, battered women and children, trauma survivors, foster kids, etc. The list is endless to the outreach, the Equestrian Center and the horses that board there. If you think of a friend or family member that is suffering or needs help mentally or physically, there's a program right now that is in your own backyard. I know horses help with my own mental health and get to see help others. But every equestrian center that is closed and torn down the access to these amazing lesson programs and nonprofits are extinguished. It shuts down an entire local community and makes the access to horses only available to those who can drive 45 minutes to an hour. It makes it so at risk youth and other struggling groups have one less resource that can literally be the difference between life and death are some of these people. I beg you to keep this resource available to our community, not just for this generation, but for the rest of them. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Ashley Danielsen, and then we have our final two in person speakers, which would be Jaya Maine and Brian Cummings.

Ashley Danielsen

Hi, I'm Ashley. I've been in the equestrian world since four years old, and largely just want to be here today to support my community and to allow you to know that I own all about horses, a private facility well actually boarding public, publicly but privately owned business at the OC fairgrounds right now. And I bring that to your attention to also say that I've been a girl scout for just about as long I was a daisy first and went through the entire Girl Scout program. And part of my mission in servicing the public is to have the Orange County Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts to the center on a regular basis between six and eight troops a year. And I would say that's a number that is low right now because of what happened with the pandemic have come through to get their safety around large animal and force badges. We teach them how to ride we teach them how to deal with safely on the ground large animals and also communicate with others and work towards a mentor program to helping these students that want to become either in this line of work or just better with working with other children and mentoring the next

generation of children to learn about these large animals and to be able to share what they know about them. So I'm hoping that you understand that we also have reached out to the inner city of Costa Mesa and tried to make ourselves as accessible as we can by offering and donating hours and hours of our time to just raise kids around animals and and just give them that foundation that agriculture does still exist in a city like community. Thank you so much for having me today. And I love our facility.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Jaya.

Jaya Mayne

Hello. Um, hi, I'm Jaya Mayne. I'm currently a trainer writer at the SC fairgrounds Equestrian Center. The Equestrian Center has been an integral part of my upbringing. It began when I was nearly nine years old taking beginner lessons on a special pony Lisa Sabo provided named merry go round. I knew immediately this was the place for me. I spent the next five years participating in Only club pony camps and weekly riding Austin's I came to the stables early and stayed late and is here I learned responsibility and moral values horsemanship and friendship. The accessibility of the barns here at the Equestrian Center and the experience gained has taught me the values of relationships, not only with horses but with people from all walks of life. The opportunities that are created by having this valuable space are so important not only to myself, but to the programs it provides. A couple of weeks ago, we held an event provided by the nonprofit profit organization changing strides and received this letter from a former attendee. It goes to whom it may concern my three foster kids from all of crest had the most incredible experience today riding horses, the staff was so sensitive to the children's trauma history, and the kids had their first time ever riding horses. This program benefits children in our community with the greatest needs. We're so thankful to have this organization in our neighborhood. I would not be where I am today or the person I am today. Without the Equestrian Center and the valuable lessons contained within these gates. We need to understand that what we have here is priceless creating a safe space for the public to experience connection and community that is so often overlooked in our fast moving world. Let's move forward with a plan that benefits everyone.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Brian. So means and then we're gonna have Gibran Stout as our final speaker and we're gonna take a break.

Brian Cummings

Hi, I'm Brian Cummings. I'm Associate Dean for Faculty Development UCI School of Medicine. I ride lesson horses, because I not good enough to ride a wild horse. The central question here is whether supporting the Equestrian Center on OC fairgrounds property is a public good. That's

what we're talking about. The board accepts a \$700,000 deficit for Centennial Farms, because they've determined that the public outreach and educational activities at the farm justify the expense. And I agree there's a deficit at the Heroes Hall and they've determined that veterans and students during the museum justify the expense. Over the past decade, the question Center has never operated a deficit until staff took over in 2023 and triggered this public private debate. Yesterday I sent you all a short video clip on the recent opening of Whittier Narrows. You've heard from the Dr. Gould who oversaw the opening there. If you watch that video, just YouTube Whittier Narrows equestrian center opening you'll see supervisor Hilda Solis of the first district probably stating that Whittier is the largest public questioning center in orange or in Los Angeles County. And the all new facilities office concessions and lockers for private owners was built by La Parks and Recreation and the Department of Public Works with 13 million in public funds. The paradigm is the same here as it is an LA LA parks does not own the horses, nor do they provide the trail rides or the lessons they offer boarding and lesson programs that are under the private trainers. Just like here, this is not a gift of public goods. It's a service supervisor Hilda Solis in the first district was a strong supporter was President The opening was a spokeswoman in the video. Why should we care about the equestrian facility in LA? Why should we care about supervisor Solis? Because they speak to the central question is spending public funds on an equestrian center a gift, like funds. Supervisor Solis was California State Assembly Member than California State Senator, she was a California representative to Congress and Secretary of Labor in the Obama administration Before being elected the LA County Board of Supervisors for the first district. If you're concerned as you should be, with whether spending OC fairgrounds funds and equestrian centers a gift of public funds, you can be assured that supervisor Solis, members of the first district they address the same question. Their lawyers addressed this question. And they clearly decided that spending 13 million in public funds was not an illegal gift of funds. Sorry, Reggie. Supervisor Katrina Foley, Senator Josh Newman, Mayor Bloomberg Newport. They all agree and they've written you letters. They agree this is not a gift of public funds. So the board is aware you said recently of 150 waivers? Well, we've got 3,000 waivers. So you've just added to our tally is 3150 waivers. Thanks. That's how you get the number of each horse. They're each ideally owned horse. Somebody has to own them. They're being written by about 45 different people. Some horses are crazy. They're only written by one person. Some are written by 100 different kids. That's the nature of the business. Secondly, I just, I was mentioning this issue and some of the doctors at UC Irvine and the department of rehab medicine and in child site they said to me, closing the Equestrian Center. Well I prescribed question therapy to my kids to my patients. And what you don't understand is that the prescription

happens we don't know about that as the public or the trainer, the kid just going there because the parents sent them. So that has time while the clock is not running so I couldn't know what went on. Yeah, well, so let me finish my laboratory sent more seconds. Thank you appreciate it, Nick. So we call the Fair Board of Directors to assert the same as LA that the question center is serving the public good. And the question center is already offering public programs similar those highlighted in center supervisor souls as video. Okay, thank you. We asked the board to acknowledge these questions, enter this nine, you need to turn it off it, even though it has returned to profit.

Nick Kovacevich

Sorry, We gotta cut we gotta cut it off here. Let's cut it off. Okay, so we've got Gibran Stout next. Yeah, we have the zoom list. We're gonna take a break, and then we're gonna get to the Zoom list. Is the clock back working? Okay.

Gibran Stout

Okay, sorry, I thought I did put a card in earlier anyway. Um, what are these numbers are confusing to me? Because nobody's asked me how many people we have. I have not seen any efforts to accurately record how many people come in. I know that you've said hundreds of 1000s at Centennial farm. So does that mean you have hundreds of 1000s of laborers? Because my understanding is they're not collected there. But that's not relevant. I do know in 2018, the last effort I saw to figure out how many people visited the Equestrian Center, your strategic plan list 1000 daily users, and I believe that's on page 10 of the 2018 specific plan. Since then, there has been no effort to figure it out. So I find it interesting that we're comparing these things because I think we need to stop comparing. This is ridiculous to compare the Equestrian Center Centennial Hall, Centennial farm Heroes Hall. It's like comparing apples to hotdogs. It's we just don't have all the data. But we could have a public meeting and talk about some of this. I understand that you've been told you cannot come and pet horses. That's not true. It's not only can you come and pet horses at any time. That's just not true that you can't come and pet horses. So if you've been told that, then you're getting incomplete information or misinformation? Are there safety things in Vault? Absolutely you don't let kids go into the pen with the goats at Centennial farm. So but we're here to work to find solutions to make it safe. There's a cost of money, you have to pay money to ride a horse, yet, you also must pay for parking. You must pay to go on the carnival rides, and you must pay for the fair food. We are all members of the public, all of us. So why are we treated differently all of the vendors on the property that pay you money to have a business or use space are all members of the public. So why are we breaking it up to Oh, your private and your public and this is private and this is public and public funds all of your money your \$53 million a year is based off of income from rental space and admission from the fair. So I don't understand this line. Why

why we're being singled out. I don't get it. I don't understand why trainers are treated differently than every other vendor or service on the property. I don't understand why the Equestrian Center is treated differently. If this if my program can't be here, it's not going to be anywhere. My base is here. The kids we serve are here. If it's gone, it's gone forever. And you're not going to hurt me. I'm going to sit home I make no money. We're a volunteer run organization.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Gibran, we're going to take a break and from back and 10 minutes. We do have a few comments on zoom.

Nick Kovacevich

...be able to participate in some of the discussion if we get through the public comment but the Zoom speakers we have here. Michelle Conklin, followed by Gina Cruz and Laura Thomas. Do we have Michelle Conklin on Zoom? Summer? We don't see her we're gonna move to. Oh... we do see here. Okay, Michelle Conklin. Your three minutes.

Michelle Conklin

Yes, thank you. Hello, my name is Michelle Conklin. I have been an avid rider here at the fairgrounds since the 90s. Back when the Equestrian Center was double or even triple its size now, my family has owned and operated Gerace vineyards and farms for nearly 20 years and I would consider it a Best In Breed considers equestrian facility. Having this extensive knowledge in operating a multi use facility touring regularly for equine and winemaking education and events. I acknowledge the many facets that must be kept in mind when planning a budget for this type of facility. I also sit on a special district board myself and I thank you all for your service today. I am a mother of a 19 month old son and a little girl on the way but my main work I do is with bleeding disorder patients, helping them take their lives back into their own hands and not letting their disease control them. And that's what I think horses do for people. Recently, I had been coming back to the fairgrounds to see the kids program as I have a couple of horses in the program, being loved on bike by kids, while I've less time trying to start my family. But they are in this stable eventing program for free. I do not make money off of them being in that program, and this is my way of paying it forward. I hope my kids will be able to do the same program someday as this is how I started. courses offer love, responsibility, work ethic, safety and respect to our young boys and girls. These are such crucial qualities needed to be developed in our youth. It is not factually accurate that someone cannot come on to the property at will and pet a horse. I see it done all the time. I will say horses are large animals and every precaution should be taken into care, especially with the recent equine diseases that have come and gone in the last couple of years. As some have stated previously, there are several programs that can be established for the public that are profitable. La used to have an inner city kids program to keep those kids out of gangs and off the streets, along with the therapeutic programs for

youth, adult senior adults and veterans. During the fair days when I was a teenager, we used to also have horses over by the Fair area for the public to interact with. And we should speak about, we could speak about those horses with those who visited the four H Center trying to align with the CHE center and seeing if they can expand their program with the fairgrounds should be on this list of programs. Another program could be a Kids program open through the libraries and cities such as a mommy and me class, but our facility needs help marketing these programs. I think that's the main crux of this situation is marketing. The available...

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you, next we have Gina Cruz on Zoom followed by Laura Thomas...we do...Gina Cruz no, Gina Cruz. We have Laura Thomas.

Laura Thomas      I'm here.

Nick Kovacevich      Okay.

Laura Thomas      Can you hear me Okay?

Nick Kovacevich      We can hear you. You got three minutes.

Laura Thomas      Thank you very much. So hello, my name is Laura Thomas. I do not bored at the fairgrounds but I brought my horses to the emergency facilities in the past. I want to make sure that the fairgrounds equestrian center remains for future generations. Having owned horses for 40 years I understand the importance and the impact they have on humans. I was involved in 2009 when a previous board tried to shut down the Equestrian Center. It morphed into selling of the fairgrounds That was an unbelievable saga. And thanks to equestrians and other developers, dedicated volunteers, the fairgrounds was saved. I hope things were going really well at the Equestrian Center. It's full lots of public programming. People are happy their horses are there. The day before Thanksgiving, I was shocked when I heard Michelle Richards CEO of the fairgrounds interviewed on KFI radio, claiming that the Equestrian Center had been losing money for years. I knew this was not true. I just learned that the fair staff has taken over management this year. Richard's failed to disclose that it is under her management that they lost nearly a million dollars. Richard also failed to disclose that the Equestrian Center has been making money for years. Quite frankly, this is a management issue, not an equestrian center issue. There's plenty of problem programming offered to thanks to the skilled trainers that have dedicated their lives to teaching others young and old, rich and poor, physical or emotional disability. People about horses horses are magical they heal keeps kids out of trouble and off the street. The board should take steps to expand these for the public benefit. also serving as an emergency facility for public safety. a godsend when an emergency such as a fire

occurs. I have brought my horses here to be safe out of harm's way the board must prepare. Be at the ready for public safety. We know California's cow equine industry touches every part of the state from companion to competition horses to working a Quinn, equines and therapy horses. The miracle that has happened with horses daily at the equestrian center should be treasured, embraced and supported by this Fairborn. Board as the Centennial Farms and Hero Halls. I urge the Board to take steps to build partnerships and reach out to experienced horse people. Move forward with a realistic RFP. Find a knowledgeable Operator do everything you can to upgrade this facility is less and less time.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. We have a Briana Dombroske.

Briana Dombroske

Good afternoon. My name is Briana Dombroske and I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor. And I'm currently working as the program director of mustard seed ranch. We're a small nonprofit and we've been in Southern California since 1999. And we provide mental health services with horses to youth and young adults in the communities. We're currently serving youth in San Diego LA and here in Newport Beach. Our curriculum is a trauma based program and we provide services at no cost to the youth who have experienced an out of home placement or foster care. We've been currently working on setting up programming at the OC fairgrounds with Mackey Hamblin and Lisa Sabo to provide services to some of our existing clients, as well as some new partnerships. So we're currently serving the olive crest community, their foster care program and the Academy, Project kinship and the Reach Academy Phoenix House wraparound, and that was the court system. It's especially challenging to find horse facilities in urban areas where the needs of youth with trauma are the highest. There's a significant need for mental health services and especially experiential programs that are accessible to youth. I think that a lot of people here have touched on that and other programs that they would like to get going or already existing at the fairgrounds. As a program, we're always looking for new horse facilities and ability to connect with more clients. So to lose the ability to provide the services out of the fairgrounds would make services inaccessible to so many youth that we provide services for just as far as logistics and transportation. Trying to find new places, you know, San Juan Capistrano and OPA is too far for a lot of our clients to commute. So we would really appreciate the ability to provide these services to the fairgrounds. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. We have Caroline. And then we have Dan as the last speaker.

Caroline Coles

Thank you so much. My name is Carolyn Coles, I was born in Newport Beach, California. I wrote at the fairgrounds when I was about eight to

10 years old. I have two daughters, 15 and seven. They've ridden with Sabo OC vaulting and now all about horses. We have never owned horses. We could never own horses. I'm an area broker but I also work in the nonprofit sector for free And I just don't make that kind of money. I'm not a homeowner in the area and the way things are going, it's not looking like I'm going to my husband works in nonprofit. Definitely we have used our engagement with the horses to maintain our public, or our mental and physical health, we are not diagnosed, we're not part of special programs. We're part of regular programs. This is a public service. As a broker, I'd like to state that something private is owned by a private entity, something public is owned by the public. The value of land makes it such that we could not have anything accessible if it were privately owned, it may need to run at a deficit and wondering if it does, it sounds like possibly there's a management issue and it's been COVID. You know, let's have grace for each other. We had a lot of fear going on, it seems like we've gotten on the wrong track. But the fairgrounds is for the public. I am the public. I've always been here. You know, this is obviously invaluable. And we have so much creativity, I feel confident that something is workable. But how you could conceive of this as a private facility is unthinkable to me. It is public. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. And last speaker we have Dan, do we find Dan?

Dan Silverton

Yes, hello.

Nick Kovacevich

All right, then three minutes. Thank you.

Dan Silverton

Thank you. So the numbers revealed earlier by the board were a little bit surprising to me. A suggested \$1.1 million loss in this year, actual was in the 900 1000s. If the place was full in the 200 1000s \$700,000 left on the table because they're empty stalls, there is a management problem. Anyway, that's aside from what I had in mind because the public influence here is more than just person by person as you've heard stories from person after person. But this sport is hobby, this passion and a love for a particularly regal species and the connection to nature. It exists. The sport is seen more and more often televised and more streaming events. The public loves horses. The interest in these animals goes far and wide. The Fair Board has the opportunity to continue to support and foster equine appreciation, appreciation of all sorts and at all levels. How does Centennial farm work do you bus in students as well as allow the public to walk in? who administers this, it's been one year already have a new management in that room remodeled office that no programs have yet been put in place by the Fair employees. We all know the previous RFP was not well written and the expenses undertaken were not were unrealistic for continued fiscal support. I suggest the current RFP should

be rewritten to actually attract functional management gibberellin had suggested an ad hoc committee. There are many inexperienced professionals who can advise this board, as it seems as functionality has not been correctly addressed. An RFP and public benefit and access are not mutually exclusive. There are a couple of nonprofits operating on the property already with benefits to less fortunate than some. But that's not enough for a real goal of the public involvement. We've heard individual stories but for bigger numbers like us said about the centennial farm. That's really why shouldn't it be a fair employed administrators responsibility to put programs in place? Plus people in elderly need activities? Have them come watch your writing lesson they'd love it. Current professionals would gladly provide or accommodate scheduling I'm sure kids are are mad for horses. Very basic free lessons could be arranged for kids with interest after only seeing some equestrian...

Nick Kovacevich      Thank you. All right, that concludes our public comment for this item.

Lori Bacca      I've been on the phone for four hours and 20 minutes waiting for my turn. I could not get on the Zoom call. I'm on the phone line. Can I speak?

Nick Kovacevich      Yeah.

Lori Bacca      My name is Lisa Baca la equestrian coalition. I spoke earlier and I've waited for my turn.

Nick Kovacevich      You already spoke earlier.

Lori Bacca      But not on 8B I spoke the general public but not on Item 8b...

Nick Kovacevich      Okay, Proceed three minutes. Last speaker.

Lori Bacca      Sure. Thank you very much. My name is Lisa vaca Los Angeles equestrian coalition. I been on hold. And I cannot find the leadership committee or the Budget and Finance Committee agenda or minutes to reference what was discussed by the board at this meeting. So if there's a way to find that, I would really appreciate knowing where to go and look for that information. Since it's public information. I'd like to point out that the links on the website do not highlight the Equestrian Center as a hot link on your bar. It's difficult you have to go to public information. And down below, there's a link on your website for the Equestrian Center. So it's hard to find information. I'd also like to point out that your staff person, Hamill does not highlight the Equestrian Center. In her bio, she only highlights Heroes Hall and the Centennial Farms as far as creating new programs and marketing and outreach in her tenure at the center. And then on the website. Looking at your board of directors and staff, you have no equestrian expertise, either on the board of directors,

or on your staff to be able to really have a good foundation of awareness how to manage a facility. I am the owner and manager of the 70 stall facility in Sylmar, and it is a very tenuous environment with diesel prices, hay prices and the economy the way it is to turn a profit, but it can be done. So I'd like to encourage the board to really look at the Equestrian Center as an asset. But bringing in qualified managers who know this industry because it is an industry. And this is a public facility. It is not a private facility, I own a private facility, I don't have to have public notice board meetings when I do a meeting with my partners. So it is not also a gift of public funds, a gift of public funds was in your minutes, which I did find from the Attorney General's Office, which I have requested Attorney General BahnCard to do a ruling on the gift of public funds is when a elected official or a public entity buys a gift using public funds for someone or it is used to purchase gifts for the public. This is not that. So I encourage equestrian expertise to be brought in since it is lacking both on the board of directors and the staff to really build out a revenue generating RFP and platform. As you've heard today, it is possible to make this a greater, more enhanced, robust program. So I thank you for your time.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you. And that now does conclude our public comment period. So thank you to the speakers and the folks who attended today. We appreciate the input. So now we'll open up the board discussion as I preface a few hours ago. We do want to kind of address this larger question possibly first is, you know, we've heard from Josh, we've, we know what the sort of guidance is on on making this decision. And we have to ultimately make the decision is, you know, if we could operate this facility at a loss as it currently runs today, is that justifiable as a gift of public funds. And ultimately, we also need to decide if we want to continue with the RFP, which I believe we stated If it's unsuccessful, then we would have to close down the facility due to the gift of public funds issue. So getting ahead of ourselves, maybe we need to decide that first. And then we ultimately need to decide if we want to continue with the RFP or if we want to look at more public programming because that is kind of the common theme that we've been hearing. And the reason why we brought this back on the agenda. So I'll open it up at the board.

Doug Le Belle

Yeah, Chair Kovacevich if I could. And I afraid we're gonna lose a quorum at some point in time, because I'm gonna have to leave shortly, but I wanted to get my comments clearly in the record. First of all, I appreciate very much the passion that the equestrian users have stated. In deference to the last speaker, I do have some knowledge as a board member over many years In government, I was responsible for a very large equestrian operation and project that we put together in one community. And I'm very familiar with all of the aspects of how you manage and operate it. All of the board members bring to this table,

different business and professional experiences that contribute to the decision making process that we go through. And we do this every day on a daily basis. For the record, I just have to say a couple of things before I give my thoughts and depart. First of all, while I appreciate all the comments, I'm very disappointed that we as a board sat here for five hours, and three quarters of those who are here to express their opinions have now left. So what we're now at a point where the decision is going to be discussed, and those that express their concerns have left, so that disappoints me, personally as a director. Secondly, we are not mismanaging the operation of the Equestrian Center, we are now managing it properly. We as a Board have a fiduciary responsibility. This is state property, we're state appointees, we have to make sure that we are addressing the issues relative to pay prevailing wages, proper liability insurance, et cetera, et cetera. We can't go back in time. But I'll just say that for a number of years, it probably could have been done a little differently. But the point is, we've now through our CEO have established a policy, whereby we are now managing it appropriately. Secondly, this board has no desire at this point in time, we've not expressed any desire to build a parking lot or put in a gas station or do anything else. We are here merely trying to put things in perspective, in terms of the operation of the facility, we have a number of private businesses on this property that have gone through a competitive bid process to become a private business. Whether it is the carnival operator, the Midway operator, the food and beverage provider, or the little mom and pop that is renting a space from us for selling T shirts during the fair, they are all paying market rent for being able to do that. That is not the case. At the Equestrian Center. We have private businesses who are running for profit businesses on the center. And we need to be adequately compensated for that cost. And I think the way to do that very clearly is just put the RFP on hold. And let's submit proposals for training facility training operators. Maybe we have behind maybe we have multiple, they can tell us if they're not making a profit. They'll certainly indicate that when they submit their proposal. We've heard the name Lisa and Brian Sabo mentioned numerous, numerous times, they are probably the primary training operator there. They board a number of horses, if you look at the earlier consent calendar, they've just paid \$50,000 to board horses and rent facilities from us for a three month period \$200,000 a year. I'm sure that those \$200,000 a year expenses are somehow being compensated for. But I don't know that for a fact. What I do know to get to the bottom line and determine whether or not we have a profit making center there, the only way to determine that is solicit proposals for trainers. And at the same time when you solicit proposals for trainers. They can include in their proposal, what type of nonprofit benefits that they provide in terms of the various programs. We've heard about changing strides. We've heard about this. We've heard about that. Give us some numbers. Let us as a board evaluate what it is that you're doing.

That creates a public benefit. Because at the bottom, the bottom line, and attorney Kaplan mentioned this last month. It's ultimately this board's decision, five of us are going to decide whether there's a public benefit there or not. And to be able to do that we need to know what you're doing when you're doing Seeing it, who's benefiting by it. And equally important, if you're running a private business on public property, I want to know what the profit is that you are generating off of that private business. We've had multiple speakers here, saying that they're employees of Lisa and Brian Sabo, I want to know more about what you're doing on that property. You list yourself as the Newport Mesa Writing Center, on the website. And you're doing business at the OC fair and Events Center Equestrian Center, I assume you're doing it for more than to break even. And I'm not be critical of that. But I need to know more about what the trainers are doing, and what kind of benefits they are providing. So that we can make an informed decision on the public benefit that has been provided to us. And again, I just have to say, thank you for complimenting my red shirt. I also want to make it very clear that that I really is one board member, in very, very disappointed that those who chose to come here and express their concerns, have also chosen to leave without hearing what this board says in terms of it. So I probably, yeah, we all have, I appreciate that. But, you know, we're sitting here as volunteers trying to do the best we can to help the shell set policy and manage the fair and event center operations. And I've just very frustrated if that doesn't show over the fact that Michelle and her staff are being criticized for mismanagement? No, they should be complimented for doing it the right way to protect the interest of the 32nd da and the state of California. So with that, I guess I'm done. In more ways then one probably.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Director.

Robert Ruiz

This is Director Ruiz.

Nick Kovacevich

Go ahead Director Ruiz.

Robert Ruiz

Thank you. Thank you, Chairman. I got I couldn't have said any better what Director La Belle just said, first of all, I want to thank everybody who came out and spoke very powerful testimonies. And I I'm sure we all agreed that there's a benefit to horse therapy. We're not disputing that here. You know, I I wanted to hear more along the lines of how can we maximize your question to Senator for a public benefit to the public? What kind of ideas we can, you know, implement and develop for a public benefit? I don't need a question, Senator. We heard you know, lies of we're going to turn it into a parking lot. I've been here for eight years now appointed as a volunteer. We have never discussed turning that into a parking lot ever. We have never discussed turning it into an office

building. So I don't know where these people are getting these lies from. Yes, I just want to see a public benefit that is given back to the public. I know someone personally who her daughter goes and rides horses there, but she pays \$85 an hour. I don't know if that's the going rate or I I don't know. But to me, I want to know if someone from like the inner cities have sent and what have you wants to send their kids to go right? They can't afford you to \$5 an hour. Can someone do that and go and ride for free? I don't know. I doubt it. But I like LaBelle, Director Labelle say is is, is I want to see the RFP process go through. Let's go through that first. Let's see what comes out of that. But in no way sir. We're here to make a decision to close this facility today. And that's all I heard most of the speakers were telling us not to close it that's not what we're here for. We're here like it says item A be discussion regarding the development of public programming. That's what we're here to discuss. And so I am disappointed to see all most of the people who left I am on Zoom. I intended to be there in person but unfortunately, we had a COVID breakout here at the office and for the safety of everyone there. I just decided to do it by zoom but I wasn't intending to be there in person. Yeah, I'm looking at the screen and half of the people are gone. I am a union rep. And I do attend quite a bit of city council meetings and whenever we're pushing for an item, if we are there until the decision is made, we don't leave, and then wait to hear what happens. And so that's what I was hoping would happen here. Supervisor Katrina, well, we did throw out some code, I guess that out there, maybe we can, you know, see if we can have some after school programs for kids so they can ride horses, and so on. And so that's what I wanted to hear. There was only one person who spoke, I believe she runs a stall, and she did mention, she does offer some, some free riding lessons, what have you, she does offer a free benefit to the public. But I don't see many other private operators do that, at least I don't know if they do or not. But that's what I wanted to hear. Again, we've been here for quite a while I do have another meeting at three o'clock, so I'll hang out as much as I can. But again, we're not here to say a bank to make a final decision, whether we close it or or, or we keep operating, we just want to make sure that we are not, you know, using public funds, and giving them away, you know, to the public. So that's just my say, and, again, I'm just, I want the RFP process to go through and we'll see what comes out of that. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you Director Ruiz.

Barbera Bagneres

Took about two minutes. I am not in favor of closing the Equestrian Center, what I'm in favor, is to give public access to that facility. It belongs to the state, this bear board has to have the fiduciary responsibility to make sure that it's operating properly. I want to see it stick around but not in the current model that we're using it. The model that we're using right now is private borders and trainers who are hat who

have changed in strides is working through them to do their public programming. I'd like to see us develop what that public programming is. So that we can have a fully just like Centennial forums, and just like he was hard. Well, the public is welcome to come. Maybe we have to own our own horses. I'm not sure exactly how that's gonna look. But I think this staff should go out and look at these things. We heard a lot of suggestions today of what we could do. I was really excited about that there were a lot of things that were said that we could do. And we'd like to do it, the private businesses are the is causing us this situation today. And that we cannot make decisions for the property because of the private businesses. So I just think we this, I'm glad that we're doing this today. It was painful. But this is not the first time we've had a painful conversation. This is not the first time we've had a five hour six hour seven hour board meeting. We needed to talk about this. We've never talked about the gift of public funds. We've never talked about these issues. And I think now we get to let the public know where we stand on this. So I'm very happy that we're able to talk about I cannot wait director La Belle said was spot on. And I agree totally with what he said. And before I was to make a motion I would anybody else that needs to speak.

Nick Kovacevich

Yeah, I want to give ample time for the discussion. But Thank you Vice Chair binaries. Director Pham is on Zoom. And he'd like to put his comments out there. Go ahead, Director Pham.

Newton Pham

Yeah, just appreciate everyone's time. Sorry, to come and go briefly. I do have a meeting at... So wanted to get to some of my thoughts out there real quick, pretty simple. And from my perspective, if I were to have preference, it would be just to continue on with what we had decided previously with the RFP process, and we could figure out how to repurpose or theoretically, you know, if there were no operators that could come forth and operate at a profit or operating even at break even private on a private basis that someone that with the expertise that they know that people in the public want, then we can figure out, you know, an alternate path later. But for me, I still think we should just continue the course.

Nick Kovacevich

Thanks, Director Pham. Director, Rubacalva-Garcia.

Natalie  
Rubalcava-Garcia

Thank you. I just want to say thank you to all the public commenters who came out today and it's always beneficial to hear the perspective of the individuals who are utilizing the space. And I also want to recognize the fact that many of you did talk about having additional access to the public, which I think is the priority. Ready for this board. And I would hope that if director vineyards is going to make a motion that it does include having staff go back and look at how we make the Equestrian

Center more accessible to the public, because that's what I think the issue is right now is that we did see comparisons between the Heroes Hall as well as the, our farm. But one of the differences I think that we all have to remember is we don't have private businesses operating for profit on either of those facilities that are located on state property. So that is the I think, number one issue and to kind of compare it to a park, I think somebody talked about a skate park and other dog park, those are all either run by a municipality, but they don't have private operators who are also conducting business on the site. So I think that has to be something that's really analyzed. I do appreciate the leadership committee bringing this item so that we could hear from the public and also discuss what our vision for public access looks like. I think for me, it would be having somebody who could just walk onto the site and access a horse if they wanted to ride during normal business hours. And I'm not sure that's happening right now. For me, I have had an opportunity as a board member to tour the Equestrian Center. And I think I was welcomed, because I'm a board member, I'm not sure that would have been the case, if I would have walked on off the streets, I probably don't have \$85, either an hour to pay towards something like that. But I think my vision, if we're going to share what that would look like would be to have school buses, who are coming on to the facility once or twice a week, and allowing the students to learn about horses and ride and all of the things that were mentioned here, but I'm not sure actually happening on the site now. So that would be something for me that would be most instrumental. I appreciate all of the benefits that horses offer. We heard from many people here, including the woman over here with a very adorable baby. But I do think that right now, all of those ideas that were shared are definitely things that I'm in favor of, but it's not currently happening. So those are Wish List wish list items. And I think that we all have to remember, especially the individuals who came from who came to public comment from out of county, a lot of the things that were being said, are misconceptions, and not currently occurring on the fairgrounds. And I think we heard from operators that are in Los Angeles who are privately operating their businesses, that's currently happening now, but on state public property. So we as stewards of state money have to be very careful with how we're facilitating those funds. So for me, I'm going to give a wish list of things that because I want to make sure that we're sticking to the agenda item and making this five hours that we just spent listening to public comment worth the time that we all have here. Some of the ideas that I think that we could bring to the site would be a mounted unit. So we have several public safety agencies that actually have horses that are used to engage with members of the public, perhaps we partner with some of them and have them rent the facility to help offset expenses. So amount of unit, I did appreciate so my supervisor Katrina Foley's ideas in subsidizing some of the expenses here by having public accessible programming. So those are things I think we

should incorporate. I mentioned having schools come on site to learn educational equestrian coping skills, whatever that may be. But as long as it's going to balance our budget, because that really is the major issue. I also think that the gift of public funds, so that is, I think, was also a little misconceived in some of the public comment. So having members of the public access our facility or the state's facility, not mine state, the state's facility is not, yes, the public is invited to to purchase a service that's operated by a private business. That's different. So that is your yes, you're a member of the public, but it's still on a privately operated business. So I think that's something that we have to keep in mind. The gift of public funds when we're losing money on a facility that's being operated publicly or privately, that is, that is different than not breaking even for a facility like Heroes hall that may be running in a deficit, but offering nothing but public access. So I think we just need to keep that in mind. And then if this item comes back for further discussion, I would ask the attorney general's office to provide more detail perhaps we have a grid that shows public use like this Know that it can clearly be stated, What is a gift of public funds. I heard somebody referenced it and it was not completely accurate, be tested payments for things from elected officials are different than giving public funds away in the in the way that we've been operating here at the fairgrounds. So that's, that concludes my comments. But I really think that we should focus on how we make this more publicly accessible. I don't think anybody on the board has it out for a quest trans. I think we all appreciate the service. And we know many of you very well and appreciate you respect you. And as a person who advocates on behalf of small business, there's, I always want to make sure that we're looking for ways to help our small businesses survive. You guys are the backbone of our local economy. But I also think we have to keep in mind the what's in the best interest of the fairgrounds. So with that, I'm going to go ahead and turn it back over to our chair.

Nick Kovacevich

Director Jackson.

Dimitria Jackson

Good afternoon, everyone. I do appreciate the comments, the robust discussion, the passion that exudes in this room, every time I've been to a meeting. And especially today, it's been a long meeting. And a lot was said, one of the things that came out of it, I understand that there's a lot of things that are happening here on the fairgrounds at the Equestrian Center, things of the nature of therapy, we heard about equine therapy, working with foster youth and things of that nature. My question, and I don't know not to be answered right now. But I'm just curious, like we talked about public access. If I wanted to send someone there if I wanted to go there, I could someone compare to made an example with the Irvine Regional Center. If you wanted to go ride a pony, you can go on and get online pay a fee, and you can ride a pony. I don't know how that

works here. I don't know if maybe it does. I mean, you can just walk in and just say, you know, I want to do pony rides. Is it Tuesday are they offered to at this point in time? I'm not aware of how that happens. And that's something I would like to know. But I also want to know, if you if a child if you needed your child to access therapy, how do you go about doing that? Who do you reach out to? Who do you contact to make that happen? How do you set that appointment? How do you determine how much that costs? Is that a discounted program? Is it a free program? There's a lot of things that would benefit the public and actually do benefit the public. But I'm not sure the public is fully aware of how to access those benefits.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Director Jackson. I appreciate the board's the the comments from my colleagues here. I think, you know, we did spend a lot of time and I'd like to get to a resolution. Although we've lost some of our our board members, we still do have a quorum. But I think, from my perspective, the this is a challenge, right is we've all been saying the same thing. I mean, people in the public's are saying, hey, look, there's a public benefit for us, we're getting a public benefit. And other people have said, Hey, we need more public benefit. And we've had elected officials say, hey, let's work together to get more public benefit to this facility. And whereas the board like Hey, we love this facility, and that the horse is being accessible to the community. So like we're literally all saying the same thing. But we've been put in a tough position, right, where when we've tried to, to go with an RFP, there's been complaints that that's not going to work. And then when we fund it ourselves, we come up with this gift of public funds issue. And I think one of the things that we're dealing with here is we have a layer in the middle, right, we have these private businesses that are possibly providing this, this gift of art, I mean, that's public services that are valuable, and something we would pay for, but because they're in the middle between us, we don't have that direct line of sight and that visibility, to really feel good about making sure that the public has access to these to these grounds and that they're getting that benefit. And so I think it's something where we need to decide, do we want to continue with business as usual? If an operator comes in, on the RFP to take over, we do avoid the gift of public funds issue, right? Because at that point, we're not spending our own money, the operator is taking over the expenses. Now, we'd like to think that that's still a good public benefit, even under that private operator. But again, we don't know because we're not operating it. The other option that we have is we can say, Hey, let us operate it. And really, truly now have visibility to ensure that that the public has access and we're actually doing what we want to get, you know, whether it's and people have said this all day, right? We can, we can still use it as an animal evacuation center. We can still have professionals train. We can still have people busing in which we don't have today but people busing it we can have

free lessons which we might have today, we don't know. But we can have that under a different model under a different model. And I think that's the direction that I think we would need to go, in order to make sure that we number one, avoid this gift of public funds issue, because now we're directly overseen. And we know the benefit that the public's getting. And number two, we can properly implement all of the access and all of these things that people have been talking about that they want in that facility. And I just don't know how we can work together. And I think it's what we got to do over the coming months is, okay, we're going to, we're going to have to change the model. And we want this facility to still be here. We heard from all these people that are benefiting, we do not want that to go away. How do we make the new model work? How do we can we still provide the training that people want, and are getting the benefit from today, under the new model, that's where I'm at, I would like to see the the model change so that we can feel really good. And that were in control and know that the public is really benefiting from this, but not lose those things that so many people here today have come and said that they find value in this facility.

Natalie  
Rubalcava-Garcia

Now, so I think the thing that we need to keep in mind is that when we had an operator, was it Rick Canton, so that went through a competitive bid process, so and when he went away, we now have private businesses operating that never went through a competitive bid. So that in and of itself could be a violation of state policy. So I think that is something that we need to keep in mind as well. So I agree on the model, part of it. And I think there's a lot that needs to be modified so that we can be back in compliance with the way that the property is used publicly. So that's something that we should probably just from an analysis perspective, keep that in mind as well is that perhaps all of these businesses do have to go through some sort of competitive bid model, which gives us access to, you know, financials and so by those are all things because those businesses would be part of the public records request process now, which they're currently sheltered from, because they were through a private operator. And I think that's something we overlooked.

Nick Kovacevich

Yeah, we have overlooked that that's a great point.

Barbera Bagneres

And so my only question too, is, if we, if we phase out the current model, then there's no need for the RFP.

Nick Kovacevich

Yeah, I mean, that's, that's the issue, I think is is the RFP, if we move forward with the RFP and bring in a private operator, it is going to be business as usual, we're not going to be able to infringe on that operator, especially the way that RFP is written. I mean, imagine if you lease a piece of property from somebody, and then they said, Hey, we're gonna start bussing people in and doing shows on you're like, No, you're paying

for that, right? So you have autonomy and authority over it. And so that's why I think it's, the leadership committee decided that we needed to bring this up now. Because if we land, if we if we continue with the RFP, and we land and operator, then that that model is set, and that model is continuing, we don't have a gift of public funds issue. So it's something we can certainly do as board, we can decide, hey, we'll just keep business as usual. We'll run the RFP, bring in an operator, take the financial burden off of us. And we're back to but I think about, again, what people are saying, and I know people, it's funny, because people are arguing to keep the existing model. But what I'm hearing is actually pushing me to think that the new model could provide much better service to the public. We talked about investing. And I know we've you know, we have the site plan. They say that it's not in the site plan. It's in the phase two, I believe, to look at that facility.

Michele Richards

It's the I think it's phase seven or eight. Yeah, they build the Agra plex. Yeah.

Nick Kovacevich

And so like, we can deploy capital to something like this and actually improve it. Like I worry if we do the RFP, like whoever we bring in is going to be adding minimal capital, right, because they're, they're trying to maximize profit. And so if we really are listening to what people are saying, and they're saying, Hey, this is a one of a kind opportunity to have this type of facility in Orange County, and we as a board think, Wow, can we make it like way better, and give way more access? That's where my head goes. And change is really hard, right? Anytime you change, your people don't like change, and the easiest thing to do is just keep the status quo. And I think we need to decide if do we want to try to keep the status quo we don't even know if in our He operators going to take it over, we heard for months from the same community that, you know, nobody would nobody would take an RFP right now they're now they're obviously arguing that we should do the RFP because it's, uh, you know, moving to a different model is obviously a threat. I, I think that I would like to find a model that's inclusive, that actually includes the stakeholders that are here and that have enjoyed the facility and have financially benefited from that. I'd like them to be included to, I don't know how that's going to be, but that's going to take work with with Michelle the staff and getting those workshops going with with constituents, but we do have elected officials that have also said, hey, I want to help I want to bring more programming. So to me, it's like, yeah, it's it's hard to think about change, and nobody wants to let go of something that you know, they love and that they're accustomed to. But I'm thinking about how good can this be, given that we have businesses there today that are benefiting, you know, the people that are coming in, and they're loving it, we have people in the community that are saying, hey, I want to do this and that and more. And we've got, you know, all

the things I mentioned the animal evacuation center that we can continue to provide. Plus, plus, plus busing people and plus free lessons put all this horse shows, we don't even know, right, we got to do the work. But I think that that's how I would look at it as in, do we want to keep the status quo? Assuming we can get somebody in on the RFP? Or do we want to say, hey, we've got to move to a new model where we have more direct visibility into the benefits of the Public means we can spend our money, we don't have to operate at a profit, we can invest our own dollars, into this Equestrian Center and into providing the services for the community, which is exciting. But it's a different model. It's a different model.

Barbera Bagneres

I agree with everything, you just said, I'm going to make a motion. And I would be open to amendment, if needed. But I would move that we put the RFP on hold. we discontinue the current private business model that currently exist. And we direct staff to research and recommend how to use that seven and a half acres to serve the public and meet our expectations for my strategic plan.

Nick Kovacevich

And I'll just comment on that. The I believe we when we previously gave a timeline for the RFP because I want to be also thoughtful of the people that are boarding there now and training there now. And it's like we don't want to have something so abrupt but what date do we give.

Michele Richards

The last board decision was that we didn't find an operator by the end of March that we would move to cease operations by the end of March. By the end of March. I think it was by the end of June. So yeah, sorry, that the board would vote if there were an operator that was identified that would have gone on the march. agenda. So if the if, by March, I think that the motion was an idea...

Barbera Bagneres

But that motion doesn't have a second yet. So there's what we talked about.

Natalie  
Rubalcava-Garcia

We talked about a six month off ramp...

Nick Kovacevich

So my point is with your motion, I would like to just clarify if we could, under your motion, also ensure that we kind of stick to that six month guidance we gave, is it going to take us time to figure out the new model anyways. Right.

Barbera Bagneres

So the motion said put the RFP on hold.

Nick Kovacevich

Yep.

Barbera Bagneres      And it said discontinue the current model.

Nick Kovacevich      And so I'm trying to tie down. I'm trying to the same timeframe that we did before just to be fair.

Barbera Bagneres      Oh, so the this continue the current model to the same timeframe. That was previously this guy said yeah. And then research what this new model looks like to bring it to the board.

Nick Kovacevich      And that would give us kind of at least six months to kind of get that in order. Right.

Barbera Bagneres      And so until we get a second it could be...

Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia      In June right. So to that would be six months... would approximately be by June.

Barbera Bagneres      By June. Yeah.

Nick Kovacevich      I think, Barbara, if I could summarize your motion tell me if I'm correct or not, is we would we would pull the RFP we would alert people that the model will be changing effective June so that they're on alert of that. And then we would spend time with staff and the public and the private operators that are there now to figure out that that next model.

Barbera Bagneres      And that is that the stenographer, you got all that? Because that's a perfect motion. I submit that motion. Second. If there's no second, then...

Nick Kovacevich      We can have further comments if you guys like or somebody can second...

Barbera Bagneres      With lack of a second is going to die.

Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia      I second the motion.

Josh Kaplan      to the chair, can you read that motion again, I kind of lost me the appropriate motion.

Nick Kovacevich      The motion is to put the RFP on hold to notify the current operators that the model is going to be changing effective June and direct staff to work with the board the public and other stakeholders to come up with that new model between now and June.

Josh Kaplan      Got it. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich      We have a motion and a second So I think we will have to do a roll call,

we do have to do a roll call on that.

Summer Angus Chair Kovacevich?

Nick Kovacevich Yes.

Summer Angus Vice Chair Bagneris?

Summer Angus Director Rubalcava-Garcia?

Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia Yes.

Summer Angus Director Ruiz?

Robert Ruiz Yes.

Summer Angus And director Jackson?

Dimitria Jackson Yes.

Summer Angus Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich Okay, thank you. Yeah, we're gonna, I don't know if you need to, I think we're going to do we have... we should move?

Barbera Bagneres Chair Kovasevich, I move that we table the remaining agenda items until our January meeting.

Robert Ruiz Second. Director Ruiz.

Nick Kovacevich Okay, so the motion is to table A agenda items, 8C, D, E and F. And pick those up at the next meeting. We have a motion and a second, Summer.

Summer Angus Chair Kovacevich?

Nick Kovacevich Yes.

Summer Angus Vice Chair Bagneris?

Barbera Bagneres Yes.

Summer Angus Director Rubacalva-Garcia?

Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia Yes.

Summer Angus Director Ruiz.

Robert Ruiz Yes.

Summer Angus And Director Jackson?

Dimitria Jackson Yes.

Summer Angus Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich Okay, item nine is closed session. We have no closed session this month, so we can move to the CEO updates item 10

Michele Richards Yeah, the CEOs updates are going to also also move forward to

Nick Kovacevich Okay, yeah, just give us a brief update and show.

Michele Richards Okay, I wanted to thank Jericho basavich and Vice Chair binaries for attending our employee Thanksgiving Potluck that meant a lot to our employees to have you both there. So, thank you so much. I also wanted to remind the board that new Bagley Keene provisions go into place January 1, in a nutshell, what that means is that we are permitted to continue the remote zoom Yep. So you can participate in zoom on Zoom. Get my notes here. However, we must have a quorum in this room in person. So there has to be at least five board members thank you present. But you do not need to disclose your location, if you are remoting. In that was a provision from from before. So board members who are participating remotely must identify if there is anyone else in the room with them. That is over the age of 18. Yes, go now. Okay, there we go. Okay. So it does give us a lot of flexibility. And there are just you know, a few months. So, obviously, we would encourage board members to let us know as soon as possible. If you're going to be meeting to remote in we would love to have you in person here, obviously. But we know that that's not always possible. So just a few updates there and then a quorum of the board must be in person. I mentioned that before. And there are a few other points that have more to do with how, you know staff sets things up. But those are the most important points there. I'm going to turn things over real quickly to can, yes, a quick operational update.

Ken Karns Ken Karns

I'll try to use my auction speed in preparation of content, condensed fair time campground for 2024 and 2025. Along with the potential placement locations of permanent midway, we're washing shower buildings. The small gazebo in the campground has Then demolished. A notice has been placed on the website related to our year round

miscellaneous camping campground closure with the construction activity along with event commitments. At this time, it's unlikely we'll be able to accommodate traveling campers from April 2024 to April 2025. With the removal of building 15 the reinstallation of the OC wine society office trailer along with temporary storage trailers has been completed. Some of the area will be repurposed for imagine ology and fare and changes are under development. And lastly, we had a visit from the CEO of the Melbourne royal in Australia. Brad was extremely impressed with our property and operations. And that's all for this month.

Michele Richards

And Joan, do you want to just give a brief update on what's coming up? Event wise?

Joan Hamill

Absolutely. We have a few events coming up tonight December 14 in the hangar we have the last fight club OC taking place, share ourselves adoptive family will be taking place December 19 and 20th. This is a food out to the those needy in the art community. Farmers Markets continues with the exception of my call, I'm going to call that out 1228 December 28. There will be no farmers market. And we have a new event to our property the grand New Year's Eve Countdown. This is a Vietnamese and US Vietnamese singers an array of well known and renowned singers. And they'll count in the new years on December 31. And of course winter fest continues through January 7. Heroes Hall excuse me, Centennial farm and Heroes Hall we have a troublemaking class that takes place this Saturday. And then in Heroes Hall our exhibit valor and virtue Jewish American Medal of Honor recipients. This exhibit runs through March 2024. And that concludes my report.

Michele Richards

And Happy belated birthday to chair Kovacevich. December 8th was it?

Nick Kovacevich

December 8th.

Michele Richards

Happy birthday. Sagittarius. Right. Yes. Last month, yeah, the next board meeting January 25. Right here. And I would like to invite the board the public, our staff, I think they're being notified right now. For a little holiday celebration, too. So if you're able to stay please do and some or maybe I could get some help bringing the treats out. All right. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Okay, thank you. We will close, close here with the Board of Directors matters of information. So I'll start with Director Ruiz on Zoom.

Robert Ruiz

Thank you. Director Kovacevich, I really don't have anything other than just want to wish everyone a Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas Kwanzaa. Whichever one you celebrate and just be safe out there. COVID is, unfortunately has reared its ugly head again. And just keep

your mask on and be safe. That's it. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Director Jackson.

Dimitria Jackson

Not much to add, I just wanted to once again, thank all of the public members who came today to share with us. And I wanted to wish everybody Happy Holidays, Season's Greetings, a happy new year. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Director Rubicalva-Garcia.

Natalie  
Rubalcava-Garcia

I think yeah, I just also want to thank our staff for everything that you guys do and appreciate and and I hope you get to take some time off for the holidays. And then if you are in the position to give to a local nonprofit, or I know there's a lot of toy drives that are going on right now that are under they have not received enough gifts to help families. So if you know of one, please and if you can, please a gift. Thank you.

Nick Kovacevich

Vice chair?

Barbera Bagneres

Sure. I want to first thank you, chair Kovacevich. This was a tough meeting your first five our meeting. Unfortunately, I've sat through a couple of days. But I appreciate your direction, your guidance, how you let us into it and how you brought us to the end. And so I really, really appreciate that happy birthday. I would sing but I don't know. Maybe I'll do it later. But happy birthday. And then I want to thank the public they came out especially those young kids. They had to be away from school. They had to get to that microphone. Some people were nervous that when the little girl didn't come to the microphone, but this is a start for them, you know, to be able to sit, sit, stand in front of the public and express themselves. So I was really appreciative to hear those comments, and everybody who came out and I just hoped that, as we move forward, change is hard. But a lot of times it's necessary. And I think that we're going to build something bigger and better and greater for the public good. And that's what we're here for. So thank you for this meeting, thank the staff, because it takes a lot to put these meetings together and manage the zoom and the manage the crowd, etc, the, the, the speaker went out in the in the Fourier had to, you know, make the shift and go get it fixed. So, appreciate everyone, and Happy Holidays, enjoy, be safe, and we will see you in the new year.

Nick Kovacevich

Thank you, Vice Chair, and I echo your same comments. It was a obviously a challenging meeting. And it's always tough when it feels like, you know, people are upset about decisions that were made. But I agree with you, I think I'm going to try to take the perspective because I truly believe it, that we will do something much bigger and greater. And

I want to think about the people that are going to be loving what this becomes. And I hope it's every one of the people that were here as well, that are saying the same thing in a year. So I'm, it's on us, we got to deliver, but I think we've got the right decision. So thank you for my colleagues for working through that and getting to that decision. And yeah, I mean, you know, it's hard say anything else after all that but it is the holidays. And CEO Richards is opening up the room here with some treats. So thank you for that. And I hope that everybody does have an opportunity to spend time with family. Enjoy your family, I will be going to winter Fest this weekend with my family. So take advantage of that. And I think my wife's going to that truffle class too. So yeah, we're gonna be busy this weekend. But yeah, everyone stay safe and have a good holiday. Happy New Year. And I think 2024 is going to be great. We've got good news from Chairman Powell on the rate cuts. So I'll take that as it's gonna be a good year next year. Thank you all and, again, if you can stay around, please do. Next meeting is January 25. This meeting is adjourned.