



BOARD OF DIRECTORS AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: **JANUARY 25, 2024** ITEM: **8E**

SUBJECT: **Presentation of Board Input on Vision for Public Programming at Equestrian Center and Vote on Direction to Staff**

DATE: January 19, 2024

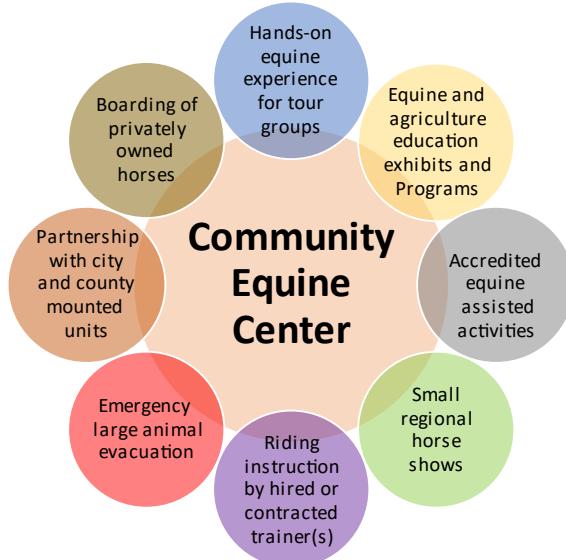
FROM: Michele Richards, CEO

PRESENTATION BY: Michele Richards, CEO

Action Item

BACKGROUND

At the December 2023 meeting, the Board of Directors voted to cancel the RFP to identify an outsourced operator, and instead directed staff to propose a new model to serve the wider public and meet the Board's strategic goals. During discussion, Board members shared their vision for a reimagined equestrian center which offered a variety of educational and recreational programs free and at low cost to the general public. Combined with staff discussions following the December Board meeting, the following vision was developed:



Hands-on equine experience for tour groups

After school youth organizations, school classes, senior groups, other community groups and the general public will be able to visit the equine center during designated days and hours to learn about and interact with horses.

Equine and agricultural exhibits

Through static exhibits and multimedia presentations, the public will be able to learn about the history and heritage of horses and their contribution to California agriculture, particularly in Orange County.

Equine assisted activities

Partnering with an established equine assisted certified therapeutic riding program in Orange County, the equine center could offer services to the community, complying with the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) standards by using PATH Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors (CTRI) and safety guidelines.

Small regional horse shows open to the public

With some facility adjustments, the equine center may have the opportunity to host small regional competitive horse shows that could be enjoyed by the general public.

Riding instruction by hired or contracted trainer(s)

Contracting with or hiring an equestrian trainer(s), and partnering with city and county resources, the equine center could offer low or no cost riding lessons to those in need in our community.

Emergency large animal evacuation

The equine center would continue its partnership with the County of Orange to serve as a large animal evacuation site during emergencies.

Partnership with city and county mounted units

There are several law enforcement mounted units in Orange County that could both board horses at the equine center and offer periodic free demonstrations to the public.

Boarding of privately owned horses

Once the public programs above are planned, and an overall programming schedule is established, remaining boarding opportunities can be offered for privately owned horses.

Staff has initiated exploratory discussions with industry and community resources that have expressed an interest in assisting with building this vision and agreed to be part of an advisory group. These resources include:

1. Equine and equestrian experts, Theresa Sears and Doug Lofstrom
2. Referrals from various education sectors
3. City of Costa Mesa, Mayor John Stephens and staff
4. Shea Therapeutic Riding Center CEO, Dana Butler-Moberg
5. Various horse show promoters
6. City and County law enforcement mounted units

Over the next few months, staff will:

1. continue to develop programming in partnership with the above resources
2. develop a plan for execution
3. recommend an operating budget
4. develop a timeline for roll-out

Staff will provide a monthly update at Board of Directors meetings to keep the Board and public apprised of progress.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval from the Board on the vision, and direction to move forward.