
From: Carol Graves
Sent: Wednesday, May 1, 2024 7:02 AM
To: nkovacevich@ocfairboard.com
Cc: OCF Executive; bbagneris@ocfairboard.com; tbilezikjian@ocfairboard.com; djackson@ocfairboard.com; dlabelle@ocfairboard.com; npham@ocfairboard.com; nrubalcava-garcia@ocfairboard.com; rruiz@ocfairboard.com
Subject: Re: Request For In Person Meeting Regarding the Equestrian Center - [Questionable]

Hi Nick,

Thank you for a prompt response and I appreciate your trying to clarify things but there ARE still many, many worrying things in what is being said and not said that require an in-person meeting.

1. You say, "The Board has decided that the facility will be moved to a hybrid community facility where private boarders and trainers can still utilize (like under the old model) but where half the facility will be used strictly for public benefit programming, controlled by the District."

Question/Clarification:

- You say, "like the old model", but you've said THE CURRENT EQUESTRIAN PROGRAMS, NON PROFITS, and TENANTS wouldn't have access to the full facility because we don't offer a 'public benefit' (which current tenants do). I'm not against you bringing in strictly public benefit programming controlled by the District but it's wrong to push us out of half of the facility because you fail to acknowledge the public benefit currently being provided simply because you don't control it. Also restricting our use would create hazards for horses and riders if you try and cram too many horses into an arena, which is my understanding of the plan.
- It's very telling that you refer to women owned business and non-profits as 'private boarders'. This choice in language feeds the stereotype that is very unfair to your current tenants providing benefit to the public.
- Also, I'm not aware of anyone against public programming. We're against the outlandish rate hike which you need to rescind because you say we don't provide a public benefit, which simply isn't true AND BECAUSE YOUR LEADERSHIP AND MISMANAGEMENT CAUSED A MASSIVE DEFICIT.

1. You say, "The details from here are left to the Staff and the Facilities Committee to determine and implement."

Question/Clarification:

There is NO publicly viewable plan. There is no plan, no budget, and zero information for us to REVIEW about what you want to do. We were told in December we would be involved, but you haven't done that. Instead, after raising our rates 20% or so last year you want to raise them another 65% this year based on what? A bad, OVERPRICED contract that has nothing to do with the new "vision".

1. You say, "As Chairman, I have the power to put items on the agenda, but as I stated I do not see this item going back on the agenda because we have already voted to approve the new vision and we feel good about the direction we are headed and are not going to be reversing course."

Question/Clarification:

You are conflating two things here that need to be parsed out. As the Chairman, you have the power to put things on the agenda. Put on the agenda to give A 30-day notice to Lopez Works and rescind the 65% increase to current tenants UNTIL AN RFP CAN GO OUT FOR A QUALIFIED AND AFFORDABLE NEW OPERATOR. That's what I'm asking you to do. You can like your "vision" all you want and move forward with it, but the fiscally irresponsible contract with Lopez Works is a separate matter. Let me be clear there are two issues 1) Your new vision THAT SQUEEZES OUT AND RESTRICTS CURRENT TENANTS and 2) THE bad contract with Lopez Works that has cost taxpayers OVER 1M in losses in ONLY 15 months. I want to be VERY CLEAR – I'm not asking to put on the agenda that you reimagine your "vision". I'm asking you to put on your agenda the following:

- Fire Lopez Works which you can do with a 30-day notice FOR ANY REASON.
- Open an RFP and keep it open for 30 days.
- Hire temporary workers until new operator is found.
- Rescind the rate hike.

1. You say, "If you want tweaks and changes to the details, then again those will not be done at the Board level but rather with Staff

which is why I made the comment about directing your efforts there.”

Question/Clarification:

Please provide the names and contact information of the people you name as ‘staff’.

1. You say, “Lastly, the Board also directed Staff to review the Lopez contract and find any possible cost savings. This is underway and I think you heard last week that they already found \$151 of reduction in boarding fees monthly.”

Question/Clarification: I must say, as a taxpayer, that the fact that this has gone on for 15 months before anyone has reviewed it is really unacceptable. The taxpayers of California have lost a little over \$1,000,000 because of the fiscally irresponsible and wasteful contract with Lopez Works. This contract, being so outrageously expensive, was brought to your attention many times and nothing was done to stop the bleeding of taxpayer funds. We expect better. Although I’m happy it’s being reviewed now, I don’t want to gloss over the fact that the wasteful spending has been going on for over a year despite many people speaking up.

Things not addressed in your response:

- The cruel conditions the horses are currently living under because of the mismanagement of Lopez Works. Injured and underfed horses, horses getting sores from lack of shavings wasn’t even mentioned in your response. Because you, the board, and staff have been informed about these conditions and it remains unaddressed, from where I sit, I consider all of you negligent in the care and mismanagement of these horses, their health and riders safety. As I said, it’s not Lopez Work’s fault they’re in over their head, it’s your fault for putting them there. You have absolutely NO BUSINESS bringing in any other animals to the EQC until this is corrected.

- The fact that the board talks about us as tenants with contempt. After we have struggled and worked very hard and sacrificed so much to invest in our daughter’s sport it feels like a spit in the face to be written off as ‘affluent’ and be told we don’t look like the people you want there. This is not only wildly inappropriate but an unfortunate turn in the conversation that just shouldn’t happen. I would like the board to acknowledge that we have every socio-economic group there.

- You are financially punishing women owned businesses and non-profits because you don't value them, what they do for the community, and you don't want to work with them. That's what you're doing. Not just you, the board and the staff are ruining businesses and non-profits that women have spent their entire lives building up. That is completely disgraceful yet still avoidable if you and the other necessary people would just be willing to meet and talk to us.

I also just want to mention that my 17 year old daughter is taking time this Saturday to work with a child in the Foster Care system to have a horse experience. These are the kinds of things you're wrecking with your policies. I don't think any of you want to be known for that.

Please let me know when and who can meet and sit down and talk with us.

Thank you,
Carol Graves

Nick Kovacevich <nkovacevich@ocfairboard.com>

To:You

Mon 4/29/2024 2:33 PM

Hi Carol, it was good speaking with you after the meeting and thank you for sharing your personal story about how these horses have positively impacted you and your family.

Sorry if I left you with confusion. I was stating that the Board will decide on direction but the Staff will work on the details. The Board has decided that the facility will be moved to a hybrid community facility where private boarders and trainers can still utilize (like under the old model) but where half the facility will be used strictly for public benefit programming, controlled by the District. The details from here are left to the Staff and the Facilities Committee to determine and implement. The broader Board will be generally receiving updates but will not have much say in the specifics, assuming the vision is being adhered to of course.

So, my comments were at this point to focus your efforts on communicating with Staff and the Facilities committee since they were directed by the Board to execute on bringing the new vision to life. As Chairman, I have the power to put items on the agenda, but as I stated I do not see this item going back on the agenda because we have already voted to approve the new vision and we feel good about the direction we are headed and are not going to be reversing course. If you want tweaks and changes to the details, then again those will not be done at the Board level but rather with Staff which is why I made the comment about directing your efforts there.

Lastly, the Board also directed Staff to review the Lopez contract and find any possible cost savings. This is underway and I think you heard last week that they already found \$151 of reduction in boarding fees monthly. The Staff will continue to progress, under the Board's direction, to make the new equine center vision come to life. Hopefully the legacy boarders and trainers can continue to collaborate with Staff as the details are being determined and the new model rolls out.

Thank you,

Nick Kovacevich

Chairman of the Board

32nd District Agricultural Association

Orange County Fair & Events Center

nkovacevich@ocfairboard.com