

## OCFEC Board Meeting May 23, 2024

**Nick Kovacevich** Good morning everyone. I'm going to call the meeting to order. All matters noticed on this agenda in any category may be considered for action as listed. Any item not so noticed may not be considered. Items listed on this agenda may be considered in any order at the discretion of the chairperson. Item number two the mission of the OCFEC is creating equitable community access to agriculture entertainment, cultural and educational experiences. Item number three is the pledge of allegiance with a follow through director that would like to lead us in, Director Ruiz?

**Robert Ruiz** Right hand over your heart. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you. Now Agenda Item number four roll call, Summer.

**Summer Angus** Chair Kovacevich?

**Nick Kovacevich** Here.

**Summer Angus** Vice Chair of Bagneris? Director Pham?

**Newton Pham** Here.

**Summer Angus** Director LaBelle?

**Doug Le Belle** Here.

**Summer Angus** Director Rubalcava-Garcia?

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** Here.

**Summer Angus** Director Ruiz?

**Robert Ruiz** Present.

**Summer Angus** Director Bilezikjian?

**Tanya Bilezikjian** Here.

**Summer Angus** And Director Jackson?

**Dimitria Jackson** Present.

<b>Summer Angus</b>	Did I say Director Pham?
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Thank you.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Thank you. And I'm gonna go ahead and make a few minor changes to the order of the agenda. Now in this slot, I'd like to move item nine A, and this is for the community affairs to make a presentation Community Affairs Committee to make a presentation. So please, I'll turn it over to my colleagues with the Community Affairs Committee. Go ahead. Thank you.
<b>Dimitria Jackson</b>	A.G Kawamura is a third generation fruit and vegetable grower and shipper from Orange County. He's the former secretary of the California Department of Food & Agriculture, co-developer of Centennial Farm, and a former board member of the 32nd District agricultural Association of the OC Fair and Event Center. Through his company, Orange County Produce LLC, A.G engaged in Building exciting, interactive 21st century 100 acre agricultural showcase at the Orange County Farm in Irvine. A.G is dedicaed to his goal of ending hunger in our lifetime and has broken innovative ways to provide fresh produce thanks to his nonprofit solutions for urban agriculture. He collaborates with farmers, ranchers, foresters, and stakeholders to focus on nutrition hunger education in advanced food systems. Please join us in welcoming A.G Kawamura.
<b>Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia</b>	I would like to present this proclamation of resolution of the Board of Directors of the 32nd District agricultural Association regarding Asian American Pacific whereas 32nd agricultural associations mission is creating equitable community access to agriculture, entertainment, cultural and educational experiences. The district's vision is the Orange County Town Square were the safe place where the community gathers and finds value. And the district recognizes the importance of having honoring the month of May as Asian Pacific Islander month, the district recognizes the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities and their achievements agriculture, the arts, literature, sciences, medicine, military service, business, entrepreneurship, and the district celebrates the AAPI communities and their contributions to the rich diverse culture and heritage of Orange County. And the district celebrates the committee's and their contributions to Orange County, OC fair and Event Center reinforces the principles of diversity, equity inclusion, and non discrimination as for institutional values, and that safety is the underlying elements and making any one person or community feel welcome in any segment. further resolved in the position of the OC Fair and Event Center board of directors, and staff with policy prohibiting discrimination of any person on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, or sexual orientation, and to respond to all concerns accordingly. Now,

therefore, the Board of Directors of the district hereby proclaim the month of May as Asian American Pacific Islander history month at the Orange County Fair Events. So it is my great honor to present this resolution to you on behalf of the board of directors.

**A.G Kawamura**

I think it's 35 years ago that you don't show up for a meeting, sometimes you get volunteered to do something, sure enough that was in, I believe it was 1989. We're looking at the centennial of the county of Orange. And there was a local piece of ground, it was a horrible looking, vacant lot where nothing would grow. But they said let's go ahead and put the example of the agricultural heritage out there. And that became the Centennial Farm. And the first year it was, it was just that, a dirt piece of ground, nothing would grow. We basically went all over the county and dug up plants and planted them, just in time for the fair. Through a picket fence around it. And people said, Hey, that looks wonderful. For those of us that knew we were just pretty embarrassed. It was a good effort, but it was tough place to farm. So the following year, the fair loved it so much, they elected to raise beds and really put some dollars into it. And we came back in that next year with tractors and everything and put it together in the centennial farm that you see today. That concept of "Build it, and they will come" really was launched then, in that second year. And what you see then is this, really a need and importance that if the public doesn't know where the food comes from, they don't know how hard it is to get it from farm to table onto the plate. And for those that don't have access to food. These are all big challenges that we continue to have. Currently, just last year, we hit 8 billion people on the planet. In last November 8 billion people is a lot. In 1927, just as a background may only have 2 billion people on the planet. So many of us know people that were born around 1925 1927, they'll be closing in 100 years old. Think how much change has happened in that much time. And what is the one the one of the areas that continues to be important and necessary is everybody wants to eat every day, three times a day if that works. And so for those of us from that community, for those of us... communities, engaged agriculture for eons, actually, I would just say we're very thankful for the support here in this country, obviously, that support around the world for agriculture, where we didn't find it. And but at the same time, we raised a little red flag or a yellow thing that is challenging if the public doesn't support agriculture, if they don't understand agriculture. And then we can start to see the attention starting to come out and start to limit the potentiality, if you will, of agriculture, the ability to produce food day after day. So with this kind of a proclamation, more of this kind of support. Thank you. And thank you for supporting the Centennial Farm during these many, many successful decades, because you've really created a place there where a lot of young kids get their first chance to understand that food really doesn't come from the store, It absolutely comes from some good hard work, so thank

you very much.

**Nick Kovacevich** Right, thank you. All right. Thank you guys for that presentation. And I am going to again, skip real quick here to Agenda Item number Six, which is matters of public comment. I will read the script and then I want to kind of discuss some of the ground rules for today that hopefully we can follow. So first public comment is allowed on issues not on the current agenda. However, no debate by the Board shall be permitted on such public comments. No action will be taken on such public comments 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 this time. Each items listed on the agenda speakers wish 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. And typically, speakers are limited to three minutes. However, as part of the ground rules today, I am going to reduce that to two minutes. And the reason being is we do have a separate meeting room booked at a specific time for close session today, which I believe is at 10:45. So we have to hit that and we have some directors that that do need to leave. And I want to make sure we have a quorum for our important items that are on the agenda today. So we're going to reduce across the board to two minutes for any public comment. Summer, if you can make the adjustment to the timer. Thank you. And then we do not have a working camera here today on the board members. So if you can, please remember when you speak as a board director to say your name. If there's no name, just assume it's me. But that would be helpful for folks that are dialed in. And then because of this room has microphones all throughout, we do not need a microphone for public comments. So public comment tours can stand right in the center there and the aisle. Oh, right at the podium. Okay. But you don't need to speak into the mic.

**Summer Angus** The microphones is not ours.

**Nick Kovacevich** Yeah, so the microphone is not relevant for capturing these comments into the record. Also, I'll call multiple speakers at one time. So if people can line up so that the public comment moves faster, that would be appreciated. And generally, for these microphones to pick up the audio of the person speaking. It's best if the rest of the room is quiet from chatter, because sometimes we miss some of the ones from last meeting due to a little bit of chatter out there. So that's all I have before we begin matters of public comment, and we do have a few. So I'll announce the first three we have Reggie Mundekis, we have Susan Seger, and we have Anna Bell. Reggie, please begin.

**Reggie Mundekis** Hi, I'm Reggie Mundekis and thank you for this opportunity to address you today. I'd like to recommend a movie. It's called Class Action Park. It's the story of action Park in New Jersey, where the philosophy was thrill rides are so much more thrilling if there's the chance of injury. And rather than buying rides, someone who knows what they're doing, let's make them ourselves out of concrete and steel, because that way they'll last longer. So I saw it parts of it left me apoplectic, people I was watching it with, thought they might have to call an ambulance because I just like started choking and not breathing, pointing and saying you can't do that. So since we're in the amusement business, I just recommend that to you for viewing it some time. And thank you, have a great holiday.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you, Susan Seger? And again, if you guys could line up behind Anna Belle is next, and then we have Alex Swanson. Go ahead and stand up. Go ahead, Anna. Alright, sorry Susan.

**Susan Seger** Members of the board, thank you for your time and attention. My name is Susan Seger. As much as I would like, I have never owned horse. It's too expensive. But I have been able to benefit from the services offered at the Equestrian Center. I first became familiar with the Equestrian Center when my daughter was in Newport Mesa School District Middle School developed a serious eating disorder complicated with anxiety and depression. My family and I did everything we could to help her including residential placement and patient therapy, outpatient therapy, private therapy, group therapy, counseling and nutrition, psychologists and psychiatrists. Nothing was really helping until we finally tried equine therapy. Beginning of ninth grade my daughter rode horses five days a week during the school year. We were trying to keep her life as normal as possible and because the Equestrian Center was here, she was able to ride, stay at school and live at home. While all the other treatment programs are covered by insurance, the only treatment program that offered any hope was not covered by insurance. So my husband and I covered the cost of the equine therapy ourselves. The trainers we worked with, were able to make the lessons affordable. Having the equestrian center nearby made it logistically possible. I honestly don't know what we would have done without this resource. My daughter's story has a happy outcome. She's now a small animal veterinarian, living and practicing in South Carolina. I don't think this would have been her story without the equine therapy. Please preserve this resource and please continue to work with the trainers who work with us. Thank You.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you. Anna Belle, followed by Alex Swanson.

**Anna Belle** Hi, i'm Anna Belle. I am a local parent and I'm here to support the Orange County Equestrian Center. My teenagers been riding at the OCC since the summer of 2021. And has found her passion in riding and

caring for horses. There are so many fantastic experience at the OCC. She's built solid, positive relationships with her peers, mentors, instructors, and horses she work with. The School of horses at the various stables are an incredible opportunity for people like my daughter to learn to ride without owning a horse. She spends several hours each week engaged in an outdoor sport that strengthens her entire body and mind. She learns she's learning to respect and take care of an exceptional care of another living being. She volunteers as a junior instructor regularly throughout the years for Changing Strides, which provides equine therapy to veterans survivors of domestic violence, divergent individuals, and at risk youth in Orange County. During the summers has introduce younger children to horsemanship and riding. She's learning empathy and gaining problem solving skills. She's grown more courageous, independent and dedicated. Her membership at the Pony Club provides opportunities for applying in depth veterinary knowledge, including the chance to shadow local veterinarians, as they provide care for horses. She's trying new things and gaining skills and tools that will serve her for the rest of her life. The OCEC is a safe place in which she is learning to set healthy boundaries and develop the self confidence to tackle difficult tasks and issues successfully. And she's having positive daily interactions with people from all walks of life. Mutual respect given. One of the most important and unique aspects of the OCC is that our local, it is our local setting for a female dominated worldwide sport. Girls and women learned to be competative...

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you. We have Alex Swanson, followed by Nessa Veidenbaum, and then Carol Graves.

**Alex Swansen**

Hello, my name is Alex Swanson. Hypothetically, it's easy to say Goodbye. It's just two words, Good, Bye, there, done in two seconds, its over. By that logic, it's easy to say anything. It's easy to say I love you. It's easy to say I hate you. It's easy to say nothing at all. But of course we know those things are hard to say because they mean something. To say goodbye is to something is leaving, something will never be in your life again because if it was, you would say "See you later," Well, we've actually getting used to it because on June 15th, we will be saying goodbye. You the Fair Board will be saying goodbye. You're saying goodbye to Pony Club, a wonderful international organization that doesn't just focus on riding, but handling the horse as well. It's things like force management, that are so important and that teaches us valuable life skills. Plus, we get unlimited Newport Mesa Pony Club attendance. Barreling isn't just like any other show, it's about your horse management as opposed to riding. The moment you get there from the moment you leave, it's constantly go go go. Making sure your horses is as happy it can be, taking care of your tech, cleaning the stalls right away, and making sure everything's organized. Its responsibility to the highest.

And there's nothing more rewarding than we do you get to sit down for a sec. And because you know everything is done. One particular thing out of the always remember it was the warm up. Anyone who has ever been to shows the worst part is the warm up for us. It's like LA traffic. No one knows where anyone's going. Sometimes even the person driving doesn't know where they're going. It's chaos. And most of the time, people are only worried about their own horse. But at this show, it wasn't like you were good at communicating. We're communicating where they were going. Calling outside and inside and what jump they were going to. And when I told one person I was on their inside they said "Thank You." I haven't been showing a ton but I've never heard anyone acknowledge the assist like that. And that's what kind of comes about acknowledging the assets showing gratitude when they do something for you. Taking care of your horse while they peg you around on a bad day. Looking out for your team like they look out for you. And it never matters what clipping you get because you looked out for your team and they looked out for you. Pony Club helps people grow into amazing men and women that go into the world and... Thank You.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you next we have Nessa, followed by Carol Graves, followed by Harper Hilterbrand.

**Nessa  
Veidenbaum**

Hello and thank you for your attention. My name Nessa Veidenbaum and I am 15 years old. I'm a member of the Newport Mesa Pony Club at the OC Fairgrounds. I began riding at the fairgrounds around 3 years ago and been enjoying it ever since. Horses have always been a passion of mine. The fairground has given me so many opportunities to pursue my dreams. Aside from progressing and riding, the Pony Club has opened up a whole new world of knowledge for me. It has taught me countless strategies that I apply in my daily life. During Pony Club, I've learned to advocate for myself and others, speak to authority officials, and challenge decisions, which I believe could be improved. Recently, I had the chance to attend a Pony Club Rally. This is a competition where we were not judged only by our riding abilities, but also how well we care for our horses and equipment. I was placed on a versatile team, with people of all different abilities. Riding is typically an individual sport but Pony Club equips us with social skills, which I find myself using constantly. Being at a rally, there's always something to be done. And honestly, it was difficult for me to navigate my own horse while also being there for my teammates. Still, I was able to use my Pony Club tactics to communicate with them effectively, even under pressure. This skill goes far beyond just a portion, and I know that my teammates and I will utilize this into our adult lives. Also, I got selected to be a team captain, which taught me a valuable lesson in responsibility. One of my teammates got marked unfairly in one category of the rally. It was my job to set the record straight. In a Pony Club setting, if you believe a

score or decision is wrong, you have the chance to use a reliable resource and make an inquiry as to why the jury made that decision. So respectfully, I would like to make an equally How can you argue that horses are not accessible to everyone, while simultaneously driving out last standing Pony Clubs in the Southern California region? Pony Club provides access not only to advanced practical knowledge, also well trained lesson horses which are available to all students. These horses are so versatile in their abilities that students are constantly learning and adapting to their environments.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you. Carol Graves is followed by Harper Hilterbrand followed by Aileen Anderson.

**Carolyn Graves**

I was at the arena walk-thru and it was frustrating because Andre, nobody on the staff knew how to fix a sinkhole or who could authorize what. It took 20 minutes of conversation between five people to decide that they would fix the sinkhole, this is after they were notified that the sinkhole caused a horse to trip and fall on a kid. There's this perception that we think this facility is ours or we are entitled. Nothing could be further from the truth. Seeing an accident involving a horse can be very scary. Guys. We have a sense of urgency around accidents and how to prevent them by always putting safety first and I must say it was worrying to see that, you know, who had a contract with whom, and the scope of work that was more of the focus for Andre. Just didn't seem like a safety first attitude to me. And please understand, you know, I'm not trying to be a brat or entitled. I just don't want some child to have to live their life with a completely preventable traumatic brain injury. I'm sure we have that mutual goal. I'm surprised to learn that this horse fell on this child 10 months ago, the trainer advised Evey about it and has been asking for the arena to be repaired for the last 10 months. I'm not here to point fingers at anyone, but you need better communication. I'm comfortable having any conversation with anyone about any topic and I will do so in good faith. I would ask that you not receive our sense of urgency about certain things as being pushy, but as genuine and sincere concerns having seen what can happen when things aren't done or done incorrectly.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you. Next we have Harper Hilterbrand followed by Aileen Anderson and then lastly Gibran Stout.

**Harper  
Hilterbrand**

Good morning Chairman and directors. My name is Harper. I'm a member of the Newport Mesa Pony Club. Pony Club is an organization for children and even adults to teach people about horsemanship, and how to properly take care of your horse. It requires a lot of patience and responsibilities. I think without Pony Club that was the person I am today. I'm the Equestrian Center is a very awesome place because kids can go there to learn how to take care of animals and how to learn to do



different responsibilities and to grow to be amazing adults. The Equestrian Center is also a very good place because the people there are very friendly and sweet, I love going there riding the school horses and going to help take care of them and doing all of the barn chores. It is a very good organization. And I hope you don't try to wash yourself.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you. Aileen Anderson.

**Aileen Anderson** Good morning to the board thank you for listening to our comments. I want to ask the board something for a moment, I think there are two outstanding issues that really have not been resolved that are getting challenging in terms of the board with the current rate hikes... come back to later. Is the deficit, that the state of deficit a gift of public funds or not? The board has not voted on this issue, it has been raised repeatedly, we have made the point that under the California law, it's unlikely to be and everything that is shaping the urgency here derives from that decision and that decision presently, has to be made. We need to come back to it and revisit it. In addition, the details of what programming are going to be offered under the new vision are critical. The devil is in details and how things will work. From my understanding, no information conveyed to us. What horses are going to be used, what trainers are going to be used, what facilities are going to be available? Without that information, you really run the risk of killing the existing programming, in the absence of any replacement, I urge to review and to think carefully about that. With that, I'd like to ask a couple of questions. The board is directed staff to reduce contract cost. What negotiations have been conducted to achieve that? Realizing that you need nine months of live space as opposed to 12 is a mistake. That's not a negotiation. What negotiations have happened? How does monetizing the support infrastructure of the Equestrian Center, every square inch has a label on it with added costs that were not expected in the contracts. How does that achieve the goal of increasing access when you drive costs in a way that are unsustainable for current trainers. I will point to the kids who are up here and spoke so eloquently. This was a Pony Club Pep Rally that was south of San Diego, which took place this last weekend, I volunteered as a chaperone and a judge. I met these kids at 3:30 in the morning, on Sunday, to load horses. 17 kids went, along with their associated adults to that rally in order to enable them to compete...

**Nick Kovacevich** It's time. It's time. Thank you. All right, next, we have Gibran Stout. And we have one final comment on Zoom. Marcy Evans. Go ahead. Gibran.

**Gibran Stout** Good Morning.

**Nick Kovacevich** We don't need a microphone.

**Gibran Stout** Goodbye morning. Thank you all for being here. Mission Critical has

been mentioned in these meetings before. That it's not mission critical. I would say that what is mission critical is different for everybody. That's like when our governor said "Essential businesses." I would say that mission critical is different for everybody. This is my life. I know it's not your life. I get that, that's cool. Sports, not my life. Concerts, not my life. But I get that it's a life for a lot of you. And I get it that it's mission critical for a lot of you. And I think it's important to respect that what's mission critical to the public is different for everybody. And I think the facts are 1000s of letters, literally 1000s of people who have told you this is important. needs to be respected. Okay, so let's mission critical. We all have loved pets, right? Everyone here has a beloved pet that they've cried over when they past. Our pets? I have a horse is 29 years old. We've had him for 24 years. I can't take him home. Okay, there's five places left in Orange County. Five public boarding places to keep horses. I can't take him home. Until they change zoning and local cities. I can't take him home. Oh, but even if I could, he won't fit on my patio. Okay. I think it's important to recognize and respect that what's mission critical is different for everybody. And this is mission critical. Okay. You took an oath to manage this amazing public property. It doesn't belong to us, it belongs to everybody. It's not yours. It's not mine...

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you Gibran. Next, we have Marce Evans on Zoom. Last public comment.

**Marce Evans**

Hi, um, can you guys hear me? Yes? Awesome. Um, my name is Marcy Evans, and I'm the executive director of Herd foundation and Five Bar Beef Orange County's only direct consumer of grass fed beef cattle ranch. I work in agriculture and ranching for a living, and I applaud the efforts of the board for furthering the mission of the Orange County Fairgrounds by creating equitable community access to agriculture, entertainment, cultural, and educational experiences. I personally love county fairs. I've always enjoyed the fairgrounds. However, I've been following the issues at the Equestrian Center since 2009. When I first went to graduate school at UC Irvine. Livestock and agriculture in Orange County, historically relied on the horse and the stables, the board that operates it at the Costa Mesa facility, our public service to the local community. And this should be a jewel that you guys have and the the presentations we've had in the past are really exciting, but with what you want to do with for the future. However, I urge the board to work with stakeholders, the nonprofit organizations and the trainer's currently at the Equestrian Center who are all members of the public, and are currently providing the public programming and force use to the public that you all want. Interviewing the correspondence and past board meeting minutes going back all the way to November of 2022, It's apparent that the Lopez works contract needs to be looked at. And that issues with welfare, animal welfare and fiscal issues at the Equestrian Center need to

be looked at, again, for California taxpayer reasons. I very much look forward to what everybody you've all want to do. But you already have existing public programming there. And the welfare issues and the fiscal issues need to be addressed. I urge the board to rescind the contract with Lopez works. Open up a new operator. I know that's not what has been decided the last couple months...

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you. Thank you, Marce. Okay, thank you. We actually had two additional public comments come in. So we'll take those here. Lauryn Mascareno, and Noelle Anderson

**Noelle Anderson** Thank you so much, everyone. My name is Noelle, I've spoken a couple of times, I have three quick points. One point was the turning our time from three minutes to two, I understand that you've had this meeting booked for a short period of time, but it would have been nice if we started on time, that could have saved us some potential public comment. I have spoken in favor of formalizing some vendor relationships with the existing trainers, I just want to emphasize that if everyone has to move out of this facility, at the end of June, people are not going to be coming back, you're going to be losing horses that can be used for leases for public programming and to benefit existing programs. I've said that before when I was here, I'm just gonna say that again so it on a formal record. Thank you.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you.

**Lauryn Mascareno** Hey everybody, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Lauryn Mascareno, I'm a community member, I've also spoken here, but I'm a community member here in Orange County, I participate and ride at the Equestrian Center that are here at the OC Fair Grounds program. Also local business women here in the area as well. We've heard a lot from many different people to many different students that are actively participating in the programs that are really benefiting for them. And I just want to emphasize that these decisions that we're making today, these conversations need to be a little bit more collaborative, and ask the board to really kind of reconsider how we're voting for the sales because something as simple to you as what seemed like your rent increase is detrimental to these programs, these women owned businesses it will impact if we don't start talking today. And I think it's really important to think about how these decisions are not just directly impacting the volume, but also how they're impacting the community in which we are all in. So ask you guys to reconsider the votes that have been made to remove the topic, incentive. And to look at how we can do a better job of collaborating and getting this, these programs in front of kids that are actively using them today and benefiting from them. It makes no sense to impact that in the way that

you're currently proposing. So ask for your reconsideration. Thank you...

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you. And that concludes our general public comment. We're gonna move to item number Seven, which is the consent calendar. We do have several public comments for that. So we'll get going. And I believe we could finish before our closed session. So first, we have Alberta Muller, followed by Leigh Ann Kazolas, followed by Lara Maxinoski.

**Alberta Muller** Hi, I am Alberta. Thank you for volunteering and taking a position. I'm sure it's not a very thankful position or seat to sit in. As a community member. I'm very, very upset about what I saw in the last meeting. I wasn't as inspired to kind of speak but after seeing your behavior by most of these board members not given the attention that these women deserve. These are women that own businesses that are directly affected by your vote and appointed position. We can't vote you out of office. We want to work with you pointed position. These women need to be listened to especially by the eight women that are sitting there. These women owned businesses, women owned businesses, DEI equality. They want the equal rights that Lopez has been given. They want to speak or be spoken to given the time that you've given a Lopez. The Lopez man who sat down with and said where somebody knocked a couple \$100 off their rent. When do they have a voice? Please, women on this board? You have to stand up for the women that are going to lose their jobs. They're gone. This is not a joke. You guys, women my daughter, rides? She's...

**Nick Kovacevich** Sorry. This is about the consent calendar...

**Alberta Muller** Yep, here we go. This is something you put up last last meeting after the board meeting.

**Nick Kovacevich** Is this related to the consent calendar?

**Unknown Speaker** What on the consent calendar is that tied to?

**Nick Kovacevich** Yeah.

**Unknown Speaker** ...Thats not a consent calendar item.

**Alberta Muller** Im so sorry...

**Alberta Muller** ...Contracts for the equestrian center

**Nick Kovacevich** That's fine. Yeah. Yeah, I don't think that's relevant to the contract.

**Alberta Muller** Sorry Nick.

<b>Josh Caplan</b>	You can come back in a few turns.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	That was your turn to work. We're addressing the consent calendar. Here. These are the public comments for the consent calendar. So please keep the comments related directly to the consent calendar.
<b>Leigh-Ann Kazolas</b>	The contract being presented, the rate increase was not was not legally passed by this board. And I know you'll be discussing that in your private sessions.
<b>Reggie Mundekis</b>	The contracts not on today's agenda.
<b>Dimitria Jackson</b>	Equine contract is apart of today's agenda, it's part of the consent calender.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	We do. We do have the draft equestrian contract on the consent calendar.
<b>Leigh-Ann Kazolas</b>	Thank you, so could I start my time,again please?
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Please, go ahead.
<b>Leigh-Ann Kazolas</b>	So the rate increases were never passed by this board legally. Alright. And it's the gift of public funds, which outside outside legal opinion says it does not hold weight. The equestrian community has no problem paying fair market rates, the cost of everything have gone up. The proposed rental contract is not that can you imagine renting an apartment or storage locker for 10 years have been asked to come up with an additional 50% security deposit. Housing a family member and a full service facility and being hit with a 52% rent increase. The government has rental rate increased laws for reason. Charging customers extra square footage fees for items needed for the care and welfare of the horses was also unfair, because per square inch fees for basic storage solutions like dry racks for feed buckets, rather than having them strewn about the public area or using secure room containers for extra feed. Creating an unhygenic situation. You've simply tax every inch of publicly owned land being used for public benefit. It does not reflect any actual costs incurred by the district and are simply jumped. The \$5,000 annual facilities fee for nonprofits directly contradicts the board's goal of fostering free low cost access to horses. But nonprofits will not survive here and new ones will come in, how does eliminating nonprofits from your model achieve your mission? As taxpayers we already contribute to utilities from the maintenance of the state owned property through paying taxes. Charging residents again for these utilities is double taxation. The good news is there's a pathway forward. The Lopez works contracts expires at the end of the year as the remaining terms are optionary. Pause these ridiculous rental rate increases today and play to

terminate the LWI contract that is natural... Form a specific equine committee made up of board members, staff, actual industry professionals, who can assist with both getting the operating costs within the industry standard and help me develop the awesome programming that you want. The public wants your opportunity to finally work collaboratively...

**Nick Kovacevich** It's time Thank you Next we have Lara Maxinoski, followed by Penelope Eli, followed by Robert Buchanan if you could line up please and again keep us to the consent calendar.

**Lara Maxinoski** So first off, let me remind you that a three out of six vote is not a majority and thus not passing. Also this history has this property has a rich history that was created in 1973. You guys will be closing the equestrian center if you guys vote in favor of this and I can write your names on this tombstone. Because your names will go down in history as being the one to have closed this property down. And this rate hike will do that you are destroying all of the value that these people are here to try to represent to you. You guys can do your own research, but honestly, in my opinion, Michelle is manipulating you guys to believe that this new vision is something that it's unfortunately not going to it sounds really good, but we haven't even actually heard a plan of what it really is. I'm not sure you guys have but until we have, we can't really get on board with that. You guys have existing horse people that have horses, have value here to offer the community and they just want to stick around to be able to continue to do that. I mean, I do whatever transparencies you feel that you need out of that. Look to hire them. Why reinvent the wheel and redo what you already have? You don't have to start from scratch, there are people fighting to try to keep their horses and keep their businesses and keep their nonprofits here, it already exists. Again, I can start writing your names and now so that we can all let you guys know in the future that this is what will actually happen to this place. So if you don't believe me, do your research. Michelle has tried really hard to shut this place down many times in the past, this is not the first go around. Again, there's no need to reinvent what you already have existing here. Lopez works is definitely destroying the facility in many ways as has been presented

**Nick Kovacevich** Is this related to the rates? Sorry, we got to stick related to the rates, guys. Next comment would be Penelope Ely And Robert Buchanan.

**Penelope Ely** Equestrian Center rates pulled out of the Consent Calender. Good morning, Chairman directors. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. And I appreciate that you listen to the public and consider our thoughts on these matters that relate to this important public space. As you're aware, nearly 1,800 residents have emailed me asking you to

consider carefully before making the Equestrian Center, the most expensive Southern California, these letters were delivered to each of you, each of the board members at last month's board meeting. But there's been no mention of these letters as public correspondences in the minutes of your meeting. I just need to know if we need to bring copies again to get to the next meeting, So there'll be entered into the record. The reasons 1000's of people have written in, is that they know the impact by raising the rates by 71% will have on the program's like Pony Club and Changing Strides and other programs that allow California residents of all ages, all demographics and all economic backgrounds to enjoy horsemanship opportunities. Raising rates by excessively high levels make the OC fairgrounds e question center, the exclusive playground for the wealthy, which runs counter to everything you claim to stand for. We understand your staff is working on public programming for the Equestrian Center, but we haven't seen the details of anything yet. Why not work with the equestrians instead of against us? You have built in equestrian experts on site. And we want to help. We have the horses, the expertise and the enthusiasm. We'd like to be part of the solution and not be shunted aside to a far corner of the Equestrian Center or The Ranch and be told to keep quiet, cut big checks, and stay out of the way. I know many of you may not value what we do, but 1000's of our community do. Please listen to the community. You are appointed officials. Thank you.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you Robert Buchanan, followed by Carol Graves, followed by Sarah klifa.

**Robert Buchanan**

Good morning. Thank you for letting me speak. I like to be respectful but direct, I got 5 points. Please connect and partner with trainers so the public programming they have in mind to be successful and include horses too. Please find someone that has horse experience take over feeding, cleaning arena maintenance. Three. Please cancel your contract with Lopez works, and consider contracting with a disabled veteran owned business. The contract is financially unsound, and Lopez works charging way over industry norm. Please do not increase the board over 50% on new clients and trainers that are still at the fairground. These trainers and clients are paying industry standard and should not be the ones punished for a contract that was not negotiated or even industry standard. And five, please utilize the support. Please utilize and support the nonprofits that are already in operation at fairgrounds. Memorial Day is right around the corner. I am an Iraq/Afghanistan veteran. Most people think barbecues and beer, I am haunted by the memories of friends that are lost still to suicide, opioid overdoses. My new mission is combating that. And we want to partner with this location. The trainer's, the subject matter experts are all sitting in the chairs. Keep the main thing the main thing, being of service. I'm a simple man. This is a huge resource that a

lot of my friends and those who came after me, men and women, warriors are going to benefit from. I really hope you consider not working with them. We can do a lot to be of service to our hero's. That's all I have. Thank you.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you, Carol Graves followed by Sarah Klifa, followed by Lisa Sabo.

**Carolyn Graves** I've been told that with the breaking of this facility in June that this facility would be in line with other facilities in the region, that simply isn't true. Even if you believe that, by the end of the year, you will be the most expensive by far and all of southern California, public or private. I talked about the problems with the facility that are starting to get some movement, but there's a long way to go. You're in no position to raise our rates after the facility has been kind of run into the ground from the miscommunication and crosstalk. Trying to raise our rates with all the known issues in my view makes you slumlords. Horse slumlords. I don't mean that personally toward anyone. I'm just keeping it 100. I tried to be descriptive, very direct, and very honest. You must deal with your own fiscal mismanagement, and bring the cost down to industry standards. Stop punishing us for your poor choices. Pull the equestrian center off the consent calendar, and vote, no, to raise our rates. And I will email you my full comments. And I must say nothing says we don't want to hear from your public more than having our lousy minuscule three minutes down to two.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you. Next we have Sarah Klifa, followed by Lisa Sabo, followed by Piper Louise Huntley.

**Sarah Klifa** My name is Sarah Klifa. I'm a trainer and co founder of Changing Strides. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. I can only speak for myself but I feel that like putting this faulty equestrian center contract on the consent calendar sadly, sneaky, and dismissive. Dismissive of the public's input that has been tirelessly expressed, I urged one of you to pull it off the list. This process has been very rushed, and only one board member has taken the time to thoroughly understand the situation and not make any hasty ill informed decisions. Our nonprofit, Changing Strides offers completely free lessons in the equine therapy to children in foster care, survivors of domestic violence, and underprivileged youth. You're already successfully doing what you're trying to do. Why is the board not asked to team up with us? We would love to get bigger and do more. But we need funding. This is the perfect opportunity for us to come together. We need to keep the entire 7.5 acre footprint and equestrian center for horses and riding opportunities. This is not a ranch, no one here, including you all are ranchers. We are equestrians who ride at a public equestrian center in the middle of the



city. How cool would it be to flip the narrative and be the board members who come to the rescue for women owned small businesses and nonprofits and support them instead of crushing them? I guess let me know when I run out of time. Director Pham, was it you mentioned on a previous meeting that you had a friend whose daughter rode horses, and they paid \$85 a lesson? It was my understanding that you felt it was very expensive. You're right, it is very expensive. We're in a we're in a recession. One of you actually know someone whose child will be affected by these outrageous contracts. That child is going to lose their trainer and not be able to afford lessons. You think it's expensive now we're going to have to raise our prices so high that we will only be able to serve the 1% of Uber wealthy. And those people do not want to ride at the worst kept facility. Those wealthy people ride at the most expensive, luxurious private facilities with the most modern high end amenities. This is not a lucrative business, I often cannot pay my vet bill, board bill and my rent in the same month. Where am I going to find an extra 5k for this 50% deposit I simply have to fork out? I have boarded horses here for 15 plus years and never not paid my bill. Not I cannot afford to pay 5000 per year in fees to be able to offer lessons and training elsewhere.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Yeah, thank you. Lisa Sabo, followed by Piper, followed by Claire M.

**Lisa Sabo**

Thank you. You know, it's our goal to collaborate with you to work with you. And we feel so bad because in March we had that vote. It was an agendized item and it was a vote. Well the vote failed. We sat there and knew the vote failed and begged you, like the vote failed, and the attorneys said the vote pass. And then April came we said the vote failed. Right. And you just ignored us. So unfortunately we had Sheppard Mullin offered to represent us and show that the vote failed. And then it gets stuck two months later in the consent calendar. I mean, just say like lack of government governance, you know. Let's have some transparency here. We are professionals who've been doing this for you years. We love the idea of free programming. That's why we have Changing Stride just every once a month, just about we have the orphans come in and it's wonderful. And I struggled to with like, gifted public funds. Well free lessons, is that gift of public funds? I don't know. I'm just a horse trainer, right? And there's so many hidden fees in this new in this new contract for example. It says a little shelf we have at the back of the barn that we dry our buckets on, use it to the buckets on 109. Save up. I'm going to be charged now \$28 a month to keep this little shelf. Right at the back of the barn, you see that? This little shelf? \$28 a month, right? I mean, it's like really, you know, come on, it's like, it's like all these little, little fees, and we have no place to go. Newport Mesa Rinding Center, you know, has no place to go. We're one of the largest pony clubs in the nation. It's wonderful. What we do, and I just I grew up in Pony Club. I'm in A Pony Cluber and it's like Girl Scouts or Boy

Scouts on steroids for horses. And then someone sent me this yesterday. It's a government for guide for states, cracking down on junk fee's to lower costs for consumers. Resource outlines action states can take to build on the Biden Harris Administration's efforts for private...

**Nick Kovacevich**

It's time Lisa, Thank you, Lisa. Next week. Next we have Piper, Louise Hadley. And then Claire M followed by Mackay Hamlin.

**Piper Louise Huntley**

Hi. I'm Piper Huntley. I am an instructor at the fairgrounds and a rider. And I'm speaking on issue, you need to pull the equestrian from the consent calender. I'm going to share a story to tell you why. So I teach with Changing Strides, which is a really sweet organization. And recently, they partnered with Olive Crest, which is a safe home for kids facing facing abuse, who've lost their parents. And I taught this one boy and we put them on our favorite horse ever. And for 10 minutes, we walked around, and he was dead silent. He was so scared. This poor kid was so scared. We walked around for 10 minutes, we didn't say a single word. Finally I decided that we should pull him into the arena. And I said, "Do you want to learn how to trot and go over poles?" and he was like, "Sure" and so we walked in there trotted around for the next half an hour. And for the next half an hour, that boy was smiling and laughing. And he didn't want to end his lesson. And so we came back to the barn and I was showing how to take care of his horse, we put his horse away. And as caretakers came up to me, and they said, "That boy hasn't smiled like that. In the months since he came to Olive Crest." He had faced abuse, he had lost his parents, and he came to the Equestrian Center. You spent time with the horses, the horses are therapy animals, they can feel a heartbeat from four feet away. That horse connected with that boy, and he felt a connection. And I'm asking you please pull the Equestrian Center for the consent calendar, the future of me, the future of the other kids in this room. You're putting us on the consent calendar, lumping us in everything else, you're trying to raise the prices. You're trying to keep all of us out. But you're going to kick out also those at risk kids, those kids who have been on the street. If you're putting us on the consent calendar, it's not just me and pony club, but it's also those kids, those orphans who come in with Olive Crest. With the home for the at risk kids come in and do equine therepy with our horses because it's accessible. It's the only place here that they can do this. Right here in Orange County. It's accessible to everyone. It's accesible for Olive Crest.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you. We have Claire followed by Mackay Hamblin followed by Whitney Hodges on Zoom.

**Clair M.**

Hi im Claire, I'm talking about pulling the equestrian center off your consent calender. I'm doing that by telling a story. I was adopted at six months old, very young age. With being adopted that has definitely

affected my mental health, and just my well being. Whether it was wondering who my biological parents are, who my family is, if I had a brother or sister, and that has affected me and my whole entire life. And I was given an outlet, which was horseback riding. I got to volunteer for my barn. I got to experience day to day and at a barn. I got to feel a sense of responsibility that was taking care of another animal. I got to brush the horse, I got picked to huff pick the horse which is taking care of its hoofs. If you don't take care of your horse, you don't see an infection that could be in its hoofs. You don't see that cut that can be on his body. And that was just so amazing for me to be able to take care of an animal that was so much bigger than me. And it was something for me that I could say, here's a sense of responsibility that isn't just taking care of myself, or worrying about my grades at school, or worrying about what's going on at home. It was an outlet. It's something that I have right now, right in front of me that I can teach kids, I can make connections with horse people that I can use their horse and I can give my friends an opportunity to groom a horse take care of a horse walk a horse.. And if you take this equestrian center away we won't have that.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you, Claire. Thank you Next we have Macki Hamblin, followed by Whitney Hodges on Zoom and then your Gibran Stout.

**Macki Hamblin**

All right, good morning. My name is Mackie Hamblin. Thank you all for being here. Today. I'm here to ask you to pull the equestrian center off the consent calendar, the rate hikes are evicting blue collar, small women owned businesses. I do want to ask you a few questions. A few questions. Start with Why. Why were you told a vote that failed had actually passed? Why Director Kovacevich when we presented a line by line item of the charges to increase the price by 75%. Get the \$151 decrease was just a blanket open cut costs? Director Pham, Why was the PowerPoint altered After was presented to the board last meeting? Why we're only one of the three paragraphs on the Equestrian Center presentation by Michelle up on the board and not presented to the entire board? Director Bilezikjian, Why have no repairs been done to the property since the OC fair center took over managing property. Director Rubicava-Garcia why were none of the equestrian portions of the last strategic plan ever actually implemented? Director LaBelle, Why don't you ask the current trainers nonprofits for more transparency if it's lacking? Why aren't current nonprofits on the property being utilized to kickstart the program that we're all talking about we want to be a part of? Director Ruiz, why are no horses lined up for any of these programs? Director Jackson, why does the ranch program only services the school across the street and not reach the underserved community in Orange County? Why can't we all work together? Why is there so much divide between the board and the equestrians and everyone that's here? Everyone here is open to paying fair rates we understand that things are

going to go up but a 50 to 70% increase is not something accessible. Who here is willing to stand up to make that stance to the others.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Whitney Hodges on Zoom, Followed by Gibran Stout. Whitney Hodges on Zoom. Is Whitney on Zoom? Okay, final comment public comment on the consent calendar. We have Gibran Stout.

**Gibran Stout**

All right. Consent calendar. Consent calendar items are for items that are non controversial. Clearly, this is controversial. Here's the list of all the contracts. The one we want you to pull, note, the difference is, is this not a contract, It's a template. It should not be here that has not been negotiated. Clearly, it's controversial. In addition to having zero negotiation. All the other contracts been negotiated, all the terms have been negotiated with the vendors. The template, nah that hasn't happened. There's been no negotiation. In addition to that it includes junk fees, a lot of junk fees. Many of you're familiar with how the White House is fighting against junk fees. One of the definitions of junk fees, by the whitehouse.gov website, are fees which take advantage of circumstances in which consumers do not have the power to shop around. I.e captive consumers. Consumers already locked into a product or service and have no choice but to pay the fee. And as we've already established, it's not that there's no room at the end there's no ends left. Okay, we don't have any options. So the fact that it is on the consent calendar at all, just seems like a backdoor way to get a vote that was improperly approved. Snuck through the backdoor. Your Governance Policy Manual 3.05 Clearly states, that in order for a motion to be approved, it must be a majority of members present including abstentions. There were six members present at that meeting, there was only three yeses. So to stick this template that has not been negotiated, that has excessive junk fees, Is just being sneaky. We are happy to pay, we are happy to pay fair market value. We are happy to sit down and open our books.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you Gibran. Okay, so we'll get to break our closed session, 10:45. Okay, so we are going to break for closed session, because we do have the room reserved. And it lines up exactly at this time. So we'll go on a quick break. This closed session, we do not expect to be very long, and then we will come back and address the consent calendar.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Okay, we'll jump back, we did have closed session, and have no other additional reports regarding that. And so we'll move back to where we were on the consent calendar item number Seven, we've received the public comment. We have the consent calendar here to approve, there's nothing that staff needs to pull. So I'll start first by making a motion to approve the consent calendar. So I did make that motion. However, I do want to open this up to for discussion and debate. The reason being is

because of the equestrian rates that are on the calendar. The reason they're on the consent calendar is because this has been happening in tandem, where we've been trying to push forward the new model with the June deadline approaching and making sure that we address the gift of public funds issue. But at the same time we do we have been informed by council that the previous vote that we took on the rental rates actually failed. So we incorrectly interpreted that as a vote the passed, when in actuality, it failed. So the good news is we have those rates, and they've been updated to reflect the decrease in light of the cost savings that we found the \$151. So those are updated in the draft template as well. And so nobody's trying to sneak through a consent calendar without a board discussion on the rates, especially with the previous vote failing, we need this vote to carry with the consent calendar and the draft template with the new rates in order for those rates to be valid. So just to be clear, this is the board discussion, and vote that will approve the rates. And hopefully this will be a valid result. Right. So just setting the stage with that. And then, you know, I want to give a little bit of...

**Doug Le Belle** Director Kovacevich?

**Nick Kovacevich** Yes?

**Doug Le Belle** I'll go ahead and second year motion. So we have a motion. And second, on the floor before discussion.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you Director La Belle, and so, I'll start I'll lead the discussion, just as I want to give you guys my thoughts. I spent a lot of time on this. I've been reading a lot of the messages from from the public. Spoke to members of the public, spoke to elected officials. Spoke to reporters. So I've been really deep in this issue. And I think one thing that I just wanted to do, for sure is kind of, you know, give the board, you know, the overview of kind of what we're doing as a board, right? Because, there's been a lot of things that have been asked of us, and things that we've certainly should take into consideration. But many of those things fall on the staff and the operational component, the boards. The board needs to really address the governance, the policy and the vision. And so, again, there was additional comments today saying that, you know, we did discuss the gift of public funds issue, or we didn't vote on it, rather, but we did discuss it at length. It's in the December Board meeting meeting minutes and you can I believe you can access the recording for that if anyone's interested in revisiting that discussion. That's not an item we need to vote on. As a board that's an item we need to discuss and ultimately decide if there's something that we can give public funds As to or not, we decided we didn't feel comfortable under the previous model that we would be getting around this gift of public

funds issue. And so that's why we voted to change the model. And we also heard a lot today. I mean, this is just honestly, I just don't even I've never seen anything like this. We voted to open up our facility to 1000s of people in the community, for the exact things that we're hearing are important to the community things like equine therapy, underprivileged kids, riding lessons, all of this type of stuff, spending a we're going to spend, as you guys know, millions of dollars out of our own public funds to benefit, yet we are being told that we're actually closing the facility. And we're being told that we're taking away things when we're literally spending millions of dollars or so let's not conflate what's going on here, we voted for a new vision, where we're going to be spending millions of dollars to directly get the public access to these horses. That's something we already did. Now, the second piece of that was, as a board, we decided, we don't want, we love the new model. We love the new vision. And a lot of people do. However, that doesn't mean we want to throw out the old model. What about where they can coexist, right. And so that's where we got to as a board coming out of that December meeting was let's bifurcate. And let's have the current private and border borders, and trainers have the opportunity to stay in the facility.

**Nick Kovacevich**

However, the gift of public funds discussion was had in December, and we determined that that needed to be done at market rate. And so what escalated from there is essentially an analysis of the market rate. And passing that along directly at cost. I mean, we're not even marking this up, but we're passing it directly at cost. And that's how we got to the rental rates that we're discussing here and voting on here today. Okay, so wanted to give everyone that background and when it comes to those rates. There's been a lot of talk about the Lopes contract. And we've even heard people say, from the public here today, that they've said that this is a quote, the cost of everything has gone up. And so we discussed, do we want to put this back out for RFP or IFP after we had one bidder last last time. And that was, you know, quite a while ago, costs have only gone up. Is that the smartest and best way to find the cost savings that we're all looking for? Again, we're not making profit. So why would we not want the cost to be lower for our borders and trainers, right? Is that the best way, or is the best way to have staff get deep in the operational details with because again, board is not going to do that stuff for the board to do. But staff to do it with the contractor, and find savings. And that's the route, that we directed staff to do, and they can do that. So the last thing I'll say is that a lot of the things that we've heard today. You know, things about, let's, you know, let's partner with the existing borders, or existing trainers that are operating the facility. The existing nonprofits that are offering the facility that are doing great things, let's partner with them on the new model. We can do that. That's not for the board to decide on this. We're deciding the rental rates based on the gift of public funds issue and based on our costs. The staff and

working with the Facilities Committee, is working on the new vision and can do all of these things. All of these things can be done. So I don't want anyone to think that by approving rates, we're somehow limiting our ability to work cohesively and collaboratively with the current equestrian community, because we're not. We have the ability to do that staff can do that. And we do expect them to be able to do that. And I think there's some updates from the facility committee about how we can get even more feedback from this group of private borders and trainers that have been using the question center. So again, wanted to kind of set the stage or have everyone kind of understand what truly we're discussing. Why, and kind of how we got here through the different processes, which I think we followed very properly. And I think we got to the right place. And now is simply a decision of, you know, do we want to approve these rates, that, you know, we that cover our costs? Or, you know, do we want to, you know, go some different direction that, you know, there's some better path forward. Right. And I'll with that, open it up to the Board for discussion before we move to a vote.

**Robert Ruiz** Just to ensure, Michelle after the increases, where are we going to be at with the rest of the equestrian centers that in area. Are we at, right around more than less than of what they are?

**Michele Richards** Right. I can give you specific information. So with the June 15th, increase for a standard 12 by 12 will be at \$756. In comparison, San Juan Capistrano is at \$910 for a 12 by 12. Huntington Central Park Equestrian Center is at \$861 For a 12 by 12. Peacock Hill, is it \$775. I mean, I can keep going on. Serrano Creek is lower at 502. Some of the private facilities like Nellie Gail is at \$775 Cotto Preserve is at \$825. And then I have some comparison.

**Robert Ruiz** That's fair enough. And also Michele, prior to the announcement to the rate increases, where we getting complaints about LWI prior to that?

**Michele Richards** There seems to be an, yeah, there seems to have been an escalation after the March board meeting. Our staff documents, you know, any concerns or complaints that come into the office. But I think you all have heard it too, in your emails that you've received. Yeah. Yeah.

**Dimitria Jackson** Sorry, to the sorry. Director Jackson, have a question. I've heard the percentage increase. And I'm not sure if it's referring to the June rate increase, or by January of 2025. So I'm really not sure how that works. So I've heard a lot of numbers I've heard 52% of heard 75. I've heard a lot of numbers just wanted to, for my purposes to to clarify what that rate increase would be maybe, as of January when it's all said and done.

**Michele Richards** Right. So when the full effect of thee, I have a calculator in here. Oh,

there.

**Dimitria Jackson** And second part of that, im sorry, Michelle. Still Director Jackson. How does that relate to competitors or others out there in the field board? A 12 by 12?

**Michele Richards** So I gave you comparison rates based on the increase for June 15th. We don't know how those other facilities are going to increase. I mean, we'd have to look at January 1st, and see what they are compared to, you know, our our \$979. So the the full, full force of the increase, which will happen in June on January 1 of 2025 is a 52% increase from what it is today. If we go what it is today to this first step. So it'll be 17.4% increase on January 15. And then we go to 868.

**Dimitria Jackson** I'm sorry, was that on June 15th?

**Michele Richards** Sorry, what did I say?

**Dimitria Jackson** January...

**Michele Richards** Oh, no, June 15th. Sorry. No, that can't be right. If we go from 868 756. Then between June, June 15th, and the next increase on October 1st is 14.8%. Increase and then if we go 979. Then it'll be 12.8%. between October and January, October 1 and January 1 of 2025. So again, it's it's hard for us to say how we would compare in January because we don't know what those other facilities were.

**Dimitria Jackson** I understand, thats very clear, in response to that.

**Nick Kovacevich** There was one facility that was, is in the doing the same thing, right a state facility you and I were discussing.

**Michele Richards** There's uh, there's state owned property, Mid Pennsylvania. It's Bear Creek is ,that's also state property and they're going through a very, very similar process right now. I've we've been following the proceedings with their board of directors. The staff presented some breakeven figures to them last week in their board meeting and They were proposing over \$1,100 for a 12 by 12 stall to cover costs. So I mean to Director Kovacevich's is point at everything's going up. It's it's expensive.

**Nick Kovacevich** Director Rubalcava-Garcia

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** This is Director Rubalcava-Garcia, So I just have a couple of questions. Have we ever had any rate increases in the past that affected the Equestrian Center?

**Michele Richards** Yeah, yeah. The, you know, typically there's a an increase on a yearly basis of some, some facilities do every six months. But yes, we have had



increases.

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** And, then do we ever ask the boarders, how much they increase their rates?

**Michele Richards** I don't believe we've them that.

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** So we allow the borders to completely operate their private businesses at the leisure of their...

**Michele Richards** Sure.

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** Okay.

**Michele Richards** They set their rates.

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** They set their own rates. One of the questions or one of the things, I also want to just kind of just remind everybody as this has not been a process that we've taken lightly, like our Chair mentioned. Even when I was chair, we went through the process of assessing the Equestrian Center. And I believe back in December, the original recommendation was to close the Equestrian Center down completely because of the loss of revenue and the gift of public funds, which is not something we have to vote on, that's a reason for increasing the rates so that we can no longer be providing a gift of public funds, which, as good stewards of the state, it is our responsibility as board members to ensure that we are protecting taxpayer dollars and not giving them away for private use. So that's, that is the reason why I voted for this in the first place. But I do recall that we had talked about shutting the facility down completely. And then the board said, we respect the equestrians, we love having these businesses here. And we want to make sure that they have somewhere to continue operating. And that's when we discussed having this plan in place, which at that time, we did talk about how expensive it was going or you know, the increase of the 50%. Or we were going to assess it. So I just want to make sure that we laid that foundation, we've looked at everything they can you explain before we brought in Lopez, what was the operating model, because we we've done three things, to get to this point, we had a private operator, we in house, and then we went back to private operators, so it's not considered...

**Nick Kovacevich** We consider going back to a private operator. And if we determined that if we couldn't find an operator that the result may be shutting down, if we couldn't find an operator. So and then we've actually pivoted to now saying, Hey, we're going to invest millions of dollars of our own money into this into this programming of this facility for the community. And, you know, it's, it's funny to me kind of that it's like, nobody's excited

about that.

**Natalie  
Rubalcava-Garcia**

Yeah, I mean, I'm excited about it. For me, it's important that we're allowing access to a broader base of our population. We have 3.1 million people in Orange County. And I think that, right now, it's limited to just a small number of people. And, of course, these individuals are members of the public. And I respect all business owners, whether you're a female, male, Hispanic, African, American, Asian, I think that all of those factors are important, however, not relevant in this case. And for me, this is a business decision, and also just want to ensure that we're doing the right thing for our facility in general. And when we adopted the strategy, I thought, broadening our, access. Access is key. Coming from a low income community, Hispanic, predominantly, neighborhood. For me having access to things that were not accessible for is very important. And that's why I support the initiative that we are bringing forward today, regardless of the name, I mean, that's semantics, if it's, The Ranch, or whatever, I think the purpose it's going to serve in Orange County is way more important than what it's named at this time. So I support the increase in the recommendations that we've made in order for us to stop providing a gift of public funds. I've been on this board for six years, and it has been an issue long before that. So with that I...

**Nick Kovacevich**

And just it's something that I you know, I want to mention, I mean, nothing in approving these rates, prevents us from finding additional cost savings. Nothing in approving these rents prevents us from making a change on who the operator of that facility is, you know, as deemed appropriate by the contracts that we have signed. We can do that. So that's where I'm just trying to make sure the board understands that what we're doing here is we're approving something that gets us on the path to eliminate the gift of public funds issue that we all discussed and agreed upon back in December. And we're directing staff, alongside the Facilities Committee to continue to work, to fight to fine tune the model, the vision and the new model and also to find ways to reduce costs for the private and borders and trainers Those that are coming over from the old model that are being accommodated on behalf of the facility so.

**Unknown Speaker**

When, and just to mention to the operator LWI Lopez works, there are Hispanic owned business. And I know that your staff went back to them and asked them to reconsider the amount that they were charging us. So that's off their backs. Right. So we've now asked them to close their profit margin so that we can further enhance the opportunity for these businesses to continue operating. So I just want to highlight that as well, they've made a concession on their part, to cut their profit margin so that they can continue delivering a service to the fair

**Michele Richards**

If I could add something to the discussion, too, I think it's very important

for the board to understand that doing business on state property is different from doing business on city property or county property. And I've discussed this with the Facilities Committee, and I know they're in agreement with it. One of the standards is that heavy equipment that's operated on state property on a regular basis, has to comply with new AQMD standards. And so, someone that's running an operation on on city property or county property, that doesn't necessarily apply. So that's going to make it more expensive for a contractor. In addition, there are some labor code of waivers for that classification of employee. That, on state property, we have a policy, that employees have to be paid overtime, according to labor code. And that's not that doesn't necessarily apply to other properties. And thirdly, often at equestrian centers, though the workers are provided housing on that on that property. That's not allowed on this state property. So all of those factors, and there are others. But those are the three main that just simply make it more expensive for a contractor to operate on state property.

**Natalie  
Rubalcava-Garcia**

And I also mentioned, one of the public commenters brought up something that's concerning for me, is the liability issue, which I think increases our cost as well. And it's something, you know that we should take into consideration as to whether or not we want to continue allowing businesses to operate, that could potentially lead us to open ourselves up to additional liability. They mentioned somebody being injured while on state property. That's something that I mean, if we're going to continue allowing private businesses to operate on our facility, we should probably take that into consideration at an even greater rate. Because that's that's if that is the case. I don't know if they're just trying to bully us into a decision or into reversing a decision that we've already made, which I don't really take kindly to that. But I think that's something that we should actually consider as a board as to whether or not we do want to allow that sort of liability to open or do we now have to ensure that they have enough insurance, which will increase the cost. So that I want to bring that to me, I heard that public comment, I was paying attention to that. So...

**Michele Richards**

And all of the the trainers who operate a business, they are required to have a certain level of insurance, and they all comply with that. We're struggling a bit with the requirements our insurance company has with having signed waivers. They have signed waivers, but our insurance company is requiring that as well. We struggled to get some of those waivers in but we're, we'll be focusing on that more, as well. It's important.

**Newton Pham**

So, Director Pham, I got to speak because I have a hard stop at 11:45. But, I wasn't there fully on the last vote, on that. But looking at this in terms of giving a time and understanding the fact that there is

opportunity for folks to continue working to reduce costs. This isn't a immediate step up, this is a gradual escalator over the next six months, call it seven months. So there is time here. You know, we're stepping up to something to bridge over the gap in the near term, not too much in my mind. So I'm kind of getting comfortable with that aspect of it. There's some other things that I kind of want just, just to understand what the to those. You know, a lot of focus is just purely on the stall cost. But what's kind of the fully loaded increase? In terms of the lockers are increasing, not likely by 52% they're actually losing 27% Based on what I'm seeing here. But then there's storage containers that we didn't charge before that are now being charged? So like what does that look like from a fully loaded aspect?

**Michele Richards** Again, costs are going up and and they're reflected in in the rates, you can see what the the current charges and you know, what the the Step Up is for those as well.

**Newton Pham** And then secondarily, another question that would have is, is there anything that we're doing or can do? In regards to like nonprofits, you know, maybe offer some concessions on that front, in terms of rental rates? Because I don't know, maybe that's not a gift of public funds because they are a nonprofit?

**Michele Richards** I mean, it depends on what the you know, what the client wants in terms of storage and you know, Again, costs are going up and and they're reflected in in the rates, you can see what the the current charges and you know, what the the Step Up is for those as well.

**Newton Pham** And then secondarily, another question that would have is, is there anything that we're doing or can do? In regards to like nonprofits, you know, maybe offer some concessions on that front, in terms of rental rates? Because I don't know, maybe that's not a gift of public funds because they are a nonprofit?

**Michele Richards** Yeah, I mean, I would like to return to Josh, Josh for confirmation on that. But if if we did that for a nonprofit, we would mean, the the, the businesses that are there are, their private businesses. So if we gave a discount, because they were doing nonprofit work, we'd have to consider that all over the fairgrounds, we'd have to, you know, a concessionaire that comes to operate the fair, or a small, small business that sells at the fair, they would be entitled to the same, you know, the same thing.

**Tanya Bilezikjian** Are those generally nonprofits as well? Concessionaires or vendors?

**Nick Kovacevich** She saaying, I we're saying, if there's a for profit business that has a separate nonprofit, or philanthropic arm, right, because I think that what we're hearing is that a lot of the for profit businesses actually provide,

you know, discounted or free services, or, you know, have a nonprofit affiliation. And so, I think what Michelle is saying is, if I'm renting the fairgrounds for anything, whether I'm doing a, you know, reptile show or a circus, or, you know, and my company that also happens to provide, you know, public good to the community, then what's to stop me from saying, Hey, let me get a discount, or better yet, let me rent for free. Right. And so I think what she's just saying is that is a slippery slope. If we want to start basing our rental rates on how much good a particular business does for the community, in their various nonprofit or philanthropic, you know, works.

**Robert Ruiz** I just want to make sure, can everyone in hear what we're discussing?

**Unknown Speaker** No, barely.

**Robert Ruiz** Okay. That's all. To your point Director Kovacevich. Yes, whatever the decision is made here. Facilities Committee is going to work with equestrian to make this work moving forward. Because whatever public program we want to implement, if they're not here, then obviously, doesn't work. We can't do any of what we want to do, right? So whatever the decision be here, I just want to let them know that we are try and work with the facilities committee along with them, to make this work for everybody, regardless of what the decision is here today.

**Unknown Speaker** No no, it's fine.

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** But the decision today is about rates.

**Robert Ruiz** Correct.

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** We've already decided to keep the facility open and accessible to the private businesses. That's not up for debate today. It's just approving the new rate structure that we put in place, I want to make sure we keep everything in perspective.

**Nick Kovacevich** Yep, and then with the rates, too, I think, you know, again, there's nothing stopping us from reducing the rates, there's nothing stopping. Director Pham brought up a point about the you no additional fees that are being charged like there's there's nothing stopping anyone from the board from reviewing that with staff. For us directing staff to sort of dig in on that and try to see what you know, can be done there to reduce costs, right. So there's nothing. That's I think the point here is, like, if we believe there's a gift of public funds issue, I think we need to approve rates that alleviate that issue, or at least put us on the path to do so. And in terms of getting those costs down so that we can get the rates down, like, great, we're not profiting. We're not marking this up. So it's not in

our interest to charge people, you know, or to for us to pay more cost just to charge people more money. Like, that's where I'm coming from. Right. So I hope that hopefully, you guys get that. Yeah, go ahead.  
Director Bilezikjian

**Tanya Bilezikjian**

Thank you, Director Kovacevich. Director Bilezikjian speaking here. One thing that I do want to mention and, you know, to me, safety is one of the biggest issues and you know, these are, I don't know, 1,000 Plus pound animals. So we've got, you know, a sinkhole that has been requested for repair and that was 10 months from repair. I don't know anything about that. Today was the first time I heard about that, but, but I would like to maybe use the facilities committee. Next time we meet, I'd like to just talk about that. Let's see if there was something that could have been done a little bit faster. I did, I have gone on walks around the facility a couple times. And you know, I want to come again, and I want to understand that that particular item, maybe walk out of the arena. So yeah, safety number one issue for me. But, I do want to, through my work with the Facilities Committee, I want to work more with your Equestrian, I want to understand more of the existing public programming that you're all doing, and you've done a great job presenting on it already. But, I do think that as we develop all of the public programming, for the future, I don't see the reason, I don't see any reason why we should stop doing some of the great stuff that's already happening. I would love to find ways for that, to just continue on, keep you guys there, you know, keep the good things going, that we have, while we pursue our new model, which I also believe in. But I do want to really foster the partnerships that you all, provided and have talked about. So I'm, I'm dedicated to that. As far as the LWI contracts, you know, we've dug in. I know that we're not marking anything up, but I do think that, you know, based on how that contract is set up based on how their fees are set up to probably didn't quite all right. And I think that, you know, going forward, I want to really dig into, you know, what a new contract could look like, in the future and make sure that, you know, next time in IFP or RFP or whatever it goes out that, you know, we were very clear that, you know, work done is what you get to charge for not some inflated fee structure that would then need to be passed along because of the gift of public funds issue and through the mouth ripping out that way. So these are some of the areas that I think that we can pursue as part of the Facilities Committee, while still going forward with the vote of the board today. So I intend to stay really, really involved and want to work with all of you. So stay tuned, I might find you on LinkedIn, or however I can find you. Or if you send me an email on my board email. So I very much want to engage as part of the Facilities Committee as one board member, and do the best I can.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank Thank you, Director Bilezikjian. You know, I'll I'll go ahead and

say as well, on the record that if the Facilities Committee determines that, you know, the board should revisit the LWI contract or staff or both of you, I will get that back on the agenda. If I'm chairperson at the time. Right. So you've got my alignment there. I think it's great that you're willing to do the work. And and dig in. And again, we're I think we're all working toward the same goal.

**Doug Le Belle** Chair Kovacevich, this is Director La Belle, If I could comment?

**Nick Kovacevich** Please.

**Doug Le Belle** First of all, you did an outstanding job of summarizing where we're at and how we got there, as we try to move this process forward. We have spent a lot of time and the staff has spent a tremendous amount of time. And the comments, I think that you made were very well taken. And I fully support that. And we dido those comments. And I appreciate Michelle's comments that, as a state agency, we are a little different. We're a lot different than in the private sector in terms of what our requirements are. And regardless of who the provider is of that service, they're going to have to meet the state contracting requirements and you know at somepoint in the future, we will be going forward with looking at that whole element of it. What I would like to suggest is, obviously, between yourself as the Chair and the Facilities Committee, I think that, you know, we're we're looking at it at this from a very positive proactive, we're trying to expand what we do not reduce what we do in terms of providing programs to to the entire community. With that, if there are no further comments, I would call the question on this.

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** I'll second, is that a motion?

**Gibran Stout** I have a comment, I have some information if you need. To look at.

**Nick Kovacevich** Sorry Stout, No public comments.

**Gibran Stout** The public has a right to make a comment.

**Josh Kaplan** You can leave your paper, you can leave your papers at the end of the table and they can be passed around.

**Gibran Stout** Some of the information you were just given...

**Nick Kovacevich** We can't have a public comment on this.

**Doug Le Belle** Excuse me, we have a motion on the table and.

**Gibran Stout** ... Kein say the public has the right to comment before you take action and the fact that you had this whole conversion...

<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	We had public comment on the consent calendar.
<b>Gibran Stout</b>	That's fine.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Yeah, we already have public comment on the consent.
<b>Gibran Stout</b>	You're taking action without allowing the public to talk about it.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	We, I think we had 15 comments So that let's reflect that...
<b>Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia</b>	I second his motion.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	We'll go ahead and take the roll call. Summer.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Chair Kovacevich?
<b>Doug Le Belle</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director Pham?
<b>Newton Pham</b>	Yea, I'll put my faith in the Facilities Committee.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director La Belle?
<b>Doug Le Belle</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director Rubalcava- Garcia?
<b>Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director Ruiz?
<b>Robert Ruiz</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director Bilezikjian?
<b>Tanya Bilezikjian</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	And Director Jackson?
<b>Dimitria Jackson</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Thank you.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Okay. Thank you guys. So I did move the agenda because obviously, in light of the vote failing, last meeting, we needed to revisit the minutes and I wanted to move that after we were able to revote on the issue. So we're going to go back to Agenda Item number Five, which is meeting



minutes. And, we do have two meeting minutes on the calendar meeting minutes held for April 25th meeting. And also the March 28th meetings, which are minutes, which are now updated to reflect that that vote failed in March. Which we just which we just addressed. Your right before this. So those are the two meeting minutes that we're looking to approve here. If anyone wants to make a motion.

**Doug Le Belle** I would approve the March amended minutes.

**Michele Richards** Can we hold for just one second?

**Nick Kovacevich** Shall we do this separately or together?

**Michele Richards** I have to estimate from one...

**Nick Kovacevich** Oh, yeah, we'll do them separately. Okay, so we have a motion for the March minutes to be approved. And we have a second from Director Bilezikjian. Summer.

**Summer Angus** Chair Kovacevich?

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** Is there a public comment on this agenda?

**Nick Kovacevich** Oh, my apologies. There are two public comments on this item. So my apologies. Okay, so we do have one public comment. We have Gibran Stout, sorry. This for the April so. All right. I messed up again. We can vote on March. Because this is for this is for April. March so we can vote on March.

**Michele Richards** Did you want to, Gibran you have a card to speak on?

**Nick Kovacevich** She's on April..

**Michele Richards** April? Oh, you're going into March.

**Nick Kovacevich** We're doing March right now. So we can vote on March. We can vote on March. We have no public comments from March. And we have a motion and a second summer.

**Summer Angus** Chair Kovacevich? Yes. Director Pham?

**Robert Ruiz** He left.

**Summer Angus** Director La Belle?

**Doug Le Belle** Yes.

**Summer Angus** Director Rubalcava-Garcia?

<b>Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia</b>	Obstain.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director Ruiz?
<b>Robert Ruiz</b>	Obstain.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director Bilezikjian?
<b>Tanya Bilezikjian</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	And Director Jackson?
<b>Dimitria Jackson</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	One, two, three, four, with two absentions.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	That is the vote to amend the March to approve the amended March meeting minutes. Okay, so that passes. Now, we will move to the April meeting minutes. And for that we do have a public comment. We have Gibran Stout.
<b>Gibran Stout</b>	Just a couple of things. At that. At that April meeting. You were delivered I think it was over 1,200 letters. I didn't see them anywhere in the minutes. And it's my understanding that they're supposed to be on there. All documents that are presented to the board consideration. And I didn't see them anywhere on there. So I'm curious how we can get that fixed? I know it's a lot of information. But I think it's important that that be on the public record because for 1,200 people speaking out on one thing, it's a big deal. My other question is that I had on the CEO's presentation, I went back through and I watched video extensively. And at the 25:15 mark she says, "That's the end of my report." And there's a small area left on the report. And so there's several items that are posted online, and as far as the operational reports that are not part of the report. And so I'm confused as to the disparity of it. The first page is the screenshot from the video. The second page is from what's posted online, and there's some information, there's some disconnect, and there's some inaccurate information. So I would ask that that be corrected. There's also something listed on here as mental health gardening. And that was never mentioned during the report. So I'm just confused as to what that is. And I request that the board, correct what is posted online to match with what was presented during the board meeting. So that's it.
<b>Michele Richards</b>	Yeah, they're not in minutes.

<b>Tanya Bilezikjian</b>	There's letters, there's a Penny Eli McGregor presented copies of 1200 or 1270 letters. From the equestrians to the board. She stated the community is asking the Board to rescind the vote on the rental increase and cancel. Yes, it is in the minutes.
<b>Dimitria Jackson</b>	Which number is it?
<b>Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia</b>	It is under item six, and it's 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 down.
<b>Gibran Stout</b>	The letter themselves are not included, as with all the other correspondence.
<b>Tanya Bilezikjian</b>	Do, letters have to be submitted through public comment in order for them to be part of an agenda. Or...?
<b>Josh Kaplan</b>	For the purposes of the meeting minutes, the letters are referred to which the meeting minutes are maintained by the district for the purposes of the Public Records Act. And presumably, those meeting minutes should include as attachments, the correspondence that's received, so the district will preserve those in accordance with its own document will presumably for attention policies.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	So as long as we preserve the correspondence, and we have the we have it reflected in the minutes, we're fine to approve this?
<b>Josh Kaplan</b>	Yes, that's correct.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Great. Any other comment or you want to have a motion?
<b>Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia</b>	Make a motion to approve minutes for April?
<b>Tanya Bilezikjian</b>	Second.
<b>Doug Le Belle</b>	A second, Director La Belle.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Thank you. Okay. Thank you. Go ahead, Summer.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Chair Kovacevich?
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director La Belle?
<b>Doug Le Belle</b>	Yes.

<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director Rubalcava-Garcia?
<b>Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director Ruiz?
<b>Robert Ruiz</b>	Obstain.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Director Bilezikjian?
<b>Tanya Bilezikjian</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	And Director Jackson?
<b>Dimitria Jackson</b>	Yes.
<b>Summer Angus</b>	Thank you.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Okay, great. So now that we've completed that we will get back on schedule here with agenda item number Eight and this is the CEO operational announcements and updates. We do have a public comment for this too. We have Gibran Stout, followed by Kelly Babbs.
<b>Kelly Babbs</b>	I'll make my comments after the presentation.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	This is the public comment period for this agenda item.
<b>Michele Richards</b>	I don't mind if they comment after.
<b>Nick Kovacevich</b>	Okay. you know what? I will make the decision to move the public comment for this until after the CEO update. Go ahead Michelle.
<b>Michele Richards</b>	All right. We all know that the OC Fair is always a good time. But does anyone know how many days until opening day? Closed the team is hard at work getting ready to welcome our guests were sprucing up the paint at our main gate. The livestock tent is up and waiting for the animals to arrive. Our outstanding exhibits team is setting up to create their magic. The first of 22 semi-trucks that hold the carnivals Legrande wheel XL has arrived on grounds. And does anyone recognize those purple poles? Sky ride. Yes, so the Skyride is almost fully assembled. You can see it on the ground. The poles are up the wires are up. And we're just waiting for the arrival of the chair. So we will have a full fare kickoff next month at the June board meeting. A couple of other updates. It was very exciting after last month's board meeting to have our board of directors break ground on the new administration building project. That project is well underway, and Ken will have a update in a few minutes. And sorry, Robert, a big congratulations to Director Robert Ruiz for finishing the

OC Marathon on May 5th. It was your first marathon ever, so you look pretty happy there. You look pretty happy to be standing still.

**Robert Ruiz**

I wasn't feeling happy at the end.

**Michele Richards**

Exactly. And I, before I turn it over to Ken for more of an operations update. As Director La Belle indicated, in last month's meeting, the staff is prepared to do a full rollout of The Ranch Program. There are a lot of details that are being worked out. I have tried very hard to keep the board apprised every month of progress. In doing so I think I've opened up my staffs good work to criticism. I'm going to continue to give periodic updates, but more details to come in September. So that said, we are developing a brand and the logo for The Ranch. We're building out the website. We are coordinating a June horse show which Michelle Capps will talk about in a few minutes. We're developing session plans as we begin our therapy partnership with the North Orange County Veterans Center. We're designing an equine exhibit and tour plan and we're developing curriculum for an expanded ranch after school programs. So stay tuned for more. We will provide updates as they're firmed up. So I don't want anyone to think that because we're just letting out little details that nothing's being done or there is no plan. There's plenty of plan and we are communicating with the equestrian community when we know what the impact will be on the borders and trainers there. You might remember in my presentation several months ago we talked about using the the barns on the west side for boarding and training and the barns on the east side will be used for the public programming that we're we're putting in place. So we'll be communicating more details about that with the borders and trainers. So Ken, I'll turn it over to you for an all click away if you want.

**Ken Karns**

Okay, for the first one or two, no photo's. For sure the first one, no photo's because you're talking level safety and security. Few updates for this month. First one is on a Unified Command dispatch center. New for 2024. A unified command operations center will be created and utilized to coordinate all security, medical, and law enforcement operations through annual fair. Previously, each team worked independently and gathered when issues arose. With representatives present daily from security, medical, and law enforcement, the newly established unified command center will provide improved communication, and immediate surveillance monitoring, and playback capabilities, weather monitoring capabilities, prompt coordinated dispatch, and will serve as our emergency operations center in the event of significant occurrence. The next item is some information on sidewalk street vendors in an effort to maintain compliance with all local and state laws and ordinances. The OC fair security team along with OC Sheriff's Department, city postbase code enforcement and local health department officials are

working to address safety and legal concerns regarding the increasing number of unpermitted sidewalker street vendors present during the annual OC Fair. The presence of unpermitted food and item vendors presents several hazards, those unforeseen events and property including potentially hazardous cooking carts that have not had health and safety inspections, lack of proper food handling and storage training or certification, parking lot traffic, vehicle safety concerns and obstruction of pedestrian evacuation pathways. As such, teams of various personnel from aforementioned agencies will be actively involved in daily direct enforcement hopes of significantly reducing or eliminating sidewalk street vendor presence altogether. The next item, also on safety, is an update regarding the carrying of Narcan. Two bills pending in the assembly would require workplaces like ours, as well as entertainment venues like the Pacific Amphitheater to stock Narcan in first aid kits and be accessible for trained staff to use in case of emergency with guests. Narcan is the common name for Naloxone and nasal spray that when administered reverses the effects of opioid overdose. In anticipation of either these two bills being passed into law, our safety and security team has begun training key staff on how to administer Narcan. Participants will be trained on how to recognize the signs of a potential overdose and the proper process of responding. If Naloxone is given to someone who hasn't overdosed, there are no adverse effects. In addition, those trained in how to administer Naloxone who act in good faith can not be subject to professional review, be liable in a civil action, or be subject to criminal prosecution for this administration. Next Item, I'll update on our partnership. And working with Edison. The Edison and the OCFEC teams met for their annual review and updates of the fair on Monday May 13. Prepare equipment inspections will be carried out and any deficiencies corrected. We also reviewed our emergency response, any brownouts and the summer projects Edison will be completing in the area. An update on our bio digester this is a long standing one. Anyway, the digester purchase is part of the 2022 capital projects has finally arrived. Assembly and testing of the unit has begun. A bio digester is a piece of equipment that will break down organic material to digest will help manage our organic trash and waste, reducing greenhouse gases produced by waste that would otherwise decompose in an open environment. Organic material from our food scraps, green material from landscaping, and animal manure is loaded into digester and turned into fertilizer, that fertilizer ends up being the consistency of a coarse coffee grind. And lastly, and really happy to report, the temporary building passed inspection by the city fire marshal on Tuesday, and the move began on Wednesday morning, and everyone should be settled in for next week. Happy answering questions.

**Michele Richards**

I would be happy to invite any board members who would like to see that building and where we'll be located for the next year. If you'd like to

join us back at the Lego village. It's a series of containers, really portable, portable offices that will become our home for the next year. So we're happy to host a tour, if you'd like. So that that concludes our operational updates.

**Nick Kovacevich** Okay, thank you. Question.

**Dimitria Jackson** Director Jackson. The digester, how do we anticipate controlling the smells? Is it encapsolated? It just...

**Ken Karns** Shouldn't be, as it breaks down, there shouldn't be no odors. Yes, yeah. If you have a garden composter or ... composter, it's its cared for properly. There are no odors.

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** Which is nice because it's required by the state. Right? The organic, the bill that passed.

**Ken Karns** So that is in our corporation. So that's both middle of the property on the north side.

**Dimitria Jackson** I'll look at a map, Thank you

**Nick Kovacevich** Any other comments from the board before we do public comment? Okay, we'll do. Thank you. CEO, Richards and COO Karns. Appreciate that. We will do public Hello, we have three public comments. We have Gibbon stout, followed by Kelly Babbs and then Marce Evans on Zoom.

**Gibran Stout** Thank you very much for letting me speak after the presentation. I have some questions about that. So first of all, I want to say we are excited to have more public programs, right? We want it. We want to collaborate. I'm happy to hear you say that we're going to collaborate. I'm looking forward to those actual conversations. But I do have some questions about the ranch program. Because I'm very familiar with it, because I've been wanting for years to really get it to be a robust program, because currently it's only one school. And it's 30 Kids, I think so, so much more, we can really do some great collaborations. But also there are no horses in the ranch program. And there have been no horses for five years. And the company that you used to get horses from has moved to Texas. And so what does that look like? Also, I know that CSFA does not insure equal equine instruction. So that's another reason for collaborating with the onsite nonprofits and organizations. So we want to help make this ranch program an actual equine program, not just a garden program. I'm also very excited to have therapy. But the North Orange County Veterans therapy center does not have horses. They have no equine therapy program. They have no equine certified therapists. So we're reinventing the wheel again, which is therapy is great. But there's your therapy on site that's happening. There's therapy programs nearby that are

happening. Why are we trying to create something new, instead of collaborating with what is? Because it takes a lot of times, Director La Belle says these things don't happen overnight. And these things have been happening for many, many years already. So Equine Assisted Therapy also...

**Nick Kovacevich** That's time.

**Gibran Stout** ... takes 6,000 hours.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you Gibran, sorry. That's time. We do have your document here. Kelly Babbs?

**Kelly Babbs** Hi, with regards to CEO Richards benchmarking of the stables around in this area and looking at prices. You're comparing where we will be which is \$1,000...

**Nick Kovacevich** I don't think that was on this agenda item.

**Kelly Babbs** Didn't she just, I'm not sure what that means...

**Nick Kovacevich** The benchmarking of the prices was on the consent calendar, I guess. Yeah. This was just the operational update on the new vision and what we're doing for the if you're related to questions, you but we yeah, we can't discuss that. Okay, thank you. We have Marce Evans on Zoom.

**Marce Evans** Hey, everybody, and thank you again for having me comment. I just wanted to say I do. I think this has been a very difficult meeting. And thank you all for giving the public time to speak. Um, I wanted to offer my services as a working rancher in Orange County. I'm in young farmers and ranchers of Orange County Farm Bureau, I as I said earlier, I'm the executive director for the Herd Foundation, which runs ranch tours on a working cattle and horse ranch out in Trabuco Canyon. And then our direct to consumer grass fed beef businesses is 5 Bar Beef, run by my boyfriend's dad, Frank Fitzpatrick, who's has a big sign with horses that you guys put up at the fair entrance by the livestock every year. So we, we very much support your vision, I think what you're doing is really exciting. I do urge you to work with the stakeholders, which it sounds like you're going to do. And so anyway, I wanted to provide my contact info, which I gave to Summer and I'll email to the board as well, because there is a fundamental miscommunication here about what a ranch is, and what is what urban equestrian, Public Good you're already doing there. And I invite all of the board members to come out and see our working horse and Cattle Ranch. It's one of the last ones in orange county along with Rancho Mission Viejo. So thank you for your time.



**Nick Kovacevich** Thank You. And that concludes public comment on this agenda item. So we'll go ahead and move to Agenda Item number Nine, which is the governance process, starting with 9B because we already did not Item 9A which was the presentation of Asian American Pacific Islander History Month proclamation by the Community Affairs Committee. And thank you for again another wonderful presentation and highlighting an incredible member of our community and previous board director who we got to meet this morning, so that's great. And item B is the annual State of the OC Fair and Event Center address. I'm going to turn this over to Michelle after public comment. Unless the public commenters would prefer to go after we do have Leigh-Ann Kazolas and Gibran Stout. Okay, we got to do them both together then. Yeah, so after Okay. Okay. Yeah. This is yes. Oh, no. This is the annual State of the OC Fair Events. There is no strategic...

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** Well, it's a three year strategic plan update. I do reference it. It's part of, It's referenced in this report.

**Nick Kovacevich** Yeah, but it's this. It's this item. The item you're referring to is this item. This is the only it's it's within the review.

**Leigh-Ann Kazolas** I will speak afterwards.

**Nick Kovacevich** Okay, how about this? How about this, we'll do the item. And then if you guys want to give public comment, we can do that. Alright, go ahead.

**Michele Richards** All right, here we go. So it's three year strategic plan. The Board of Directors included an initiative for the CEO to provide the board and public a state of the OC Fair and Event Center presentation each year. It's been a year since my last presentation so I'm here to provide the board and the public with this year's State of the OC fair and Event Center review. So today I'm going to review a few key aspects of our overall business and provide you all with a report of how we're doing. Okay. After surviving the cancellation of the 2020, OC fair and all the challenges we faced coming out of the pandemic, we hosted the three most financially successful fairs in our history in 2021, 22, and 23. I feel like that's all behind us now. So now we turn to our future and what lies ahead for the OC Fair and Events Center. It's no longer about just surviving and thriving, but it's about focusing on our future. As we conclude our three year strategic plan at the end of this year, I would be facilitating a new strategic planning process with the board looking ahead over the next five years from 2025 through 2029. Our master plan already in motion is a look forward to how we'll develop this property to serve the needs of the community and it includes 10 projects scheduled through the end of 2033. Some of those projects include enhancements and upgrades to Centennial farm to expand our agriculture education

programs, not in the Master Site Plan. But an important part of our ag-education mission will be the Ranch community equine center, with a vision to provide school tours, equine exhibits and demonstrations, hands on experiences, horse shows and Equine Assisted programs for the public. And all of this means responsible growth, financial stability and service to our mission. Three principles that will form the foundation for our future.

**Michele Richards** Our direction is clear. With year two of our strategic plan completed, year three in full swing and a new five year planning process scheduled for the fall. We have our roadmap for the future. We have an approved budget for 2024 and are currently 2.7 2 million favorable to that budget. And lastly, we have an approved Master Site Plan which will serve us 10 years into the future. With our first project, the expansion of the administration building already underway. The strategic plan the budget, and the Master Site Plan formed the foundation from which we will grow. We couldn't do it without an active, and engaged board of directors who take stewardship of this property, and fiduciary oversight of this organization very seriously. They are a diverse group of experts in a variety of fields including engineering, the law, finance, labor, public service and, entrepreneurship. With eight members, our board has a combined experience of over 52 years serving the OC fair and Events Center. They volunteered their time on our five committees. The Leadership Committee develops the board agendas, is liaison for the safety and security of our events, and initiates and monitors the strategic planning process. The Financial Monitoring Committee has monthly financial oversight, monitors the budget, and oversees the annual audit process. The Facilities Committee focuses on construction projects, capital expenditures and master site planning. The Governance Committee recommends policy updates, and oversees the annual form 700 reporting and required board training. And the Community Affairs Committee focuses on DEI activities, engages with the community and develops relationships with local, county, and state officials. Board members are ambassadors for the organization in the community. They bring their expertise and knowledge to the table to help guide the organization's vision and accomplish our mission. They attend our year round events and activities in order to develop the knowledge to make sound decisions. And they love the OC Fair, right?

**Michele Richards** Yes. All right. The OC fair remains the only fair in California with over 1 million in attendance. There are over 2000 fairs in North America, we rank 13 moving up two spots from last year. But it's no longer about attendance as we've shown over the last few years. It's about safety, the guest experience, managing our resources and being a good neighbor. Our leadership within the fair industry was solid before, but has continued to expand as our staff serves in key leadership roles with

Western Fairs Association and the International Association of Fairs and expositions on industry committees, and as trainers, and workshop facilitators at the Western Fairs Association annual convention held in Reno, Nevada in January, we were honoured with 14 achievement awards. And the International Association for fairs and expositions recognized us with three achievement awards. And we're very proud to have received a People's Choice Award again from the OC register readers for 2023. And here is just some of the industry and California State committees and boards that our staff serves on. We are active within our community as well. Many of us serve on boards outside the organization and committees within the industry. Last year, we doubled the number of fair admission ticket donations to the neediest in our community, over 5000. And we're doing it again this year so that those who would not otherwise be able to visit the OC fair can attend. Imaginology was a huge success this year, despite the constant threat of rain, providing a free opportunity for students, teachers, and families to explore, discover and learn. And as we continue to serve our educational mission, we're very proud to report that both Centennial Farm and Hero's Hall saw big increases in participation and engagement from the public. Centennial Farm welcomed over 112,000 visitors this past school year, growing more than 15% from the prior year, we increase the number of farm and garden classes to 19, tripling the number of parties participants from last year. Most classes sold out within hours, and our wonderful docents at Centennial farm doubled the number of volunteer hours to over 6900. Likewise, Hero's Hall welcomed 8,000 visitors just since the beginning of the year, that's nearly double the number from the same time last year. Our Veterans Day event last November attracted 500 participants anxious to show their respect to our veterans.

**Michele Richards**

We introduced two new exhibits since last year and expanded or develop new partnerships with the OC Docent League, the Young Marines and Cal guard museum command. Just tell someone that you work at the OC fair, or you serve on the board of directors, and they'll tell you what this organization means to the community. And just like these young award winners at last year's fair, we're continuing to achieve as we develop new business in responsible ways. We added 23 new events in 2023 and so far have booked 12 new events this year. events that have never been at the OC fair and Event Center before. Our sales team from tandem has added 14 new sponsors of the OC fair and Imaginology in the last few years and are still working on it for this year's fair. Part of our strategic plan includes mining new business from Orange County. We featured 90 New merchants at the OC Fair last year, four of which were from Orange County. All were from California. We added five new concessionaires to the Fair last year. One was local from Orange County and three were from California, and wait until you see what we have in store for the food at the 2024 OC fair. Last year's concert series had 15

sold out shows the most ever in Pacific amphitheater history. Six of the 10 most profitable shows held in the Pacific amphitheater city since its reopening in 2003 happened during the 2023 OC Fair. And for the first time ever, profit from a single show in the Pacific Amphitheater exceeded \$400,000. Does anybody remember what show that might be? Neyo! It was me. Yes. Yep. Yep, it was a very successful show. We completed 47 capital improvement projects in 2023.

**Michele Richards**

And there are 60 projects scheduled for this year. So far the team has completed 12 of those projects. 43 are active and five are pending. It has been indeed a very busy year for us. We're making technology work for us. We started a new partnership with Etix since last year, and are exploring all the available technology the partnership offers to improve the guest experience. We've made some nice upgrades to our website to also improve the guest experience. Our new administration building expansion when completed will feature many technology upgrades to enhance employee collaboration, as well as include many green energy features. We live in an interesting world for sure we're bad actors are alive and well. So we're implementing cybersecurity network monitoring to keep our systems secure. Portable sound monitoring equipment is being used to ensure compliance with sound levels in the surrounding areas, but also to be good neighbors. And our secure Security Command Center, as Ken mentioned earlier, is getting some technology upgrades to unify security, medical, and law enforcement operations throughout the fair. And we're continuing to invest in our team in the last year. And with the hard work from our HR team. We filled 10 key positions within the organization and are proud to offer nine promotions to nine deserving individuals. We continue to offer ongoing supervisory training, emergency preparedness training, workplace harassment prevention and workplace safety training to our team. And in the last year, we have certified 25 employees on forklifts and 27 on elevated lifts and 135 people have been trained on the safe operation of carts in the last year. Golf Carts are very important to our business. And what about our financial strength? Well, our finances continue to be strong even as we fund the first two projects of our Master Site Plan. Today, we have \$48 million in reserves. Our controlled attendance model for the fair continues to pay off with net proceeds from the 2023 OC Fair of 22.8 million at the end of April.

**Michele Richards**

For the first third of 2024, we are currently 2.7 2 million favorable to budget. And when we take four months of actual financial performance, and add eight months of budgeted numbers, the result is a year round projection of 7.6 million in net proceeds by the end of the year. So our financial outlook is indeed strong. But, just like this kid in the photo, we still have our challenges. As you heard some of them today. As we move forward with confidence toward our strategic planning process, we'll be

asking some key questions. How do we control our fair attendance, and manage our resources but continue to grow the business? How do we continue to attract key talent to join our team? How do we manage expenses in this inflationary economy? How do we offer value to our guests without minimizing the guest experience? And how do we address our ongoing parking and storage issues? How do we continue to achieve our mission of creating equitable community access to agriculture, entertainment, cultural and educational experience? While the job market is softening a bit, we've been very successful in filling many key positions and we have our annual hiring fairs scheduled for June 8th. So lots of great summer jobs out there. So last year, I asked the question of our employees. What do you think the state of the Oc Fair and Event Center is and they came up with some interesting words like bright, exciting and invincible. This year I decided to see from the faces of our guests what they think the state of the OC Fair and Event Center is. So here are the faces from Centennial Farm, Imaginology, the OC Fair, Hero's Hall, and our year round events. So there you have it. That concludes our state of the OC Fair presentation. Any questions? Nope.

**Nick Kovacevich** People look happy.

**Michele Richards** They are. They're having fun. Okay, I think we had some public comment.

**Nick Kovacevich** We do if we want, if the public... So we have Leigh-Ann Kazolas and Gibran Stout if you're interested.

**Leigh-Ann Kazolas** That was great. I mean, there's so much great things going on here. We love affair. It's there's a lot of great things. And I think the good thing about strategic plans is that that's a good point for reflection, because without reflection, there's not improvement. And CEO, Richard said, you know, we've met all of our 2023 strategic goals, but I just wanted to give...

**Michele Richards** I don't think I ever said that.

**Leigh-Ann Kazolas** Well, I thought you said strategic goals were met in 2023...

**Michele Richards** I never said they were met.

**Nick Kovacevich** Go ahead.

**Leigh-Ann Kazolas** There were strategic goals, because some of those strategic goals were that you guys all came up with it was raised about a equine facility. And the facility is actually unfortunately, more declined than ever before. There's just minor stall repairs... store customers, but arena fencing

remains broken, the hot walkers don't work. The public areas are dirty, and like the bleachers haven't been cleaned, they're unsafe. There's no safe place for the public. And even as you guys move forward with your next strategic plan, in this great public domain, I'm hoping that some of these issues can be addressed. The other issue was also the strategic plan was to offer the highest standard of care for the housed horses, this standard of care is actually falling below basic levels. There's been moldy hay, there's been issues with horses with bedsores from lack of bedding, sharp objects falling off the contractors equipment found in the arena. That's not the highest standard of care. And I'm hoping that the board and staff and the equestrian community can work together to bring those standards up because it's important. One of the strategic plans was also to be able to find the true costs of offering an equestrian center, but you're still paying \$1,000 daily for two hours worth of work to manage the arenas. So that's not learning what it really costs right if you pay 50,000 You're not learning the real cost of that car. You're overpaying for the services you're not really taking it. And we have offered and industry experts you know Joy from Whittier Narrows, she manages like six public equestrian centers. We have people that are willing to work with you guys work, with us with you guys to really get to what it actually costs to meet that goal.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Thank you Leigh-Ann, Gibran Stout?

**Gibran Stout**

Thank you CEO Richards for that update. Here's the questions. I'm confused. What happened to the community Equine Center? I keep suddenly hearing about the ranch. And I've not ever seen anything on the agenda that it's changing from the community equine center to the ranch. So I'm just confused because there are no horses with the ranch program. You said there's plenty of plan. We haven't seen the plan. We've seen highlights in these operational updates. But I haven't seen a plan. There hasn't been a lot. There hasn't been communication with the equestrians, it's other than, Oh, you're gonna have to move. We'd love to have communication because there's some really great ways we can do it and do it effectively. That Master Site Plan, Master Site Plan. A Master Site means it's everything. And the Equestrian Center is glaringly absent. You talk about spending millions and millions of dollars. I know you spend millions and millions of dollars on an inappropriate contractor to care. And that's millions and millions of dollars that could have gone into programs. But what's the budget? How many millions? Where's the budget? What what what is it? And the strategic goals weren't met in 2020 some of them really super simple, it's collaborating with on site nonprofits, and we're here. Oh my god, you guys are so sick of us. You're sick of us begging to have a conversation and begging to collaborate, like let's, what the heck, come on. And a public nonprofit corporation is not owned by a private corporation. They are separate

entities. So we think it's really important to differentiate what's public and public benefit. So if you're saying that the nonprofits on site don't offer public benefits, what are the new programs that you're proposing? How is that different? So how is the current public benefits different than that?

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you Gibran. Now we have any other comments from the board on this item? Okay. Great. So we'll move on. Thank you, Michelle, for a great report. Very good to see some of the progress we're making. Of course, we all know our work is not done. And you guys will continue to progress. But good to see some of the achievements and the state of the current address. So thank you. Next, we'll have the committee reports, item . We are 9C going to start with the leadership committee. And fortunately, my committee, co-committee member is not here. So I will go ahead and give the brief update. Essentially, we met on May 8th, to plan the agenda for this May board of directors meeting. And we will do the same next month on June 12th to plan the agenda for the June meeting. And I'll take the opportunity to remind everybody that that will be our last meeting until after the fair, so should be a fun one and look forward to hopefully having some positive energy at that meeting, leading up to your biggest event of the year, which should be exciting for everybody. So that's all we have from the leadership committee. And I will now move to Agenda Item 9C two, which is the financial monitoring audit committee. Before we get the report, we do have, once again, a couple of public comments. We have Gibran Stout.

**Gibran Stout** I'll speak after the report.

**Nick Kovacevich** Okay, we'll do the report first. So Finance and Monitoring Committee Director Pham is not here. So I would ask Director Bilezikjian if you could please provide us a report.

**Tanya Bilezikjian** You got it. So we met and went through all of the financials that were prepared and presented to us. I'll keep it short since Michelle presented some of this already. But year to date, revenues are favorable to budget by \$1.4 million. And additionally, expenses are favorable to budget by \$2.6 million, putting us in a really good position. So for the year to date period ending April 30th, 2024, net proceeds are a favorable budget by \$2.724 million. And then again, as Michelle noted, cash and cash investments are at \$48 million, as at the end of April. We are wrapping up the audit working with the auditor. And I don't know how to say that Lance Solon..

**Nick Kovacevich** Oh, Sail.

**Tanya Bilezikjian** As staff is or I haven't been accurate before, staff is currently waiting on outstanding pension information from the state, which does tend to lag

behind. And then we'll be meeting again on June 9th, although I might have to adjust the time. I'll work out my calender.

**Nick Kovacevich** Okay, great. Thank you for the update. We'll do the public comment. We do have Gibran Stout. Two minutes.

**Gibran Stout** Thank you so much for your work that you're doing. Really appreciate it. Attention that you're giving to it. A couple of people mentioned earlier. It is not as it's not where it should be. It's not worth tipping. I know we're spending millions and millions. We're overspending on areas that we could be putting money into improvements. I know that we walked around the property today versus two years ago. We have footing issues we have weeds we have. We don't have consistent repair being done on the facilities. We some of the things that are being proposed for the public programming and The Ranch has some really serious and fatal flaws. We'd like to talk about that some more. So looking forward to those conversations that you said we're going to be having. They're really easy fixes. It's not anything major. It's but it's just when you don't have a feel for what's happening there. You don't really know and what's going to happen. We don't know. I know there's lots of plan, but we don't know what the plan is really, we know, overview. We know guidelines, but we don't know what's actually happening. I know the word entitled has been banded around...

**Nick Kovacevich** Gibran, can we keep this related to the financial report. Sorry.

**Gibran Stout** No, no, that's okay. Entitled is what slumlords call the tenants. And so when you say, when you pay for an apartment, you get to use that apartment and all communities bases that come with it, I suppose you could say, tenants are entitled. I know, it's annoying, trust me I know. But I think it's important to recognize that when people pay, I guess they do feel entitled to use the space that they're paying for. And they do feel entitled to fair market value.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you, Gibran. And next, we're gonna move to item number. Facilities Committee, no item? Oh, yes. Item number 9C3, the Facilities Committee. And for that we have some public comment. But I guess keeping with the order that we're doing nowadays, for this, we will do the report first, seems to be the preferred method. So let's go ahead and hear the facilities. There's a lot of public comment, but we'll we'll take it after the report. You are on the list. Go ahead. Yeah.

**Robert Ruiz** As we're looking at, you know, dress it up a bit because I don't think that's been a major issue to begin with, right Michelle? So that and we also you know, we discuss the equestrian center on the annual arena maintenance will be up this coming Monday. Correct, Michelle? Correct. And related to that. I know we had quite a bit of speakers here



today. The Facilities Committee has decided we're going to put out a survey here that's going to go out to all the borders and trainers. So we're gonna get back some feedback from everybody. I know we're not we're not here, everyone's not here but quite a few are and I thank those who showed up so we're going to working with Michelle and the Facilities Committee. We're gonna put it out to all of us that we get feedback from everybody who's at the Equestrian Center. Other then that our next meeting is going to be on the fifth of next month. Directly Bilezikjian, unless you want to add something to it.

**Tanya Bilezikjian** Nope, nicely done. Thank you.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you. I think that's a great idea. And you guys are moving forward to try to get all the input we can from the existing equestrian community that's here. So I look forward to seeing the results of that. We will do any other comments from the board will take public comment on this agenda item. So we have a few public comments. We'll start with Carol Graves, followed by Gibran Stout, and then Aimee Murdoch.

**Carolyn Graves** This has been recently found in the arena. This was this was in cashews foot. Luckily he has big feet. But these are recent, just to put that out there. I also want to request since this is so important, can I have a full three minutes? I will go very fast.

**Nick Kovacevich** We cannot, no it's got to be a uniform, I'm sorry. So we'll do two minutes.

**Carolyn Graves** All right. I'll try to be very fast. Just in the last week, moldy hay, horses being left in urine, urine soaked shavings, urine in addition to the feums causes brush infection which rots their skin and hooves. One stall had to the mats pulled out and had a bunch of black mold scraped underneath it. Just in the last three weeks of that was called because of a horse could barely walk. There's been injuries related to the lack of shavings. And for the last several months we've found these, I have so many examples, I can give you particularly if you ever asked. 10 months ago when the horse tripped and fell onto a child because of the sinkhole. Despite this being told, staff and Lopes Works didn't agree to fix it for 18 months. I had a very good conversation with Michelle and Evey. And I'm very grateful that they promptly spoke to me after coming to them. The problem has been, who do we talk to? So I'm not a bully. I'm not trying to, you know, be alarmist, we have genuine, sincere concerns about the facility. And before you vote to raise our rates, I think that you need to understand that there's a lot of crosstalk, there's a lot of miscommunication about when there is a problem who do we go to. And that's been leading to things kind of piling up and getting worse. So we need to have conversations that aren't in this format. Michelle took probably 30 minutes, her and Evey, of their time and phone conversation

that was very productive. And that's what we need more of.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Okay, thank you, Carolyn.

**Natalie  
Rubalcava-Garcia**

Chair Kovacevich if I may, Michelle would be that point of contact for people...

**Michele Richards**

Actually, any issues regarding daily issues with the Equestrian Center. And Carol and I talked about this, they should be reported to our staff, there is a process for documenting complaints, so that they can go out and check it out work with the contractor to resolve any issues. So if people are waiting month to month to come and speak with the Board of Directors, that's the least productive way to get an issue addressed.

**Natalie  
Rubalcava-Garcia**

And yeah, I'm addressing them to the, your public comment periods over, but I'm just addressing it to the CEO, because I would like clarification. So if possible, if we could just send out an email that outlines that process. So there's clarity and transparency, put it on the website, send it to the board members. So we're also aware and there's no confusion by the borders.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Great idea.

**Carolyn Graves**

And this is not public gift of funds.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Okay, so next we have Gibran Stout on this item, followed by Amy Murdoch. And then lastly, Lisa Sabo.

**Gibran Stout**

What she said. I'm the person who's been trying to get the sinkhole. I have had constant communication with staff, constant communication. Since December of 2022. We had a meeting, I had constant communication. I've gotten bids to fix the work. I have had constant communication meetings, phone calls and text. And I shared that and I keep getting the runaround. Oh, we don't manage it. We do manage it. Oh, the Evey's job. Oh, that's discretion of the board. Oh, the board didn't give us direction. Oh, that slump has worked. So I would love to have that. That thing that you were just talking about? LW I, you said cut your profit margin. And I know I asked Michelle, Michelle and I have been emailing about it. There were no cuts. They changed how they did their math. They changed how they calculated things. But there have been no cuts made by LWI. So I'm curious to know what cuts. There are none, I'd like to see. It's important to also know that for the facilities that operator you have is incentivized to waste. And the storage she's talking about I just throw away good material. That increases your manure hauling costs because the operator doesn't pay for waste removal. But they do get paid based on how many shavings they use. So they're incentivized to throw away as much as they can. Oh, we have to

use more. Oh, you're out of shavings you have to buy more. It's like having a litter box, right? You don't need to shovel in your litter box if you go broke buying cat litter. shavings are the same way I know it's, it's crazy, but you sift it. You don't throw everything away. When you do you have an operator who's gonna get rewarded for being wasteful and I don't think that what she wants, I don't think that's what anybody wants so we say best in breed. That's, that's hilarious because it is not best in breed. No where close, no where close. So we look forward to having those meetings and the survey.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you Gibran. Next we have Aimee Murdoch, followed by Lisa Sabo.

**Unknown Speaker** Aimee Murdoch she had to go.

**Nick Kovacevich** Okay, we got Lisa. Go ahead.

**Lisa Sabo** Hello again, thank you. And I'm so excited. Maybe we can meet the Facilities Meeting because I agree. These are like the little details, you know, that we need to talk about and get fixed at the Equestrian Center before it becomes a huge issue. And it just the footing is a huge issue. In the past they visited, you know, examine the footing every six to eight months, and had tractors, and sand, and levelers in there. And right now just preparing for this show jumping rallying. Just so you know, our Pony Club is one of the largest pony clubs in the United States. 40 members in our club. Pony Club internationally, nationally is a nonprofit organization. And these kids work so hard, but comparing these horses and... The 17 kids we took, we took 12 horses, and I just was dying because I'm there, my school horses, 8 of them are my school horses and I'm having to jump them on this incredibly hard foot. And so fixing the footing is just an absolutely huge, huge issue. And so anyway, but these are things that we should be working, talking about in meeting, smaller meetings, with the staff. And Teresa's been saying to me in the office, said I just went in and hugged her the other day, because she's so, she's practically crying because she has had so many complaints coming to her. And she's been telling me for months that they ordered the sand, which is not really true, because it was so incredibly confusing. So with that, let's work and then actually talk to Lopes works and let's try to negotiate it down or in the fall run an RFP. And then Minar disposal, the fairgrounds is currently paying \$105 a month for manure disposal for horse. Remember Joyce, from Linear Narrows, she pays 30 something a month. I mean, that contract alone could stop, you know, lower rates. And it's just because you've been the person, and uses the same company. That's the frustrating thing. Whoever negotiated that contract they saw they saw the government coming and they just negotiated high. Anyway, thank you.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you, Lisa. Okay, so that actually concludes our committee reports. We do have on the agenda, the Governance Committee, and the community affairs committee, but we do not have reports for those committees. At this time. However, we did have a public comment for the Community Affairs Committee. So Gibran in light of there's no report, would you still like to make a public comment?

**Gibran Stout** Okay, lynching aside, I want you guys to know that there's a lot of things happening. We say that all the time. I wanted to give you an update. We had, we've been working with SOY, our groups working with SOY for many, many years, and we had them out just a couple of weeks ago. We'd love to do a great event. It's a great opportunity for these girls. For all the kids. We have a lot on our club. We say we teach your daughter how to say no to a 1200 pound animal, they can say no to a 200 pound animal. That's kind of our tagline. So they came out and had a great time. And I think they're primarily Latina, you know, so we had some girl scouts out. I know, the other trainers here have had Girl Scouts that we had 10, six year old daisies out yesterday. They scream. So that was very challenging. And we are working with several different nonprofits, they do lots of generous donations, I'd also like to point out that we are hosting a much revolting competition over sadly, it's going to be at a venue in Los Angeles, because the prices that staff quoted us were five to six times what industry standard is. So I'm very excited that we have a show. It's a different type of show. But I think it's really important that when you're getting comps for things, you can really compare apples to apples. And there will be more of a show you would have done our show here, we would have loved to do it on site, obviously super easy. Much easier than driving to Los Angeles. But I think it's important that you know, that I approached that I discussed it with staff and didn't really get much response and feedback. And a little bit I did it was extremely expensive. Way, way, way over industry standards. I'm paying \$500 for an arena of the Los Angeles and I was quoted \$3,000 for a smaller arena where I keep my horses already and I've been for 10 years. So I think that that's all part of the whole facilities thing and the cost and all that stuff.

**Nick Kovacevich** Okay, thank you. And then that, that moves us to Agenda Item 11. Since we already did our closed session earlier in the window, we had the room. So this is an upcoming events preview and I'll turn this over to Michelle. Yes.

**Michele Capps** So, upcoming events. This weekend, we've got the Scottish Feast. It's a fantastic way to explore the culture and the Scots in the Celts. The best part you don't have to be Scottish to have fun here. It will be two days of bagpipes, drums, Highland dancing, Scottish clans, and more. And that will be opening at 10am Both Saturday and Sunday, then six to six night

market is coming back. The six to six night market is inspired by the famous open air nighttime bazaars of Asia where people come together to eat, drink, socialize, and be entertained. This is their 12th year and they feature over 250 food vendors, merchandise, crafts, artists, games, live concerts, and entertainment attractions. And it's an epic event. I really enjoy it. I hope you guys have gone in there and tried it. They have some amazing vocal talent, and local chefs, and entrepreneurs. And that's what this is all about. Empowering their community by serving as a platform for showcasing local talent. And then June 1, and second we have Repticon. You can explore aisles and aisles of reptiles, amphibians, and vertebrates and more. As Michelle said, we've got a job fair coming up on the eighth if you know anybody who is looking for the best summer job ever. Come on over and we've got that job. The 15th of June battleground Grappling championship. I had to look this one up actually. And it's going to be competitors from the Mighty Might so four to six years old, all the way up to adult master level, and the sport is a specialized version of wrestling. Also on the 15th and 16th, the SoCal World Guitar Show, featuring vintage dealers and collectors, appraisers, and manufacturers. And the public can bring their own items to sell and trade. June 15th is a busy day. Move on, at night we've got the speedway returning with its second parley night.

**Michele Capps**

And on the 20th, we have the Flight Club OC. Six boxing matches, MMA fights, and that all starts at 7pm. And if you come early, you can start with dinner and drinks over at the Baja & Grill. So I said the 15th was a busy day it is going to be the first horse show. Victory at the Fair, and Victory horse shows is bringing this show to us. The public is invited to this free community event to see special center and jumper equestrian competitions here at the fair and it showcases the agility, skill and accomplishments of horses and riders. It's a two day event, highlighting a variety of classes for entry level through intermediate, comfort and jumpers. And that includes ages five years old and up. The victory horse show they are locally rated. And so the horse show is locally rated and provides opportunities for riders and horses to experience competition. And then farmers markets I think it's going to be too late for us to catch today's every Thursday, dozens of vendors with the county's freshest fruits, vegetables and other food items. And then, Michelle touched on this over at Centennial Farm, we have some workshops coming up. On June 1st. We have the food preservation savoring your gardens bounty. And then we will also have on June 8, designing a winning floral arrangement. And as she pointed out, our team has held 19 of these Farm and Garden classes with a total of 956 participants. They do sell out. If you're interested in getting in on any of them, you should sign up early.

**Michele Capps**

And then also, over at the farm we have discovery day. The final one for

the season is coming up on June 3, and year to date. We've had 13 discovery days with over 13,000 students, the junior farmer tours, we have had 1500, well 1,567 tours with over 30,000 students and our discovery days has been growing in popularity and attendance. It's a self guided tour, an event that allows students to touch a baby chick, plant their own radish seed, take it home and watch it grow, and other demonstrations throughout the farm introducing the students to California agriculture. And then finally, over at heroes fall we have the Vietnam display the Vietnam War through the art and photography of Ed Bowen. On May 11. We held a lovely opening ceremony and tribute to it and the exhibit now on display through December 22. Mr. Bowen served as a combat artist in the Vietnam War. In 2021. He entered a contest here at Hero's Hall and he won second place. He subsequently forged a friendship with the staff here and they began planning for this exhibition. Ed, unfortunately he passed away the day after Christmas. But with the help of his daughters, the show went on to fulfill his dream. I invite everyone to step inside heroes falls and see Ed's photos, paintings, and other items from his time in Vietnam.

**Michele Richards** And that concludes our report. All right. Lots of good stuff happening.

**Nick Kovacevich** Yeah, very exciting. Thank you, Michelle. Alright, so we'll do Agenda Item Number 12. Border Board of Directors matters of information. I'll start with our loan zoom, Director, La Belle, you'd like to kick us off.

**Doug La Belle** Thanks Nick. Good meeting today. Appreciate all the comments. A couple of things. First of all, on June 4th, and this is sort of a Governance Committee thing, the one of our responsibilities, all of us as directors have certain mandatory training that we must do and CDFA is going to be holding an onsite opportunity for us to have an interactive training session that will enable us to complete one of our required courses. As Michelle Richards, knows, I've been a broken record on this for a number of years, and I really a big advocate of on site training, where we can have an interactive discussion, you know, obviously sitting at your computer and completing it, it's one thing. But, having the ability to get feedback from other directors and other staff members, other members of the State agency is really, I've found to be a very good way to expand the learning curve. So for those that can do it on the June 4th meeting, it'll be held in the Pacific Amphitheater room, and I would encourage you to attend. One all for my congratulations to Director Ruiz, who completed the marathon on behalf of all of us directors. And I'm working on a special award for you, Robert. And I hope to have it at the June meeting. It'll be a surprise, but we're going to duly recognize you for your for your efforts. With that, I want to thank all the staff for all their hard work, and I'm very excited about the upcoming fair, it'll be my

guess my 14th being on the board. So looking forward to all of the activities. And thanks again, Nick, for a great job and a great meeting.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you, Director La Belle. Appreciate your comments. Okay. Director Rubalcava-Garcia?

**Natalie Rubalcava-Garcia** Thank you, I first of all, I want to thank everybody who participated in public comment, because it is a great part of the process. And we love hearing from members of the public related to issues that are impacting us here at the fair. But I also want to thank CEO Richards for her professionalism. And I also want to highlight the fact that she works very hard. I have nothing but a significant amount of faith in the efforts that you put in to the fairgrounds leading your team. And I know that this equestrian center issue has become very contentious and personal for some people. But I also want to remind you that CEO Richards is a human being, and a hard working woman who we all support as board members. So please, when addressing the fair about issues that are impacting your business. I, everybody's entitled to their opinion, but I do want to remind everybody that we need to be respectful, and kind, and ensure that we're staying on topic so that we can all come to solutions, together in the most appropriate way. So that I want to mention, but I just want to let you know that I have full faith in your efforts. I don't ever feel like you're trying to pull the wool over my eyes. I'm not a dingdong, I actually can think for myself. And I asked very good questions. So with that, I also would like to ask that we close the meeting in memoriam since it is Memorial weekend, Memorial Day weekend. A veteran just recently passed away and his name is, and I know many of you may know him because he has attended some of the events at Hero's Hall. But Espiridian Castillo also known as, Speed, recently passed away. He earned a high school he earned his title because he was a very fast runner like Director Ruiz over here. Well, Speed was born in New Mexico, and grew up in Arizona. He was a big part of Orange County, including Anaheim. He was best known for being a longtime referee, but he was also a veteran of the Korean War. So I just want to make sure that we remember him and recognize all of the sacrifices that him and his family made on behalf of our country as we enter Memorial Day. weekend. With that, that concludes my comments.

**Nick Kovacevich** Right. Thank you, Director Bilezikjian.

**Tanya Bilezikjian** Yeah, I want to, again, you know, thank you all for coming and joining. And thank you CEO, and your staff for for the work that you do. I feel strongly about, you know, getting comments out in public, and having a conversation about it all will be respectful, all of us. So, I just want to go back to the presentation you made that I'm so grateful that you guys are doing this on a monthly basis and recognizing through your work on the

Community Affairs Committee, I just want to share one quick story, I have a garden in my backyard, and I have a bunch of mint growing, and we're gonna make Mojito's. And then I walked outside to get some mint, and there was this tiny little caterpillar on one of them. And my sister lost her mind, because there was a bug on food. Then I rinse the bug off. Then painless, just put it in the drink just put it on the drinks now. She's said you can't do that, that's not how that works. There was a bug, throw it away. No, it comes from the dirt and there are bugs in the dirt. And the work that our honoree does, and that happens at Centennial Farm to educate people about where food comes from is so important. I mean, it just helps us to respect the work that's done, and to not waste because of the hard work that's done to raise it up in the ground. So thank you for highlighting that today.

**Nick Kovacevich** Thank you, Director Ruiz.

**Robert Ruiz** I'll just make it brief. I just wanted to thank you for the meeting today. For keeping the meeting moving along. And I want to thank everyone who came out here and expressed their opinion. The more participation the better. And Michelle, thank you again, for everything you do your staff, all the hard work. It's always appreciated from all of us. So just wanted to thank you for that. And just everyone wish everyone a happy and save Memorial Day. That is not forget those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom we enjoy today. And see, you all at the next meeting. looking forward to that presentation from Director La Belle.

**Nick Kovacevich** I will be the photo for that one.

**Doug Le Belle** There will be surprise, I guarantee that.

**Nick Kovacevich** Director Jackson.

**Dimitria Jackson** Hi, thank you, everyone. It was it was a good meeting. Thanks to Michelle and to staff, once again for everything that you do. And thanks to the public for coming forward every month, and sharing information. I think it helps us to be better, better directors. So thank you for providing the input. Question about oh, this is kind of off. We have a fair coming up for the sorry, a job fair coming? Yes. And what are the ages? Because I may have some children to send here.

**Michele Richards** Most of our jobs are 16. And over some are require you to be 18.

**Dimitria Jackson** I happen to know someone who will be 16 a week before the job fair. So this may be a great opportunity. Yeah, but thank you for that information. And I'm looking forward to be attending my first year as a board member. So we're getting close to that point in time. So I'm really excited about that. And everyone have a wonderful, safe, Happy holiday



weekend. Yes.

**Nick Kovacevich**

Great, thank you. And I'll close with, you know, echoing some of the comments from the other directors and a lot of work has been put in on a lot of things right. And obviously, we're seeing results, as we saw with the state of the address from Michelle. So it's good to see that doesn't mean we're perfect. You know, we hear from the community, I think that's important. There's been meetings with more members, you know, that we're here today. And we've kept the full three minutes today, we went to two minutes, because, specifically I knew director PHam had to leave and I want to make sure he was part of the vote. So hopefully everyone understands that I appreciate you guys accommodating the time limit today, two minutes, so. But we do hear a lot of good information, I think it's incumbent on us to receive that information, we're now going to have a survey so we're gonna get, you know, even a broader spectrum of instrument information, but to be able to incorporate that into decisions we make and be able to have discussions to be able to change our mind. You know, I think we're seeing, you know, certainly after COVID That, you know, things change, right, and your perspective changes. And so, I can always appreciate somebody that's willing to say, Hey, I've changed my mind. I mean, what's wrong with that? That's what our country should be, you know, based on our free speech and our ability to, to get information and to be able to make decisions. And, you know, sometimes you get it wrong, admit that, you know, you make a different decision, right. So I think we're doing a great job as a board in following all those processes. And I like to see the outcomes we're getting to. And again, not to say we've got we're gonna get everything perfect, but I think we're doing it the right way. And that's going to yield additional future results that are positive like we've already been seen showing up here. So I'm excited for our future. Sure, as Director Rubalcava- Garcia stated, I mean, our, Michelle, and our staff, I think is incredible. I've, you know, talked to a lot of people and that, you know, that they have concerns about and it's like, look from a board perspective, right, we have a lot of confidence in our staff to get things right.

**Nick Kovacevich**

And I think our staff has shown that they've got majority of things right, consistently. And being able to outperform, you know, other folks in the industry in many different areas. So I think that that can continue doesn't mean that, again, they're perfect, or there aren't areas that they need to be made aware of. And I think as board, we can do a good job of bringing things to their attention. But, you know, tremendous work and tremendous results. And thank you guys for your efforts. And then the last thing I'll say is, with Memorial Day coming, I read a stat today, I just revisited it. America has been at war for 222 out of the 239 years, we've been in existence, despite the fact that we're basically kind of on an

island when you think of our friendly neighbors to the north and south. Right. We're now you know, involved in two wars, currently, right. Fortunately, not with with troops on the ground. But, you know, unfortunately, that could happen. Right. So I think, taking the time to honor the members of service, and, you know, some here today, and thank you for your service, can't thank you enough. I wish it wasn't that way. You know, I wish that we could find the peace and stop being in war constantly, right? So that's what I'm going to be reflecting on over the weekend. And spending time with friends and family is what everyone does. And knowing that you're able to do that because of what others have done for us is an important takeaway. So that's all I have. Thank you guys. And last agenda item 13 is our next board meeting which is June 27th. Last board meeting before the fair, and I hope to see you all here. Thank you Meeting adjourned.