

MINUTES OF OCFEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING HELD MARCH 27, 2025

The following Minutes are a summary of Board action and proceedings. For a full transcript please click on the link below or visit the ocfair.com website.

https://s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/ocfair.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/18075758/25_03_March_Board_transcript.pdf

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Kovacevich, called the meeting to order at 9:38 a.m.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by Director Bilezikjian. Roll call was taken by meeting secretary, Summer Angus.

4. DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Chair Kovacevich, Vice Chair Bagneris, Director Pham (via Zoom), Director La Belle, Director Rubalcava-Garcia (via Zoom), Director Ruiz (via Zoom), Director Bilezikjian and Director Jackson.

DIRECTORS ABSENT/EXCUSED: None.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Michele Richards, OCFEC CEO; Ken Karns, OCFEC Chief Operating Officer; Melissa Au-Yeung, Chief Administrative Officer; Michele Capps (via Zoom), OCFEC Chief Business Development Officer; Jason Jacobsen, Director Planning & Production; Evy Young, OCFEC Agriculture Programs Director; Mathew Parreira, OCFEC Design & Décor Supervisor; Allen Mesick, OCFEC Centennial Farm Supervisor; Evelyn Nunez, OCFEC Communications Associate; Summer Angus, OCFEC Executive Assistant; OCFEC Agriculture Programs staff; Josh Caplan, Office of the Attorney General; Reginald Joseph, transcriptionist; Reggie Mundekis; Gibran Stout; Carol Graves

5. MINUTES:

A. Board meeting held February 27, 2025

Action Item

ACTION: Director La Belle motioned and Vice Chair Bagneris seconded to approve the Minutes from Board meetings held February 27, 2025. **MOTION CARRIED.**

AYES: Chair Kovacevich, Vice Chair Bagneris, Director Pham, Director La Belle, Director Rubalcava-Garcia, Director Ruiz and Director Jackson. **NAYES:** None. **ABSTENTIONS:** Directors Bilezikjian.

9. GOVERNANCE PROCESS (item moved up)

A. Presentation of Women's History Month Proclamation by Community Affairs Committee

Information Item

Director Jackson on behalf of the Community Affairs Committee, presented the Women's History Month proclamation to Dolores Huerta (not present), describing her as one of the most influential labor activists of the 20th century who has devoted a lifetime of action to improve the working conditions and lives of agricultural workers.

6. MATTERS OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Reggie Mundekis stated that she started attending Board meetings in July of 2009. She raised questions about how later projects in the Master Site Plan will be afforded or funded. She suggested partnering with neighboring Orange Coast College and California Office of Emergency Services development center. She shared that CalFire has released new fire maps showing Newport coast to Laguna as a high fire danger area, adding in the event of a disaster, people in those areas may evacuate to the fairgrounds.

Gibran Stout criticized the actions of staff for allegedly denying the public information and participation. She asserted that as an agricultural district the Board should be concentrating on more agriculture and less buildings. She stated that the fairgrounds is the only place in Costa Mesa for equine recreation.

10. CLOSED SESSION (Closed to the Public)

The Board adjourned to closed session at 9:54 a.m. and resume at 12:40 p.m.

Items to report out of closed session: None.

7. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Standard Agreements: SA-065-25SP; SA-066-25PA; SA-069-25IO; SA-070-25FT; SA-071-25SP; SA-072-25SP; SA-073-25FT; SA-074-25GE; SA-075-25GE; SA-076-25GE; SA-077-25GE; SA-078-25GE; SA-079-25GE; SA-080-25GE; SA-081-25GE; SA-082-25GE; SA-083-25GE; SA-085-25YR; SA-086-25YR; SA-090-25SP

i. Standard Agreement Amendments: SA-216-23CT (Amend. #2)

ii. Standard Agreement Amendments (Exercise Option): SA-036-21YR (Amend. #4); SA-087-21YR (Amend. #6); SA-088-21YR (Amend. #4); SA-129-22FT (Amend. #4); SA-102-23YR (Amend. #2)

iii. Interagency Agreement: SA-084-25IA

B. Rental Agreements: R-007-25; R-011-25; R-022-25; R-037-25; R-038-25; R-044-25; R-056-25; R-067-25; R-068-25; R-071-25; EQC-010-25; 25 IO-JA 01; 25 IO-JA 02; 25 IO-FE 01; 25 IO-FE 02; 25 IO-FE 03; 25 IO-FE 04; 25 IO-FE 06; 25 IO-FE 07; 25 IO-FE 08; 25 IO-FE 09; 25 IO-FE 10; 25 IO-FE 11; 25 IO-FE 12; 25 IO-FE 13; 25 IO-FE 14; 25 IO-FE 15; 25 IO-FE 16; 25 IO-FE 17; 25 IO-FE 18; 25 IO-FE 19; 25 IO-FE 20; 25 IO-FE 21; 25 IO-FE 22; 25 IO-FE 23; 25 IO-FE 24; 25 IO-FE 26; 25 IO-FE 27; 25 IO-FE 28; 25 IO-FE 29; 25 IO-FE 30; 25 IO-FE 31; 25 IO-FE 32; 25 IO-FE 33; 25 IO-FE 34; 25 IO-FE 35; 25 IO-FE 36; 25 IO-FE 37; 25

IO-FE 38; 25 IO-FE 39; 25 IO-FE 40; 25 IO-FE 43; 25 IO-FE 44; 25 IO-FE 45; 25 IO-FE 46; HH0125

i. **Rental Agreement Amendments:** R-20-25 (Amend. #1)

C. Commercial Rental Agreements: IMCOM-01-25; IMCOM-02-25; IMCOM-03-25; IMCOM-04-25; IMCOM-05-25; IMCOM-06-25; IMCOM-07-25

D. Concession Rental Agreements: IMFO-01-25; IMFO-02-25; IMFO-03-25; IMFO-04-25; IMFO-05-25; IMFO-06-25; IMFO-07-25; IMFO-08-25; IMFO-09-25; 25501; 25502; 25503; 25505; 25506; 25507; 25508; 25509; 25510; 25511; 25512; 25513; 25514; 25515; 25516; 25517; 25518; 25519; 25520; 25521; 25522; 25523; 25524; 25525; 25526; 25530; 25531; 25532; 25500; 25533; 25534; 25535; 25536; 25537; 25538; 25539; 25527; 25528; 25529; 25540; 25541; 25542; 25543; 25544; 25545; 25546; 25550; 25551; 25552; 25553; 25554; 25555; 25556; 25557; 25558; 25559; 25560; 25561; 25562; 25563; 25564; 25565; 25568; 25569; 25570; 25571; 25572; 25574; 25575; 25576; 25577; 25578; 25579; 25580

E. Independent Amusement Agreements: IMIA-01-25; IMIA-02-25; 25631; 25632; 25633; 25636; 25637; 25643

F. Merchandise-Service Rental Agreements: 25634; 25635; 25638; 25639; 25640; 25641; 25644; 25645; 25646; 25647

G. Platinum Rental Agreements: 25702; 25728; 25727; 25733

H. Active Joint Powers Authority Agreements (New): None.

I. Judging Agreements: 25 IO-JA 01; 26 IO-JA 02

J. Correspondence:

Communications to the Board from members of the public related to OCFEC business are identified below and included with the Board materials (available on the OCFEC website). Note that this agenda item includes only those communication(s) that were sent to the entire Board and CEO before the publication of this month's agenda. The deadline for correspondence to be included on the April 2025 agenda is April 11, 2025.

- i. 03/02/2025 Patti – OC Fair Board Administration Deception
- ii. 03/04/2025 Leslie Morgan – Public Equestrian Center
- iii. 03/04/2025 Michael Storan – Restore OC Equestrian Center !!
- iv. 03/11/2025 Barbara Makros Public Equestrian Center
- v. 03/11/2025 Stephanie Rogers – Please reconsider the OC Fairgrounds Strategic Plan
- vi. 03/12/25 April Strong – Equestrian Center
- vii. 03/12/2025 Carol Graves – Please Put the Equestrian Center On the Master Site Plan
- viii. 03/12/2025 Christine Lambson – Please protect and preserve the Public Equestrian Center
- ix. 03/12/2025 Lisa Cassidy – Equestrian Center
- x. 03/13/2025 Caroline Colesworthy – Please keep equestrian center

K. CDFA Correspondence:

Communications to the Board from the California Department of Food & Agriculture Division of Fairs & Expositions regarding relevant topics at Fairs and Expositions.

- i. None.

- End of Consent Calendar –

CEO Richards pulled Rental Agreement R-037-25 due to a clerical error that will be corrected and brought back.

ACTION: Director La Belle motioned and Vice Chair Bagneris seconded to approve the consent calendar with agreement R-037-25 removed. **MOTION CARRIED.**

AYES: Chair Kovacevich, Vice Chair Bagneris, Director Pham, Director La Belle, Director Rubalcava-Garcia, Director Ruiz, Directors Bilezikjian and Director Jackson. **NAYES:** None. **ABSTENTIONS:** None.

9. GOVERNANCE PROCESS (continued)

B. Update on Outreach to Stakeholders for Feedback on Five-Year Strategic Plan Review of Public Feedback on Draft Strategic Plan, Discussion Regarding Amendments and Vote on Whether or Not to Approve

Action Item

Reggie Mundekis shared appreciation for the work on the strategic plan and the public outreach, representing the broader community of Orange County.

Gibran Stout expressed confusion about the approval process for the strategic plan, criticizing no amendments in the report for public review. She criticized the alleged lack of transparency. Stout referenced a prior strategic plan, which included two pages dedicated to the equestrian center and noted that 90% of public feedback (of the survey) supported using the equestrian space for recreation. She warned that failing to amend the strategic plan to include equestrian recreation would be another example of the Board ignoring public input. She stated that the exhibits are great but there's no life skills learned from them. Stout urged the Board to listen to the public feedback and amend the strategic plan to include equestrian activities.

CEO Richards discussed the public feedback received on the draft strategic plan. She took the Board through the draft, recommending the following amendments:

- Switching the order of the last two technology initiatives on page (page 5 of the draft strategic plan)
- Adding “OCFEC” to page 9 to read “Creating an environment that supports making it easier to do business with OCFEC and results in process improvements and operational excellence

CEO Richards reported that the first Discovery Day at The Ranch is scheduled for May 14. She detailed the programs and activities for the Discovery Day.

Board and staff discussion ensued; items discussed:

- Outreach to the County of Orange and discussion with the City of Costa Mesa regarding the County's master trail plan and connecting it to TeWinkle Park adjacent to The Ranch
 - Engagement and encouragement of OC Supervisor Foley to support process and opportunities
- Continued expansion of equestrian programming at The Ranch for the benefit of a greater constituency
- Public feedback ideas/activities related to equine activities are already in the robust plan for The Ranch, not duplicated in the strategic plan
- Confusion and misinformation regarding alleged closure of equine facility and activities
- Praise for the strategic plan and a job well done

ACTION: Vice Chair Bagneris motioned and Director La Belle seconded to approve the Five-Year Strategic Plan with the recommended amendments: Switching the order of the last two technology initiatives on page (page 5 of the draft strategic plan) and adding "OCFEC" to page 9 to read "Creating an environment that supports making it easier to do business with OCFEC and results in process improvements and operational excellence, as presented.

MOTION CARRIED. AYES: Chair Kovacevich, Vice Chair Bagneris, Director Pham, Director La Belle, Director Rubalcava-Garcia, Director Ruiz, Directors Bilezikjian and Director Jackson. **NAYES:** None.

ABSTENTIONS: None.

8. CEO'S OPERATIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

CEO Richards reported the following:

- Yesterday teams from OC Animal Care and the ASPCA were on-site to train along with our Ranch, Centennial Farm and Security staff on large animal evacuations
- Montford Point Marines Association members spoke at a Heroes Hall Speakers Series event March 1 about their service through multiple wars
- High school classes visited Heroes Hall exhibit prior to reading the book titled "The Things They Carried" by Tim O'Brien
- Pacific Coast Sport Fishing Show and Overland Expo shows greatly contributed to OCFEC March revenue of over \$1.3M
- Goodwill donation center truck officially opened at OCFEC at the weekly farmers market

Melissa Au-Yeung, OCFEC Chief Administration Officer, reported OCTA OC Fair Express will be operating during the 2025 OC Fair.

Gibran Stout criticized The Ranch programs arguing that programs are not being expanded. She criticized plans for the Discovery Day at The Ranch for not having mounted demonstrations. She asserted that the County of Orange master trails plan

linking it to the property has been an idea for a long time and was brought up at a public meeting in 2017. She alleged that staff has turned trainers away from The Ranch. She asserted trainers bring in boarders and compared not having trainers at the facility, to not having a lifeguard at a pool. She alleged there were no public meetings for the development of The Ranch.

9. GOVERNANCE PROCESS *(continued)*

C. Preview of 2025 Imaginology

Information Item

Mathew Parreira, OCFEC Design & Décor Supervisor presented the 2025 Imaginology preview.

Gibran Stout stated Imaginology is a great event. She discussed her prior involvement at Imaginology as well as her time as a 4H leader. She shared her disappointment in not being included this year. She asserted the public and the local youth, are the ones that are going to suffer and asked the Board what their legacy will be.

D. Committee / Ad Hoc Committee / Liaison Report

Information Item

To assure compliance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, Committee reports are only for the purpose of the Committee chair, Ad Hoc Committee members or Liaison to provide a verbal update. Should the Board want to discuss any Committee work item not already on the agenda; those would need to be agendized for a future Board meeting.

- i. **Leadership Committee** (Chair Kovacevich, Committee Chair; Vice Chair Bagneris)
- ii. **Financial Monitoring and Audit Committee** (Director Pham, Committee Chair; Director Bilezikjian)
- iii. **Facilities Committee** (Director Ruiz, Committee Chair; Director Bilezikjian)
- iv. **Governance Committee** (Director La Belle, Committee Chair; Chair Kovacevich)
- v. **Community Affairs Committee** (Director Rubalcava-Garcia, Committee Chair; Director Jackson)

Chair Kovacevich on behalf of the Leadership Committee, reported:

- Committee met on March 12 to plan the March agenda and coordination of CEO interviews
- Next meeting is scheduled for 4/9/2025

CEO Richards, on behalf of the Financial Monitoring and Audit Committee, reported:

- She presented the February financial reports
- Staff provided the committee with outstanding receivables for review
 - She detailed the debts for write-off and FTB collection
- Updated the committee on cyber security training efforts for staff

- Next meeting is scheduled for 4/21/25

Gibran Stout criticized the equestrian center income projection on the financial report, asserting it will never happen without trainers. She questioned the FTB process of collections. She discussed trainers' outstanding balances and OCFEC's refusal to take money or offers of settlement. She presented the Board with a handout regarding a nearby equine facility that has a six-month waiting list.

Carol Graves criticized the \$70,000 deficit of The Ranch on the statement of operation report. She pointed out the contradiction between the Board's ability to generate revenue from other events and the ongoing financial shortfall at the equestrian facility. She emphasized that while the Board can plan for equestrian activities and put proposals on paper, nothing will come of it without the right people involved. She asserted that there is no misinformation out there about the situation, alleging the trainers have been kicked out, that everyone knows it, adding it will continue to have a budget shortfall. She alleged mismanagement and shared her concern for the future of the facility. She asserted the Board needs to fix their relationship with the equestrians. She alleged OCFEC has a bad reputation in the equestrian world. She gave credit and thanked for improvements in the stalls of black waterproofing around bottom and the auto waters.

Director Bilezikian, on behalf of the Facilities Committee, reported:

- The committee met March 5 and reviewed and discussed the following:
 - CapX projects (26 active; 2 complete)
 - 2 projects may carry over to 2026
 - Master Site plan
 - Committee took a tour of the administration building construction site
 - Status on the work and impact on schedule
 - Targeted completion timeframe estimated for late May/early June
 - Midway restroom project continuing to work from 60% toward 90% drawings

Ken Karns, OCFEC Chief Operating Officer, shared some photos of the administration building progress. He discussed a go, no-go date as it relates to move in before the fair, with a chance of a May 31 completion. He added that an April 21 meeting date has been set to reassess the entire project for that go, no-go date for occupancy.

Director Jackson, on behalf of the Community Affairs committee, reported:

- Committee met the first week of March to identify potential recipients of the Women's History Month proclamation - Dolores Huerta (Item 9A)
 - Any recommendations for recipients for monthly proclamations can be emailed to the committee for consideration
- Next meeting is TBD

CEO Richards added acknowledgement of Women's History Month and Cesar Chavez Day.

Gibran Stout alleged the committee reports are not published for the public ahead of time. She spoke in support of the work the Community Affairs Committee is doing. She alleged committee meetings are required to be open to the public and she has been repeatedly blocked from them. She criticized the that the only opportunity for her to speak is in the three-minute time limit of public comment.

Josh Caplan, Deputy Attorney General, stated two person committees that are created at the will of the Board Chair, that don't have any delegated authority, do not meet the requirements of Bagley-Keen Open Meeting Act.

Chair Kovacevich reiterated that all Board meeting reports are available on the OC Fair website. He also added the public can communicate with the Board via email.

11. UPCOMING EVENTS PREVIEW

Michele Capps, OCFEC Chief Business Development Officer, gave an update on upcoming events at OCFEC.

12. BOARD OF DIRECTORS MATTERS OF INFORMATION

Board members made concluding comments:

- Looking forward to Imaginology and Japan Fair and other year-round events
- Acknowledgement of a long meeting and appreciate Chair's leadership during the meeting
- Birthday wishes to CEO Richards
- Appreciation to be on the Board and working with fellow Board members
- Strategic plan development was a very interactive and successful process
- A lot was accomplished in the meeting today
- Community Affairs Committee monthly proclamation list out to the public for community outreach and recipients
- Sentiments of moving forward, moving on from the past
- CEO recruitment is a large undertaking and appreciation of the Board's time

13. NEXT BOARD MEETING: APRIL 24, 2025

14. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:09 p.m.

Nick Kovacevich, Chair

Michele Richards, Chief Executive Officer