

**MINUTES OF OCFEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
HELD MAY 22, 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/2025/05/19134137/25_05_May_Transcript.pdf

Before the meeting opened, Glen Johnson, President of Centennial Farm Foundation presented a \$50,000 check from their spring fundraiser to support education programs at Centennial Farm.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Kovacevich, called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

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

4. DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Chair Kovacevich, Vice Chair Bagneris, Director Pham, Director Rubalcava-Garcia, Director Ruiz, Director Bilezikjian and Director Jackson.

Director Ruiz joined the meeting during closed session.

DIRECTORS ABSENT/EXCUSED: Director La Belle.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Michele Richards, OCFEC CEO; Ken Karns, OCFEC Chief Operating Officer; Melissa Au-Yeung, Chief Administrative Officer; Michele Capps, OCFEC Chief Business Development Officer; Jason Jacobsen, Director Planning & Production; Arnold Duong, OCFEC IT Technician; Summer Angus, OCFEC Executive Assistant; Cassandra Scott, OCFEC Communications Associate; Josh Caplan, Office of the Attorney General; Reginald Joseph, transcriptionist; Glen Johnson; Glenn Tanaka; Omar Qureshi; Brent Bushnell; Macki Hamblin; Gibran Stout; Reggie Mundekis

5. MINUTES:

A. Board meeting held April 24, 2025

Action Item

B. Board meeting held May 7, 2025

Action Item

C. Board meeting held May 12, 2025

Action Item

ACTION: Vice Chair Bagneris motioned and Director Bilezikjian seconded to approve the Minutes from Board meetings held April 24, 2025, May 7, 2025 and May 12, 2025. **MOTION CARRIED. AYES: Chair Kovacevich, Vice Chair**

Bagneris, Director Pham, Director Rubalcava-Garcia, Director Bilezikjian and Director Jackson. NAYES: None. ABSTENTIONS: None.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

- A. Standard Agreements:** SA-101-25GE; SA-112-25AS; SA-114-25SP; SA-115-25BH; SA-116-25BH; SA-117-25BH; SA-118-25GE; SA-119-25GE; SA-120-25FT; SA-121-25YR; SA-122-25FT; SA-123-25YR; SA-124-25GE; SA-125-25GE; SA-126-25AS; SA-128-25GE; SA-129-25GE; SA-130-25PA; SA-131-25PA; SA-132-25PA; SA-133-25HB; SA-134-25FT; SA-135-25GE; SA-136-25YR; SA-137-25GE; SA-138-25HB; SA-139-25GE; SA-140-25FT; SA-141-25GE; SA-142-25SP; SA-143-25SP; SA-144-25PA; SA-145-25PA
- i. Standard Agreement Amendments:** SA-140-20FT (Amend. #5); SA-033-22SP (Amend. #5); SA-076-25GE (Amend. #1); SA-077-25GE (Amend. #1); SA-099-25GE (Amend. #1)
- ii. Standard Agreement Amendments (Exercise Option):** SA-037-21YR (Amend. #5)
- B. Rental Agreements:** R-014-25; R-015-25; R-029-25; R-076-25; R-088-25; R-089-25; R-090-25; R-090-25; R-091-25; R-092-25; R-093-25; R-094-25; R-095-25; R-097-25; R-098-25; RA-EQC015-25; EQC-012-25; EQC-013-25; OCC-2501; OCC-2502; OCC-2503; OCC-2505; OCC-2506; OCC-2507; OCC-2509; OCC-2510
- i. Rental Agreement Amendments:** R-076-25 (Amend. #1); R-091-25 (Amend. #1)
- C. Commercial Rental Agreements:** 25026; 25036; 25043; 25082; 25104; 25135
- D. Concession Rental Agreements:** 25566; 25549; 25567; 25548
- E. Platinum Rental Agreements:** 25707; 25710; 25715; 25732; 25719; 25720; 25716; 25721; 25729
- F. Supplier Rental Agreements:** 25661; 25662; 25664; 25665; 25666; 25667; 25668
- G. Active Joint Powers Authority Agreements (New):** None.
- H. Judging Agreements:** CA-001-25; CA-002-25; CA-003-25; CA-004-25; CA-005-25; CA-006-25; CA-007-25; CA-008-25; CA-009-25; CA-010-25; CA-011-25; CA-012-25; CA-013-25; CA-014-25; CA-015-25; CA-016-25; CA-017-25; CA-018-25; CA-019-25; CA-020-25; CA-021-25; CA-022-25; CA-023-25; CA-024-25; CA-025-25; CA-026-25; CA-027-25; CA-028-25; CA-029-25; CA-030-25; CA-031-25; CA-032-25; CA-033-25; CA-034-25; CA-035-25; CA-036-25; CA-037-25; CA-038-25; CA-039-25; CA-040-25; CA-041-25; CA-042-25; CA-043-25; CA-044-25; CA-045-25; CA-046-25; CA-047-25; CA-048-25; CA-049-25; CA-050-25; CA-051-25; CA-052-25; CA-053-25; CA-054-25; CA-055-25; CA-056-25; CA-

057-25; CA-058-25; CA-059-25; CA-060-25; CA-061-25; CA-062-25; CA-063-25; CA-064-25; CA-065-25; CA-066-25; CA-067-25; CA-068-25; CA-069-25; CA-070-25; CA-071-25; CA-072-25; CA-073-25; CA-074-25; HA-001-25; HA-002-25; HA-003-25; HA-004-25; HA-005-25; HA-006-25; HA-007-25; HA-008-25; HA-009-25; HA-010-25; HA-011-25; HA-012-25; HA-013-25; HA-014-25; HA-015-25; HA-016-25; HA-017-25; VA-001-25; VA-002-25; VA-003-25; VA-004-25; VA-005-25; VA-006-25; VA-007-25; VA-008-25; VA-009-25; VA-010-25; VA-011-25; VA-012-25; VA-013-25; VA-014-25; VA-015-25; VA-016-25; VA-017-25; VA-018-25; VA-019-25; VA-020-25; VA-021-25; VA-022-25; VA-023-25

I. 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 June 2025 agenda is June 13, 2025.

i. None.

J. 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 Standard Agreements SA-120-25FT and SA-121-25YR for the City of Costa Mesa's traffic management for year-round and fairtime stating the agreements are awaiting updated rates. She also pulled Rental Agreement R-090-25 for Retail Finance International Holdings Inc., dba Synchrony, stating R-090-25 was a duplicated number and will come back when assigned a new agreement number. She clarified R-090-25 for Golden Star Technology, Inc., dba GST remains on the consent calendar.

ACTION: Vice Chair Bagneris motioned and Director Bilezikjian seconded to approve the consent calendar with Standard Agreements SA-120-25FT; SA-121-25YR and Rental Agreement R-090-25 for Retail Finance International Holdings Inc., dba Synchrony removed (R-090-25 for Golden Star Technology, Inc., dba GST remains approved on the consent calendar). **MOTION CARRIED. AYES:** Chair Kovacevich, Vice Chair Bagneris, Director Pham, Director Rubalcava-Garcia, Director Bilezikjian and Director Jackson. **NAYES:** None. **ABSTENTIONS:** None.

10. GOVERNANCE PROCESS *(item moved up)*

**A. Presentation of Arab American Heritage Month Proclamation by
Community Affairs Committee
Information Item**

Directors Rubalcava-Garcia and Jackson presented the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month proclamation to Glenn Tanaka of Tanaka Farms honoring his family's agricultural legacy and community programs.

Glenn Tanaka discussed common agricultural roots, Tanaka Farms and Centennial Farm.

8. MATTERS OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Omar Qurashi brought a proposal for the 2025 fair or future fair, stating it's new and innovative. He expressed gratitude for vendors being seen and heard. He thanked CEO Richards for her leadership.

Mackie Hamblin shared feedback on her recent visit during Ranch Day, calling it an interesting experience. She asserted the exhibits are static and non-interactive, including displays such as stick horses and stall exhibits. She expressed her disappointment over the alleged lack of hands-on experiences and suggested that similar passive displays would not be suitable for other fair attractions (e.g., Ferris wheel, food vendors, concerts), implying the Ranch experience lacked meaningful engagement.

Gibran Stout shared her impressions of Ranch Day, expressing disappointment with alleged lack of interactive and educational programming compared to the former equestrian center's past trainer operations. She noted a perceived disconnect between the public's and staff's definitions of "robust programming." She also criticized the staffing model and suggested it may be inappropriate for specialized programming such as equestrian operations.

Brent Bushnell, attraction developer, expressed interest in bringing a new mixed reality attraction, recently featured on Shark Tank, to the OC Fair. He mentioned prior work with the LA County Fair and collaboration with Omar Qureshi, and requested consideration to participate in this year's event.

7. CLOSED SESSION (Closed to the Public)

The Board adjourned to closed session at 9:58 a.m. and resume at 10:59 a.m.

Items to report out of closed session: None.

Director Ruiz left the meeting after closed session.

9. CEO'S OPERATIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

CEO Richards reported the following:

- Civil service employees complete mandatory emergency preparedness training
- New diesel forklift replacement arrived – any new replacement equipment will meet all AQMD standards
- Heroes Hall Speaker Series continues to grow in popularity – April 30 event was moved to Plaza Pacifica lobby due to high attendance - OC Supervisor Katrina Foley presented a proclamation

- The Pacific Amphitheatre to partner with Irvine Unified School District high schools this summer to provide an educational extension opportunity for students to observe load-in, sound checks and other technical aspects of the Pacific Amphitheatre summer concert series, followed by Q&A sessions with the professionals
- Detailed work continues on the Administration Building expansion project, including instillation of mill work, doors and ceiling treatments
- 56 days to the OC Fair – livestock tent and skyride towers are up as well installation of new reader boards at Main Gate
- TRCC Discovery Day summary:
 - 549 teachers, students and parents attended; 80 partners who helped host
 - City of Costa Mesa Mayor John Stephens, Mayor Pro Tem Manuel Chavez and District Director for Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris, Michael Tou joined the ribbon cutting
 - Knott's Berry Farm CEO Jon Storbeck and team also attended the opening to see the exhibits with Knott's contributions
 - OC Sheriff Mounted Unit spoke about how horses are used to keep the community safe
 - CalGuard Mounted Unit were on hand with some of their horses to teach visitors how horses are used in the military
 - TRCC trainers Walk Intuit and new trainer ZEquestrian participated in public programming
 - Interactive exhibits about chickens and rabbits, honey bees, gardening, large animal evacuations and more

CEO Richards acknowledged and praised OC FEC's Evy Young and Teresa Dayton for their work and dedication for making The Ranch and the Discovery Day a success.

Evy Young shared plans for another Discovery Day in the fall and that staff is continuing to make improvements, including bringing in more partners and students.

Board and staff discussion ensued; items discussed:

- Excitement for a new trainer on grounds for riding lessons
- Progress to continue at TRCC – team effort is great
- TRCC is achieving the Board's intended goal/vision of being more publicly accessible
- Ranch's ability to host large public experiences as well as smaller, in-depth, private educational sessions
- Emphasized flexibility for public engagement and private equestrian use, including lessons and boarding
- Acknowledgement that change is difficult but long-term confidence in the decision
- Activities were appropriate for the size and age of the audience
- Safety as a priority, especially with a large number of young children present
- Praise of the collaborative efforts across all departments in realizing the Board's vision
- Acknowledgement of earlier skepticism and negative media coverage - noting that once the vision was realized in physical form, perceptions began to shift positively

- Suggestion of inviting media back to see the progress firsthand

10. **GOVERNANCE PROCESS** *(continued)*

B. Staff Presentation of Layout and Operational Changes Planned for 2025 OC Fair

Information Item

Ken Karns, OCFEC Chief Operating Officer, presented a sneak peek of some layout and operational changes for the 2025 OC Fair which also included new food, new rides, new acts and more planned for the 2025 OC Fair.

Karns confirmed the vegan stand will be returning.

Reggie Mundekis discussed the social media post regarding the OC Fair hiring event, asking what is the youngest age the fair hires and what jobs are available.

Melissa Au-Yeung stated the OC Fair hires people as young as sixteen with a work permit. She added that there are positions in parking and maintenance for that age group.

C. Annual State of the OC Fair & Event Center Address

Information Item

CEO Richards presented the annual State of the OC Fair & Event Center address.

Board members praised CEO Richards for an excellent report.

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 May 7 to plan the May agenda and discuss the ongoing CEO recruitment process
- Next meeting is scheduled for 6/11/2025

Director Pham, on behalf of the Financial Monitoring and Audit Committee, reported:

- Committee met on 5/19/25 and reviewed the April financials (April financial reports presented)
- Staff discussed credit card processing fees related to event rentals and shared recommendations for potential offsets to go to the Board for approval at a future meeting
- Next meeting is scheduled for 6/23/25

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

- The committee met May 8 and reviewed and discussed the following:
 - CapX projects (26 active; 13 complete)
- Master Site Plan (MSP)
 - Phase One: Excitement for the finished project
 - Phase Two: Midway restroom project: teams continue to work on elements of the design drawings
 - Master Site Plan refresh:
- The committee reviewed the existing MSP PowerPoint presentation in preparation of Strategic Plan Initiatives
- California Construction Authority: news that the executive officer will be an interim person in the position
 - CCA board meeting hosted at OCFEC – board will tour the admin building project
- Staff gave the committee an update on the TRCC Discovery Day

Director Bilezikjian requested to take a walking tour the property with the Master Site Plan.

Ken Karns, OCFEC Chief Operating Officer, shared photos of the Administration Building project progress.

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

- Committee met May 7 to discuss potential recipients of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month proclamation (Item 10A)
 - Staff updated the committee on plans for the “We Are OC” cultural celebration day on Sunday, August 17 at the 2025 OC Fair, including the youth poetry competition

Vice Chair Bagneris praised the Community Affairs Committee, stating that they have elevated the vision for the committee.

Staff acknowledged AANHPI and Memorial Day.

Chair Kovacevich asked the committee to work with staff to get a dinner in place for the proclamation recipients during Fair.

11. UPCOMING EVENTS PREVIEW

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

12. BOARD OF DIRECTORS MATTERS OF INFORMATION

Board members made concluding comments, expressing the following:

- Expressed appreciation for honoring Mr. Tanaka and meeting his son
- Excitement expressed for the upcoming fair, especially following visits to the LA County Fair and recent preview events
- Praise of fair programming and noted importance of continuing to innovate and enhance year-round engagement
- All Board members shared deep appreciation for Michele Richards' guidance, innovative initiatives, leadership and legacy - described her as a transformative, compassionate, and highly effective leader
- Comments on increasing competition in the region (e.g., year-round attractions at OC Vibe and Great Park)

CEO Richards gave final remarks, expressing heartfelt gratitude to the Board and staff, reflecting on her rewarding tenure.

13. NEXT BOARD MEETING: JUNE 26, 2025

14. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

Barbara Bagneris, Vice Chair

Ken Karns, Chief Operating Officer
(CEO Delegated Authority)