

Contact: Brian Lochrie  
949-294-8269  
[brian@communicationslab.com](mailto:brian@communicationslab.com)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Orange County Fair Board Votes to Work with Community Stakeholders to Change Model for OC Equestrian Center**

*OC Equestrian community thanks board members for their acknowledgement that the OC Fairgrounds Equestrian Center serves the public interest*

December 14, 2023

The Orange County Fair and Event Center (OCFEC) Board of Directors today voted unanimously to take three actions that could lead to the preservation and enhancement of the OC Fairgrounds Equestrian Center:

**1. Pull the Request for Proposals (RFP) for a new operator for the Equestrian Center**

*The equestrian community was pleased the board pulled the RFP as it had flaws that would have required the operator instead of the property owner to make major capital improvements. This likely would've limited the number of responsible bidders.*

**2. Form a committee with OCFEC Board Members, OCFEC Staff and community stakeholders to develop a new model for the way the equestrian center operates.**

*The equestrian community was particularly pleased that the board acknowledged them and offered a seat at the table with a directive that OCFEC Board Members, Staff and community stakeholders in the Equestrian Center should meet to discuss a responsible path forward.*

**3. Provide a deadline of June to implement the new model.**

*June is a reasonable deadline to develop a new model to set the course for the equestrian center for the next generation.*

More than 100 local community members filled the board room and spilled out into the lobby and even outside the building. Local residents, schoolchildren and business owners took the day off to express to the Fair Board about their concern regarding agenda item #8B, which suggested the board could direct

staff that the Equestrian Center does not provide a “public purpose.” This could have been the first step toward the demolition of the Equestrian Center.

Dozens of speakers talked about the public benefits the Fairgrounds Equestrian Center provides. From equine therapy to veterans with PTSD to foster youth and underserved communities in need, the publicly owned Fairgrounds Equestrian Center provides an oasis of mental and physical health services to all Orange County residents.

After more than five hours of public testimony, the Fair Board members acknowledged the importance of the Equestrian Center and voted to take the first step down a pathway that will not only preserve but enhance the Equestrian Center and possibly provide even more public opportunities than exist today.

Orange County Supervisor and former Costa Mesa Mayor Katrina Foley spoke in support of preserving the Fairgrounds Equestrian Center and offered county support if needed. The Fair Board also received a letter of support from State Senator Josh Newman and signed petitions from more than 4,000 residents asking the Fair Board to protect this jewel.

###

*For more information or media inquiries, please contact:*

Brian Lochrie  
[brian@communicationslab.com](mailto:brian@communicationslab.com)  
949-294-8269