



KATRINA FOLEY

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FIFTH DISTRICT

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November 15, 2023

Board of Directors
OC Fair & Events Center
88 Fair Drive,
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Re: 11/16/2023 Board of Directors Agenda Item 8C – Review of Equestrian Center RFP Scope of Work Highlights and Discussion About Further Input

To the Board of Directors:

I write to express concerns on Item 8C on November 16th's Board of Director's Agenda, which releases a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an independent operator of the Equestrian Center with an identified date to close the Center if the RFP is unsuccessful. While I appreciate the board's efforts to understand the possibilities of this facility, I fear this item is simply the latest effort to strip away a critical public amenity at the Fairgrounds.

We must preserve the Equestrian Center. The Equestrian Center serves as an indispensable public amenity and bedrock feature of the history and culture of the OC Fairgrounds. Throughout Orange County's history, the fairgrounds have provided a home for the equestrian community, stretching back to the horse races that took place at the original OC Fairs in the 1890's. Today, the Equestrian Center offers riding lessons, vaulting practices, summer camps for kids, equine therapy, a local stable for residents, and many other free and low-cost community outreach programs. Perhaps more significantly, the facility provides a home to the local equestrian community who increasingly see reduced resources.

For nearly 20 years, I have tirelessly defended the OC Fair & Event Center, including helping lead the charge against the sale of the fairgrounds to a private developer during the Great Recession. Previous board actions created a culture of fear among the Center's patrons. In 2009 the board considered turning the Equestrian Center into a parking lot and in 2018 the board left the center out of initial drafts of the 10-year master plan for the fairgrounds. Even now, the center is not a part of long-term plans for the fairgrounds, with current drafts of the master plan providing no plans for renovations, investment, or long-term preservation. While \$229 million of investments are planned for other aspects of the fairgrounds, this RFP proposes to require bidders

Serving the cities of Aliso Viejo, Costa Mesa, Dana Point, Irvine, Laguna Beach, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Newport Beach, San Clemente, San Juan Capistrano and the unincorporated areas of Coto de Caza, Emerald Bay, Ladera Ranch, Las Flores, Rancho Mission Viejo, Stonecliffe, and Wagon Wheel

to cover all capital, general, and deferred maintenance costs at the site. Rather than abandon this facility, the board should invest and incorporate the Equestrian Center into long term strategies for the fairgrounds.

I look forward to working with you on preserving this vital resource for our residents. Should you have questions, please contact Jonathan Davis, a Policy Advisor in my office, at (714) 834-3550 or Jonathan.Davis@ocgov.com. Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

Respectfully submitted,



Katrina Foley
Orange County Supervisor, Fifth District