

Alameda County Agricultural Fair Association Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

Thursday, May 15, 2025
9:00 a.m.

SUMMARY/ACTION MINUTES

Committee Members present

Nate Miley
David Haubert
Jerome Hoban
Tim Weaver
Chuck Moore
John Smith
Gordon Galvan
Frank Imhof

Location: Alameda County Fairgrounds

4501 Pleasanton Avenue, Board Room
Pleasanton, CA 94566

Remote participation: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85200799778>

Toll Free - (888) 475 4499

Webinar ID: 852 0079 9778

CALL TO ORDER

[Attachment](#)

Supervisor David Haubert called the meeting to order.

1. Update on State/Local Regulatory Compliance

Jerome Hoban, Chief Executive Officer, Alameda County Fair Association provided an update on State and Local Regulatory Compliance.

- The track was closed March 25, 2025
- Storm drain system has been cleaned
- Water samples will be taken during the next Qualified Storm Event
- Dublin San Ramon Services District (DSRSD) permit was granted to discharge the Baker tanks to the sanitation system
- Baker tanks have been removed from the property
- Permit application submitted for Fair-time use of bypass valves.
- DSRSD will require sanitation flow study during Fair.
- Kier & Wright contracted for engineering solutions for the entire property and to develop flow calculations
- Continued communication with Regional Water Board weekly,
- GSA, DSRSD, and City

A permit for the tanks was filed approximately a month prior, with about a one-month turnaround. A second permit is needed to turn the valves and is timed to align with the Fair dates when animals are onsite. This second permit was also applied for at the same time as the first in 2024, and it's the first time such a permit was requested, at the regulatory agency's request.

Concerns about water discharge date back to 2014, when the Fair was a year-round stabling facility. In response, the city installed a bypass valve, completed around 2016, which resolved the discharge issue at the time. After that, year-round stabling ended, and the fairgrounds were no longer a high-volume source of waste, so no compliance issues arose.

In 2023–2024, the Fair resumed year-round horse presence, reactivating the discharge problem. The bypass valve was then deemed no longer sufficient. Regulatory attention was reignited, and the Fair began planning for a catchment and treatment facility.

Supervisor David Haubert asked about concerns over Congressman Swalwell’s letter over untreated animal waste affecting groundwater and human health. In the letter the Congressman offered support for implementing a water treatment and recycling system.

The letter was reportedly prompted by a former consultant of the Fair who had earlier pitched a digestion solution and later sought federal funds.

The Fair refuted the claims in the Congressman’s letter and were in full compliance with state water quality requirements and had consistent cooperation with regulators. The consultant’s communication to the Congressman occurred without the Fair’s knowledge, which prompted the letter.

The Committee discussed whether the County or Fair Board is ultimately responsible for all required permits. Further clarification is needed from County Counsel and possibly the City of Pleasanton.

The current compliance plan includes Kier & Wright engineering firm to study the site’s flows and bacterial loads. This will determine what treatment systems would be required to remain compliant. The target is to host up to 500 horses for 45 days or less, which avoids stricter concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) classification.

A plan is expected by October 2025 to allow for potential horse racing in 2026.

Supervisor David Haubert stated that that the heritage and cultural importance of equestrian events, including 4-H, shows, and racing, must be preserved. The County is committed to finding affordable, compliant solutions to allow animal-related events to continue.

The Fair Board is not opposed to restoring horse racing and equestrian events but is cautious due to economic and regulatory risks. The next steps are contingent on Kier & Wright engineering recommendations, regulatory feedback and feasibility and affordability of implementing compliant systems.

2. Update on Horse Racing

Jerome Hoban provided an update on Horse Racing.

- Fair Board voted to negotiate a deal with Bernal Park Racing on March 18th
- Fair and Bernal Park Racing requested Summer race dates from the California Horse Racing Board (CHRB) March 20th
- The Fair received a deposit from Bernal Park Racing March 21st
- Thoroughbred Owners of California (TOC) and Southern tracks did not grant funding for training and stabling past March 25th
- CHRB determined that the Pleasanton track was no longer a CHRB licensed training facility
- Trainer’s Finish Line Insurance was no longer valid after April 1 for the Pleasanton track
- Bernal Park Racing’s deposit was returned, the track closed March 25th
- All horses exited property by April 5th, CHRB denied request for summer race dates in April
- Currently, no other Fairs are scheduled to run in 2025

- California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) Secretary Karen Ross signaled federal horse racing was unlikely but supported exploring options.
- Regulatory burdens intensified in 2024 due to water compliance and CHRB licensing issues.

CARF (California Authority of Racing Fairs), the contracted race operator, defaulted on \$5M+ in payments. The Fairgrounds lost money not from poor racing performance but due to unpaid service contracts (track work, security, maintenance). CARF is not bankrupt but financially insolvent. Only \$1.2–\$1.3M of the debt has been recovered.

Supervisor Haubert reported that an extension to June 10th was not requested, which could be viewed as a missed opportunity for local horsemen.

The Fair Board cited compliance, insurance gaps, and lack of support below 400 horses as barriers to the extension. In addition, the Stronach Group (Santa Anita, Monarch betting) blocked online betting, crippling revenue. Monarch signed late, severely limiting GSR's revenue window. These decisions were intentional efforts to undermine Northern California racing.

Speaker

A representative of Bernal Park Racing submitted a [proposed business plan for Bernal Park Racing 2025](#) by owners George Schmidt and John Harris. The proposal included the following information:

- Bernal Park Racing will take full financial responsibility for races.
- Have \$2M+ in funding, with \$1.59M already secured.
- Plan to launch at Humboldt in 2025, then return to Pleasanton in 2026.
- Long-term goal: year-round training hub in Pleasanton or Fresno.
- Pleasanton as the Preferred Site due to climate, historical role, strong local support. Horsemen expressed desire to return, citing rising Southern CA costs, weather, and quality of life.

Supervisors Haubert and Miley requested:

- A detailed plan from the Fair Board for horse racing viability.
- Review and update of the MOU between County and Fairgrounds to ensure better transparency and communication.
- Continued partnership development with Bernal Park Racing.

The Fair Board wants to remain a landlord, not an operator. Summer fair racing could be viable and self-funded. A successful meet in Humboldt will build Bernal Park's credibility. The future depends on:

- Regulatory compliance
- Reliable financial partners
- Horse availability
- Betting access and platform cooperation

3. Update on Golf at the Fairgrounds

Jerome Hoban reported that the golf course at the fairgrounds is open daily from 7 a.m. until dark and is maintained by Jetter Golf. The First Tee Tri-Valley program is still operational on the property. The course is expected to remain open during the fair, with access rerouted through Pleasanton Avenue.

Previously, the golf course was operated entirely by the Jetter family. To allow for year-round horse racing, the fairgrounds bought out the Jetter's' contract using \$3.1 million in cash.

CARF (California Authority of Racing Fairs) was involved indirectly. The Fair Association put up the funds and provided CARF a line of credit for repayment.

The Fair Association now fully controls the golf course and operations. Previously, during fair events or other uses, the Fair had to pay Jetter to close the course. Now it can operate or close it at will.

The course is not yet profitable due to winter downtime but is projected to generate about \$250K–\$300K annually in a good year. All golf revenue now goes to the Association, while Jetter Golf is paid a fixed fee for maintenance only. The transaction is recorded as a cash loss, as the \$3.1 million has not yet been repaid by CARF. The cost of the golf course acquisition will likely provide long-term control and potential profitability for the fairgrounds.

4. Update on Utilizing the Grandstands during Fair

Jerome Hoban reported on the event lineup which includes:

- NASCAR Experience, a simulator exhibit inside the grandstands, running throughout the fair.
- Hot Air Balloons, tethered rides in the golf course infield during the first seven (7) days
- Action Sports Stunt Show includes bicycle stunt performances on the racetrack during the first week, held at 6 p.m. daily.
- Tractor Pulls will be held on the racetrack, which will be tightly sealed to prevent damage.
- A three-night rodeo event featuring bronco and bull riding, no wild cow milking or mutton busting, hosted by Camacho Lifestyle.
- Monster Trucks will follow the rodeo, using the racetrack area.
- Fireworks & Drone Spectacular Show

The Pleasanton city liaison was supportive, especially of the louder, action-based events like tractor pulls and monster trucks. These events are designed to fill the gap left by horse racing and appeal to a younger, broader demographic.

Approximately \$400,000 has been allocated for grandstand entertainment. No major capital expenditures are required beyond sealing/unsealing the racetrack and minor operational setup. Performers and exhibitors are paid as part of this entertainment budget, and all attractions are included in fair admission.

These events were included to drive attendance, boost media exposure, and maintain use of the grandstands now that horse racing has ended. The strategy is modeled after the successful 2019 fair (before the pandemic) and aligns with modern entertainment trends.

5. Update on Futsal Contract

Joni Pattillo, Special Assistant to the County Administrator, provided an update on the Futsal contract. A meeting was held on Monday, May 12, 2025, with the General Services Agency and other stakeholders to review and finalize the licensing agreement for a futsal facility with Ballistic United Soccer Club. The General Services Agency provided a [written summary](#). The outcome was positive, with minor language change and all parties agree that the license complies with the original contract.

Jerome Hoban reported that the futsal courts will be located near Gate 12, in an area currently used for parking. The facility will occupy space equivalent to about two to three rows of parking but will not remove trees or major infrastructure. The courts are semi-permanent, portable, and can be packed into shipping containers if needed. The Ballistic United Soccer Club will pause operations during major events to preserve parking and space.

The fairgrounds retain full control over parking, food/beverage services, and can charge rent for both operating and non-operating days, similar to other licensees. Standard parking for events is \$15 per vehicle.

The facility's location was adjusted slightly to avoid overlapping with the driving range and prevent potential injuries from stray golf balls.

6. Update on the Upcoming 2025 Fair Planning

The fair opens in 29 days and this year's concert lineup features major acts such as Clint Black, Tower of Power, Too Short, War, Air Supply, Sugar Ray, and Colbie Caillat. Two tribute bands are included: Twist on Taylor (Taylor Swift tribute) and an Elton John tribute.

Concert ticket sales are significantly up — several hundred thousand dollars more than last year. Total revenue is up compared to 2024, driven by concert ticket sales. Fair admission ticket sales (non-concert) are flat year-over-year. Promotional days (\$3.50 Wednesdays and \$11 Throwback Thursdays) are contributing to strong ticket volume but lower per-ticket revenue.

Overall projections are stronger than expected, considering the elimination of horse racing. There are no box seats, sky lounge, or trackside terrace ticket sales this year, which makes the near-flat revenue performance more promising. Brochures are available for board members to take and promote the fair.

7. Update on the Proposed 2025 Fair Association Budget

Vivian Wu, Chief Financial Officer, Alameda County Fair Association, provided an update on the Fair Association budget.

The 2025 Fair Association budget was originally submitted in October 2024 and approved by the County Board in late 2024. Since then, the team has conducted multiple reforecasts (January and May) due to the closure of Golden State Racing (GSR) and other evolving factors.

Fair attendance projection was revised, down by 30,000 attendees due to the absence of horse racing. Estimated revenue loss: ~\$450,000 (based on a \$15 per capita average for parking and admission).

Expenses that were eliminated included losses related to summer horse racing operations and stabling (previously projected at \$274K and \$88K), the shutdown GSR-related budget lines (originally projected at \$2.45M revenue and \$450K in expense reimbursements).

A hiring freeze was implemented in January, and the Fair cut 8 event operations positions and reduced payroll/grounds expenses by approx. \$300K–\$400K.

Capital expenditures cut from \$2.8M to \$1.3M, focused primarily on the foundation for the farm project. Construction manager's salary and additional maintenance positions were eliminated.

Additional Revenue Sources

- Futsal facility revenue added to forecast.
- \$1.35M in IRS Employee Retention Tax Credits received in April 2025.
- \$1.125M from CARF for sale of equipment (barns, tractors, etc.), applied toward past debt.
- \$300K received from CARF in March for partial repayment on their line of credit.
- CARF's total current outstanding debt: approx. \$3.85M, which includes ~\$2.9M on the line of credit and ~\$974K in unpaid operating expenses.

The Sky Lounge will operate on weekends from 5:30–8:30 p.m. during the fair, offering bar access, appetizers, VIP hosting for board members, emeritus, and sponsors.

The financial position has improved significantly from the January forecast due to new revenues, cost cuts, and receipt of overdue payments. The team remains optimistic and continues to revise projections as needed.

PUBLIC INPUT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.