



22nd DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

Board of Directors Meeting

Del Mar Fairgrounds
2260 Jimmy Durante Boulevard
Del Mar, CA 92014

August 18, 2026

MINUTES

The following minutes are a summary of the Board action and proceedings. For a full transcript please click on the link below or visit the [delmarfairgrounds.com](https://www.delmarfairgrounds.com) website:

<https://www.delmarfairgrounds.com/p/public-information1>

OFFICERS PRESENT

Sam Nejabat, Chair
Lisa Barkett, Vice Chair

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Mark Arabo
Phil Blair
Donna DeBerry
Kathlyn Mead
Ted Miyahara
Elsa Morales-Roth
Frederick Schenk

OTHERS PRESENT

Joshua Caplan, Deputy Attorney General (Counsel)
Becky Bartling, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Katie Mueller, Chief Operations Officer (COO)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nejabat called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. and announced that Item 8-A-1 and 8-D-2 would be tabled to a future meeting. Additionally, the update on the Governors Hall plaque dedication was moved from the CEO Update to the DMTC Liaison Committee Report.

ROLL CALL

Chair Nejabat, Vice Chair Barkett, and Directors Arabo, Blair, DeBerry, Mead, Miyahara, Morales-Roth, and Schenk were all present.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA (see pages 6-25 of transcript)

Shane Harris, Daisy Dominguez, Lilly, Dominic Palmieri, Nathan Marcus, Martha Sullivan, Jane Cartmill, Stephen Vartanian, Nathan Janousek, Ryann Newman, Lynn Freudenberg

RECESS TO CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board recessed to Closed Executive Session at 9:57 a.m.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION

The Board reconvened to Open Session at 10:37 p.m. Chair Nejabat stated that the District Board of Directors considered the advice of Counsel on the items listed on the Closed Session portion of the agenda and has nothing to report.

CONSENT CALENDAR

The Consent Calendar items can be found on pages 9-14 of the meeting packet.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CONSENT CALENDAR (see page 27-29 of transcript)
Martha Sullivan, Jane Cartmill, Lynn Freudenberg

Director Blair moved to approve the Consent Calendar. Director Arabo seconded the motion. Chair Nejabat, Vice Chair Barkett, and Directors Arabo, Blair, DeBerry, Mead, Miyahara, Morales-Roth, and Schenk all voted in favor. Director Blair abstained on voting on the June 9 meeting minutes, since he was not in attendance. The Consent Calendar was approved 9-0.

CEO REPORT

Chair Nejabat reminded the Board that the Governors Hall plaque dedication would be addressed under Item 8-F, the DMTC Liaison Committee Report under General Business.

- Don Diego Scholarship Foundation Executive Director Ashley McCaughan presented a recap of the June 10 gala, and highlighted some of this year's scholarship recipients. More than \$126,000 was raised at the gala this year, and 175 people attended.
- CEO Bartling previewed events taking place at the Fairgrounds over the coming months.
- District Marketing Director Jennifer Hellman was honored as a "2026 Indispensables" winner by the San Diego Business Journal.
- The District is not moving forward with plans to relocate staff offices to the Surfside Race Place building, and will reallocate the funds.
- The District is working to replace HVAC systems in the DMTC and Legends offices, as well as in the Grandstand electrical room.
- An elevator assessment has been conducted, and an update will be provided to the Board once results have been received.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CEO REPORT (see pages 45-46 of transcript)
Martha Sullivan

CEO Bartling announced that the September Board of Directors meeting was moved from the 8th to the 15th.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Chair Nejabat reminded the Board that Item 8-A-1, consideration and vote on whether to approve an interagency agreement with the California Department of Food and Agriculture for legal services in the amount of \$150,000 annually, had been postponed to a future meeting.

Item 8-A-2: Discussion and vote on whether to adjust the terms of Board officers to align with the calendar year

Chair Nejabat referred to the report on page 41 of the meeting packet.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-A-2 (see page 47 of transcript)

None

Director Mead moved to approve changing the Board officers' terms to coincide with the calendar year, with elections taking place in November or December and terms beginning on January 1. Director Arabo seconded the motion. Chair Nejabat, Vice Chair Barkett, and Directors Arabo, Blair, DeBerry, Mead, Miyahara, Morales-Roth, and Schenk all voted in favor. The motion was approved 9-0.

Item 8-B: Finance Committee Report

Chair Nejabat referred to the reports on pages 42-52 of the meeting packet.

Committee Chair Arabo requested to take up Item 8-B-2 before 8-B-1.

Item 8-B-2: Discussion and vote on whether to approve an additional \$27,767.00 monthly in labor costs to support new needed positions and adjustments in position responsibilities

CEO Bartling explained that the number of year-round District employees dropped from about 170 people before COVID to about 65 today, and new positions are crucially needed to support staff and operations. Additionally, some current employees will be promoted to positions more aligned with their responsibilities. Several positions that were budgeted but unnecessary have been eliminated, providing some payroll savings.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-B-2 (see pages 79-80 of transcript)

None

Director Blair moved to approve an additional \$27,767.00 monthly in labor costs to support new needed positions and adjustments in position responsibilities. Vice Chair Barkett seconded the motion. Chair Nejabat, Vice Chair Barkett, and Directors Arabo, Blair, DeBerry, Miyahara, Morales-Roth, and Schenk voted in favor. Director Mead voted in opposition. The motion was approved 8-1.

Item 8-B-1: Recap of committee meetings held on June 25 and August 3

Committee Chair Arabo distributed handouts showing Fair concessions revenue and rent information. Overall Fair revenue was about \$6 million less than budgeted. The Committee is discussing options to maximize attendance and revenue, including charging higher rent at premium vendor locations and examining service contracts over \$500,000 to identify opportunities to save money.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-B-1 (see pages 101-118 of transcript)

Carmel Dyer-Pittroff, Charlie Boghosian, Nathan Marcus, Dominic Palmieri, Stephen Vartanian, Nathan Janousek, Ryann Newman

Item 8-C-1: Audit & Governance Committee Report

Committee Chair Morales-Roth reported that the District has selected LSL to conduct an audit of the District, State Race Track Leasing Commission, and Del Mar Race Track Authority. The Committee is also working to develop a formal strategic plan for the Board, as well as reviewing existing Board policies. Recommendations will be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-C-1 (see page 120 of transcript)

None

The Board recessed for a break at 12:20 p.m. The meeting resumed at 12:42 p.m.

Item 8-D: Master Site Planning Committee Report

Chair Nejabat reminded the Board that Item 8-D-2, the staff report on the special events train platform project, had been postponed to a future meeting.

Item 8-D-1: Presentation by Bodewell Group regarding finalization of the Technical Advisory Coalition (TAC) and recommendations for the next phase of the master plan timeline

Bodewell Group Senior Director Zach MacQuarrie recapped the work completed so far on outreach and gathering public input on the master site plan, and shared the list of 12 technical experts comprising the Technical Advisory Coalition (TAC). The TAC will advise the District on CEQA requirements, including geotechnical, building design, and environmental constraints. Bodewell distributed a Public Outreach report, found on pages 53-84 of the online meeting packet, and a Key Opinion Leader Audit report, found on pages 85-191.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-D-1 (see pages 150-153 of transcript)

Carla Hayes, Martha Sullivan

Item 8-D-3: Staff report on the Affordable Housing Site Due Diligence and Development and Feasibility Analysis Agreement (previously called the Exclusive Negotiating Rights Agreement)

Director Arabo voluntarily recused himself from the discussion and vote on the ENRA, and was not present in the room for Items 8-D-3, 8-D-4, and 8-D-5.

CEO Bartling provided a timeline of affordable housing discussions between the District and the City of Del Mar.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-D-3 (see pages 159-167 of transcript)

Tracy Martinez, Karen Brindley, Don Mosier, Lesa Heebner, Alex Goodman

Item 8-D-4: Staff recommendation regarding potential affordable housing site at RV park site east of Jimmy Durante Blvd

District staff recommended that the City of Del Mar continue conversations with the City of San Diego about exploring potential affordable housing options at the Surf and Turf RV Park site, known as Site 4, east of Jimmy Durante Boulevard. Any plans must include relocating the RV park to a similar location with in-kind replacement of existing utilities for water, sewer and electrical, along with adding new amenities.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-D-4 (see pages 175-177 of transcript)
Laura DeMarco, Karen Brindley

Item 8-D-5: Discussion and vote on whether and/or how to proceed with the Affordable Housing Site Due Diligence and Development and Feasibility Analysis Agreement (previously called the Exclusive Negotiating Rights Agreement), including possible affordable housing site location alternatives east of Jimmy Durante Blvd

Director Blair moved to proceed with the Affordable Housing Site Due Diligence and Development and Feasibility Analysis Agreement for Site 4, including possible affordable housing and/or senior housing alternatives east of Jimmy Durante Boulevard. Director Schenk seconded the motion. Vice Chair Barkett and Directors Blair and Schenk voted in favor. Chair Nejabat and Directors DeBerry, Mead, Miyahara, and Morales-Roth voted in opposition. The motion failed 3-5.

Director Miyara made a new motion to terminate the Affordable Housing Site Due Diligence and Development and Feasibility Analysis Agreement with the City of Del Mar. Director Mead seconded the motion.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-D-5 (see pages 222-230 of transcript)
Tracy Martinez, Lesa Heebner, John Spelich, Laura DeMarco, Karen Brindley

Chair Nejabat and Directors DeBerry, Mead, Miyahara, and Morales-Roth voted in favor. Vice Chair Barkett and Directors Blair and Schenk voted in opposition. The motion was approved 5-3.

Item 8-E: People & Culture Committee Report

Committee Chair Mead recapped the committee meeting on July 16, where topics included setting CEO goals and assessing the impact of the current Board committees.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-E (see page 234 of transcript)
None

The Board recessed for a short break at 2:48 p.m. The meeting resumed at 2:58 p.m. and Director Arabo returned to the meeting at that time.

Item 8-F: DMTC Liaison Committee Report

Chair Nejabat referred to the report on pages 197-201 of the meeting packet, and reminded the Board that the Governors Hall plaque would be discussed during the DMTC Liaison Committee report. Items 8-F-2 and 8-F-3 were taken out of order.

Committee Chair Arabo reported that more than 800 people attended the after party concert at the Sound following Opening Day of the DMTC summer race meet. The Board voiced their support for planning a similar event in coming years.

Item 8-F-3: Update from DMTC on summer race meet

DMTC President and COO Josh Rubinstein shared that the first half of the summer meet has produced strong results, with a sellout on Opening Day and an increase in wagering. The average field size is 8.6 horses per race, which leads the industry. Between 2000 and 2025, horse racing in Del Mar provided more than \$544 million to the state of California.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-F-3 (see pages 253-257 of transcript)

Laura DeMarco, Martha Sullivan, Jane Cartmill

Item 8-F-2: Discussion and vote on like-for-like replacement of Infield video board versus designing and constructing a new structure

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-F-3 (see pages 258-263 of transcript)

Martha Sullivan, Jane Cartmill, Lynn Freudenberg

Director Arabo moved to approve a like-for-like replacement of the Infield video board versus designing and constructing a new structure. Director Mead seconded the motion. Chair Nejabat, Vice Chair Barkett, and Directors Arabo, Blair, DeBerry, Mead, Miyahara, Morales-Roth, and Schenk all voted in favor. The motion was approved 9-0.

Item 8-G: Food & Beverage Committee Report

Committee Chair Barkett referred to the financial report on page 49 of the meeting packet and explained that while net profit was down in the spring, that is typical for the pre-Fair period, and is a smaller net loss than the previous year. The Committee plans to issue an RFP in the next week or so to secure a food and beverage consultant.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-G (see page 276 of transcript)

None

Item 8-H: Fair Operations Committee Report

Chair Nejabat referred to the report on page 202 of the meeting packet.

Item 8-H-1: Recap of committee meeting held on August 5

Committee Chair Mead reported that topics at the August 5 meeting included reviewing the Fair wrap-up presentation for the Board, plans for the annual staff Fair Debrief, the process for booking Grandstand entertainment, and the possibility of adding more Fair dates in 2027.

Item 8-H-2: 2026 San Diego County Fair wrap-up presentation

COO Mueller presented highlights from the 2026 Fair, including attendance and concert numbers, successful promotions, new exhibits and attractions, and community participation.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-H (see pages 305-306 of transcript)

None

Item 8-I: Emergency Preparedness Committee Report

Committee Chair Barkett recapped the August 5 meeting, where the Committee discussed conducting an inventory of supplies on site; adding an emergency page to the Del Mar Fairgrounds website to provide evacuation forms and information; and reestablishing the First 50 volunteer program. In attendance was an expert from the San Diego Humane Society, and in September the meeting will be expanded to include a volunteer first responder, an equine veterinarian, several area fire chiefs, the San Diego County Department of Animal Services, and the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-I (see page 314 of transcript)

None

Item 8-J: Regulatory & Governmental Affairs Committee Report

Committee Chair Miyahara reported that the Committee met on August 14 to discuss establishing strategic partnerships with elected officials and public agencies to strengthen collaboration and relationships.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8-J (see pages 317-318 of transcript)

Laura DeMarco

MATTERS OF INFORMATION & DIRECTORS' REQUESTS

Vice Chair Barkett requested that the Audit & Governance Committee look into California Government Code 11020 regarding office hours for state agencies. Director Arabo suggested that the Committee consider establishing an email policy.

Director Arabo requested that the DMTC Liaison Committee study the possibility of a historic designation for the race track.

Correspondence can be found on pages 205-234 of the meeting packet. The updated list of Board committee assignments can be found on pages 235-240 of the meeting packet. Contracts executed per the CEO's delegated authority can be found on pages 241-242 of the meeting packet.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Chair Nejabat adjourned the meeting at 4:32 p.m.



Becky Bartling
Chief Executive Officer