



**22<sup>nd</sup> DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION  
Board of Directors Meeting**

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

**September 15, 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 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, District Chief Executive Officer (CEO)  
Katie Mueller, District Chief Operations Officer (COO)  
Michael Sadegh, District Finance Director  
Jennifer Hellman, District Marketing Director

---

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Nejabat called the meeting to order at 9:38 a.m. and announced that the Don Diego Scholarship Foundation presentation under the CEO Report and Item 6-A-1 under General Business, the SANDAG presentation on the special events train platform, would be postponed to a future meeting.

**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 5-15 of transcript)

Carla Hayes, Mark Rittenbaum, Tracy Martinez, John Spelich, Jennifer Anderson

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

The Consent Calendar items can be found on pages 6-21 of the meeting packet.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CONSENT CALENDAR (see page 15 of transcript)

None

Director Arabo asked to pull agreement 26-027 for Versa Music Group from the Consent Calendar for further discussion under General Business.

Director Arabo moved to approve the Consent Calendar with the removal of agreement 26-027. Vice Chair Barkett seconded the motion. Chair Nejabat, Vice Chair Barkett, and Directors Arabo, Blair, DeBerry, Mead, Miyahara, Morales-Roth, and Schenk all voted in favor. The Consent Calendar was approved 9-0.

**CEO REPORT**

- Del Mar Golf Center General Manager Matt Clay presented an overview of recent upgrades to the driving range, mini golf course, and golf education programs.
- CEO Bartling previewed events taking place at the Fairgrounds over the coming months.
- The Connection Center project, which would have consolidated all District staff offices into The Sound building, has been canceled, saving the District approximately \$7 million.
- The District hopes to finish replacing the DMTC office HVAC system by November.
- The California Emergency Response Resiliency: Venues + Fairgrounds (CERRVF) has approached the District about joining the non-profit group as a member.
- Some District staff will travel to Louisville for the International Association of Fairs and Expositions conference from November 29-December 4. The Western Fairs Association conference will take place in Las Vegas from January 31-February 3, 2027.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CEO REPORT (see page 44 of transcript)

None

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

Agreement # 26-027 – Versa Music Group

Director Mead confirmed that the contract for a new talent booking company had gone through the Fair Ops Committee.

Director Arabo moved to approve agreement 26-027 for Versa Music Group. Director DeBerry seconded the motion. Chair Nejabat, Vice Chair Barkett, and Directors Arabo, Blair, DeBerry, Mead, Miyahara, Morales-Roth, and Schenk all voted in favor. Agreement 26-027 was approved 9-0.

Chair Nejabat reminded the Board that Item 6-A-1, the staff report and SANDAG presentation on the special events train platform project, had been postponed to a future meeting.

Item 6-B-1: Executive Committee Report – Discussion and vote regarding creation of a second Vice Chair of the Board

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 6-B-1 (see page 48 of transcript)

None

Director Arabo moved to create a second Vice Chair of the Board. Director DeBerry seconded the motion. After discussion, Director Arabo amended the motion, moving to support the current Board Chair's recommendation regarding creation of a second Vice Chair during the next election of Board officers. Director Mead seconded the amended 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 6-C-1: Nominating Committee Report – Discussion regarding process for Board officer elections in November

Committee Chair Barkett explained that the Committee usually recommends candidates for office based on who has expressed interest, but no Board members have done so. The Committee recommends allowing direct officer nominations from the floor when elections take place in November or December.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 6-C-1 (see pages 77-78 of transcript)

None

Item 6-D-1: Finance Committee Report

Chair Nejabat referred to the reports on pages 26-35 of the meeting packet. Committee Chair Blair recapped the most recent Committee meeting and reviewed the financial reports in the packet.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 6-D-1 (see page 98 of transcript)

None

Item 6-D-2: Finance Committee – Discussion of SB 84 Supplemental Payment Obligations - Repayment Process

CEO Bartling referred to the report on page 36 of the meeting packet and explained that in 2017, the State of California gave each District Agricultural Association a one-time supplemental payment to CalPERS. The California Department of Finance will be issuing invoices to DAAs for repayment by June 30, 2030, and interest will begin accruing on July 1, 2027. If the amount owed is paid by June 30, 2027, no interest will be due. The Committee recommends delaying a decision on a payment plan until February of 2027.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 6-D-2 (see page 103 of transcript)

None

Item 6-E-1 and 6-E-2: Audit & Governance Committee Report

Committee Chair Morales-Roth recapped the most recent meeting, which covered topics such as creating a framework policy relating to communications between the Board and District staff, as well as potential revisions to the District's ticket policy.

Item 6-E-3: Audit & Governance Committee – Discussion and vote to hold committee meetings during the second week after the full Board of Directors meeting

Committee Chair Morales-Roth referred to the report on page 47 of the meeting packet and recommended that Board committee meetings be held regularly during the second week after the full Board meeting to allow time for preparing Board meeting agendas and staff reports.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 6-E

None

Director Arabo moved to make a best-faith effort to hold committee meetings during the second week following the full Board of Directors meeting. Director Blair 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 6-F-1: DMTC Liaison Committee Report

Del Mar Thoroughbred Club President and COO Josh Rubinstein gave an update on the 2026 summer race meet, which ended on September 7 and saw increases in wagering and food and beverage sales.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 6-F-1 (see page 127 of transcript)

None

Item 6-G-1: SRTL & RTA Meetings Report

RTA President Mead recapped the latest meetings of the State Race Track Leasing Commission and Del Mar Race Track Authority, which included approval to request DGS approval for a non-competitive bid to allow for an amendment to the Del Mar Racetrack Operating Agreement through October 1, 2038, aligning with the bond payoff date.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 6-G-1 (see page 130 of transcript)

None

Item 6-H-1: Emergency Preparedness Committee Report

More than 40 people attended the most recent committee meeting, representing agencies such as local fire departments, veterinarians, and the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services, Department of Animal Services, and Humane Society, as well as other volunteers and community partners. Committee Chair Barkett explained that the District is working to establish MOUs with suppliers for feed and bedding, manure removal, and other services. COO Mueller reported that District leadership is assigning roles for full-time staff to perform in an evacuation scenario. District Marketing Director Jennifer Hellman gave an overview of how the District's website and social media will be leveraged if the fairgrounds is activated as an emergency evacuation site.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 6-H-1 (see page 149 of transcript)

None

**Item 6-I-1: Fair Operations Committee Report**

Committee Chair Mead referred to the report on pages 50-52 of the meeting packet and reported that District staff met in August for the annual Fair Debrief workshop to discuss what worked well, what needs work, and ideas for 2027.

**Item 6-I-2: Fair Operations Committee – Presentation of San Diego County Fair guest survey results**

Marketing Director Hellman presented results of a post-Fair survey completed by more than 1,500 guests at the 2026 Fair, highlighting high and low points and areas of focus for 2027.

**Item 6-I-3: Fair Operations Committee – Discussion and vote on 2027 Fair date amendment**

The Committee recommends:

- Opening the Fair on Thursday, June 10 (rather than Wednesday)
- Closing the Fair on Monday, July 5
- Adding Tuesdays June 22 and June 29 to the schedule, for a total of 22 days.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 6-I (see page 187 of transcript)**

None

Director Blair moved to approve amending the 2027 Fair schedule as presented in the meeting packet. 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.

**MATTERS OF INFORMATION & DIRECTORS' REQUESTS**

There were no requests from the Board for future agenda items. Matters of information and correspondence can be found on pages 53-88 of the meeting packet. The updated list of Board committee assignments can be found on pages 89-93 of the meeting packet.

**RECESS TO CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Board recessed to Closed Executive Session at 12:51 p.m.

**RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION**

The Board reconvened to Open Session at 2:04 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. The Board also evaluated the performance of the CEO consistent with government code, and has nothing to report.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, Chair Nejabat adjourned the meeting at 2:04 p.m.



Becky Bartling  
Chief Executive Officer