



CITY OF COSTA MESA

P.O. BOX 1200, COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA 92628-1200

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Allan L. Roeder
City Manager

PHONE: (714) 754-5327

EMAIL: citymanager@ci.costa-mesa.ca.us

April 1, 2010

Costa Mesa, California –

Following the March 17, 2010 announcement by the State of California, Department of General Services that all bids for the purchase of the Orange County Fair & Event Center were rejected, the City of Costa Mesa and the State of California agreed to exclusively negotiate for the purchase of the Fairgrounds.

Costa Mesa City Council authorized this move in an effort to preserve the Fairgrounds and retain public ownership of the fair, insuring into the future that the property continues to operate as a fairground.

"We are extremely proud to have the Orange County Fair & Event Center in our community and believe that it provides both social and economic benefit to Costa Mesa and the larger population of Orange County," Mayor Mansoor stated. "We are convinced that the Governor is intent on selling the property and believe that it is in the best interests of the City to commence negotiations with the State to that end."

The focus of the negotiations is to retain public ownership and to continue to provide public programs and private opportunities that meet the needs and interests of Orange County in a manner that is transparent and allows for public participation. Costa Mesa will require that the Fairgrounds be self-supporting financially and not rely on local tax dollars for purchase and operation of the 150 acre facility.

Retention of the Fair and year-around events, plus Centennial Farm and other educationally-based community programs is critical. It is important to encourage the ongoing business of the Fair organization so that existing and future public-private partnerships can thrive and provide important social and economic benefit to the community.

In order to create the operating model and business plan for self-sufficiency, the City has retained Becky Bailey-Findley to serve as project manager for the purchase of the Fairgrounds. Ms. Bailey-Findley served as CEO of the Orange County Fair & Event Center from 1994 to 2008. Under her leadership the Fair and year-round events and programs grew significantly and she was known for her emphasis in positive community outreach and participation. Her charge will be to create a plan that preserves the heritage and relationship of the Fair with the community while bringing all elements of the fair business together to achieve the self-supporting goals of Costa Mesa.

It is expected that successful negotiations between the City and State will require State legislation. It is the intent of the City, should negotiations be successful, that there be a smooth and orderly transition from State to local ownership and that employees of the Fair be treated fairly and respectfully.

Mayor Mansoor concluded, "Our plan to submit a comprehensive proposal to the Governor demonstrates our commitment to preserve the Orange County Fair & Event Center as a community asset for all of Southern California and we hope that the Governor will agree that local control is the best for California."