



Minutes

Lakewood City Council

Adjourned Regular Meeting held
June 25, 2024

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 5:36 p.m. by Mayor Rogers in the Weingart Ballroom, 5000 Clark Avenue, Lakewood, California.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Mayor Todd Rogers
Vice Mayor Cassandra Chase
Council Member David Arellano
Council Member Steve Croft
Council Member Jeff Wood

LAKEWOOD EQUESTRIAN CENTER OPERATIONS

Valarie Frost, Director of Recreation and Community Services, displayed slides and made a presentation based on the report in the agenda. She provided an overview of the Lakewood Equestrian Center (LEC) Operations including the City's management of the LEC; expenses and revenue; private horse boarding, horse trailer and boarder residency statistics; vendors and horse riding trainers; capital improvement and facility condition; operational needs for continued city management; potential for new business or non-profit management; and alternatives to Lakewood Equestrian Center operations. She stated that there were two options to consider in seeking a Council decision regarding the future disposition of the Lakewood Equestrian Center. The first option was to continue to maintain and coordinate equestrian activities at the Lakewood Equestrian Center to include private horse boarding, horse riding training, and equine therapy; along with a provision for a contracted vendor to provide a publicly accessible pony ride and petting zoo concession. Given this directive, staff would seek an additional budget appropriation to onboard four full-time, benefited employees, funding annual arena restoration and a defined capital improvement plan to address necessary facility improvements including best management practices for stormwater runoff, arena restoration, roadway restoration and the replacement of horse boarding units and tack sheds that were deteriorated. The second option would be to cease equestrian activities, specifically private horse boarding, horse riding training and equine therapy, on the 19-acre property referred to as the Lakewood Equestrian Center and explore options for the development of alternative recreation amenities for the greater public benefit.

Staff responded to questions and comments from Council Members regarding the uncertainty and restrictions of the Southern California Edison lease; current and future facility capital improvement needs; possibility of downsizing; and resident horse boarders.

Steve Skolnik, for the City Attorney, stated that written comments were transmitted to and received by the offices of the City Manager and the City Clerk and were provided to the Council Members.

At 6:33 p.m., the Adjourned Regular Meeting of the City Council was recessed. At 6:40 p.m., the City Council Meeting was reconvened.

LAKEWOOD EQUESTRIAN CENTER OPERATIONS - Continued

Russell Triplett, Kate Rodriguez, Ryan Rodriguez, Noah Grove, Michele Bloomquist, Liz Vozzella, Alexa Rodell, Carlos Cota, Hayley Bloomquist, Kari LaFleur, Jody Radke, Lisa Morissette, Tom Marchese, Sandie Mercer, Marcia Burns, Paul Day, Andrew Stein, Heidi Gillett, Kendall Gillett, Nancy and Douglas Alchorn, Sean and Cindy Flavin, Jenny Meeker, D. Joy Gould, Kelley Pearce, Marty Ozuna, Stephanie Field, and Matt Marshall addressed the City Council regarding their support of continued operations of the Lakewood Equestrian Center.

At 7:43 p.m., the Adjourned Regular Meeting of the City Council was recessed for the Regular Meeting of the City Council. At 9:21 p.m., the Adjourned Regular Meeting of the City Council was reconvened.

Oliver Rothenberg, Lux Higbee, Stephanie Arnold, Lisa Baca, Francesca Martinelli, Rebecca Spira, G. Datta, Melissa Pawneshing, Riley Forsythe, Macki Hamblin, Carol Graves, Angelina Rose, Evan Morissette, James Rock, Faith Grimm, Joan Macomber, Rose Heida, Gloria Scott, Kimberly Holmes, Gibran Stout, Sophie Berro, Aspasia Zouras, and Chris Shararian spoke in favor of continued operations of the Lakewood Equestrian Center.

Mayor Rogers stated that it was agreed that the City should not be in the equestrian center business. Staff provided suggestions and responses to inquiries and with unanimous concurrence of the Council Members, direction was provided to work on a site plan to exclude the Southern California Edison right of way; to seek identifiable equestrian center operators with sufficient capital to manage such an undertaking; to advertise a Request for Proposals or Request for Qualifying Information (RFP/RFQI) for the investment and long term lease; to allow adequate time to advertise the RFP/RFQI, then evaluate the submissions and negotiate any potential agreement; to ensure horse care at the facility in the interim; to create a small working group of equestrian community members, as represented by a trainer, a boarder, youth, a vendor as well as a non-equestrian resident and staff to continue the dialogue to find solutions; to set a target of sixty days while allowing for possible extensions, as needed; and to provide updates to Council Members as the process moved forward.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be brought before the City Council, Mayor Rogers adjourned the meeting at 11:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Mayberry
City Clerk