

SAN MATEO COUNTY EXPOSITION & FAIR ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' RETREAT MEETING – JANUARY 28, 2026

Our mission is to provide a resilient space that enhances daily life through connectedness, economic opportunity, and community wellbeing.

Minutes

A retreat meeting of the Board of Directors was held January 28, 2026, at the San Mateo County Event Center, 2495 South Delaware Street, San Mateo, CA 94403.

I. ATTENDANCE

Present: Rosanne Foust, President
Raymond Juballa, Secretary-Treasurer
Tom Ames
Noemi Avram
Theresa Faapuaa
Leonard Iniguez
Kitty Lopez
Rowena Poti Meafua
Steven Wong

Excused: Amy Buckmaster
James Tucker

Also Present: Dana Stoehr, Chief Executive Officer
Charlene King, CAO
Noelia Corzo, Board of Supervisors
Brian Kulich, Chief Deputy County Attorney
Allyson Chan, Supervisor Corzo's Office
Becky Bailey-Findley, Facilitator

I. **Welcome & Opening**

The meeting commenced with an emphasis on the importance of strategic planning for long-term success. The San Mateo County Event Center board of directors remains deeply committed to this process, empowering the organization to shape its future through informed and deliberate decision-making grounded in thorough research. The objective for today is to build upon the foundational direction previously established by the board, incorporate updated data and information, and subsequently set a strategic course for the next five years.

Those present introduced themselves and shared personal reflections on how the San Mateo County Event Center (SMCEC) fosters resiliency, growth, and social well-being within the community. Highlights of their insights are as follows.

- ★ The SMCEC has a long history of being connected, adaptable, and innovative as our community and our culture evolve and grow. They have continually included the county’s diverse cultures, always offering a safe, accessible space where families can come and make lifelong memories.
- ★ During the pandemic, the SMCEC delivered comprehensive services and responded effectively to public needs, thereby assisting the County in maintaining critical services and resources.
- ★ The board and staff of SMCEC are dedicated to delivering valuable experiences, resources, and opportunities for the community. They remain committed to fostering positive outcomes for the well-being of all individuals. Responsible stewardship of the fairgrounds and its assets is central to its guiding principles. Their approach prioritizes constructive responses that strive to effectively address community needs.
- ★ The SMCEC promotes a sense of family and togetherness among its board, staff, and guests. It is an unexpected treasure in the community, known for its long-standing traditions and shared memories.

II. The SMCEC Foundation for Planning

In previous strategic planning sessions, the board adopted Core Values, its understanding of what Resiliency means, and Purpose and Mission Statements for SMCEC. These are:

Core Values

Safety
 Family
 Diversity
 Learning
 Responsibility
 Service
 Adaptability
 Resiliency
 Memories

The Meaning of Resiliency

- The community’s ability to withstand, prevent, and/or quickly recover from adversity.
- Community resilience focuses on enhancing the community’s day-to-day health and well-being to reduce the negative impacts of major disruptions.
- It is disaster and emergency support + the well-being of the community as a place to gather and build physical, behavioral, and social health.
- A resiliency approach enhances daily life through social connectedness and improving everyday health, wellness, and community systems.

SMCEC Purpose Statement

We exist as an anchor for social connectedness, wellness, resiliency, imaginative experiences, and economic well-being for our community.

SMCEC Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a resilient space that enhances daily life through connectedness, economic opportunity, and community well-being.

III. An Understanding of “Place” and Its Impact on Community

The group reviewed three concepts and theories about “place” and its importance to community health.

A. Zocalo

Zocalo: a *diverse* public square, marked by *community interaction*, a *beehive of activity*, and meeting in an *inclusive, equity-based* environment.

B. Third Place

Third Place: “first place” is home; “second place” is work; Third places, then, are anchors of community life and facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction. Where you relax and have fun in public, where you encounter familiar faces and make new acquaintances.

C. Sacred Places in a Community

- A place that provides identity to the Community.
- A place with a wisdom tradition.

Board and staff then shared examples of how the SMCEC contributes to social connectedness, wellness, resiliency, imaginative experiences, and economic well-being in the San Mateo County community.

Their responses included:

- The annual county fair welcomes everyone, brings people together, sparks creativity, and creates the atmosphere of a big community gathering.
- SMCEC is committed to maintaining an effective balance between delivering community services and meeting the organizational requirement of self-sufficiency.
- SMCEC serves as a platform for coordinating community responses to emergencies and critical needs. Examples of its initiatives include hosting the Senior Showcase, organizing The Samaritan House Toy Drive, supporting additional activities such as food banks and warming centers, and advocating against human trafficking.
- Throughout the year, SMCEC serves as a venue dedicated to acknowledging and celebrating cultural communities, their artistic expressions, events, traditions, and gatherings.
- Agricultural education and engagement with the urban community remain active and well-supported at SMCEC.

- The range of activities at the SMCEC is extensive and dynamic, fostering connections among groups with shared interests and reflecting the priorities of San Mateo County residents.
- The makeup of the board of directors mirrors the demographic characteristics of the county residents served by SMCEC.

IV. Report from Johnson Consulting

See attached presentation from Johnson Consulting.

V. Where Do We Want To Go?

Setting Direction for SMCEC's Future: 2026 – 2030

Over the next five years, the SMCEC organization will face decisions that require a clear strategic direction, careful consideration of funding alternatives, alignment with County objectives, and optimal utilization of SMCEC assets. The group established criteria deemed essential for informed and responsible future decision-making.

Criteria For Strategic Decision Making

- ✓ Alignment with SMCEC's Purpose, Mission, and Core Values
- ✓ Alignment with deed restriction regarding the use of the land.
- ✓ Financial impact on SMCEC and the Community.
- ✓ Impact on the SMCEC community, stakeholders, and guests.
- ✓ Cultural Impact: Inclusivity and Diversity
- ✓ Ability to Respond to an Emergency
- ✓ Support of Education.
- ✓ Adaptability and Future Growth.
- ✓ Open to imagination and trusting the planning process.
- ✓ Addressing critical infrastructure needs.
- ✓ Modernization of facilities and grounds.
- ✓ Responsible balance between meeting community needs and the financial self-sufficiency of SMCEC as a public enterprise.
- ✓ Long-term capitalization, including deferred maintenance, financial planning, and market viability.
- ✓ Leed Certification
- ✓ Provide focused time for comprehensive research and planning.

- ✓ It is a project within reach – practical, feasible, and fundable.
- ✓ SMCEC’s contribution to the County’s World Class Vision.

The board formulated statements outlining the organization’s strategic direction over the next five years, emphasizing alignment of team efforts and resources toward a shared objective.

- 1. It is our position that the SMCEC has consistently contributed to, and will continue to support, San Mateo County’s world-class vision.**

- 2. We will focus on developing a comprehensive, feasible master plan vision for the SMCEC, integrating facility and grounds upgrades and modernization. This initiative aims to strengthen SMCEC’s role in advancing the community’s social well-being, economic growth, and participation in entertainment, recreation, education, sports, and public service.**

VI. Conclusion

The meeting concluded with the board identifying next steps in the planning process.

Action Step	By Whom	By When
Prepare notes of the Jan. 28, 2026 Board retreat. Send Draft to the CEO and Board President for editing. Bring to the full board for adoption at the February board meeting.	BBF Dana & Rosanne	2/6/26 2/25/26
Johnson Consulting to continue the feasibility study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct the survey ○ Prepare site recommendations ○ Update the data points ○ Add historical information. 		