



EARL WARREN SHOWGROUNDS

A GIFT FOR THE COMMUNITY

A three-stage renovation plan for Earl Warren Showgrounds equestrian center is slated to begin in 2020



RAFAEL MALDONADO / NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

The Equestrian Center at Earl Warren Showgrounds will look to host multiple events after the 2020 renovation.

By PAUL GONZALEZ
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

A three-stage renovation plan is set to begin early next year for the Earl Warren Showgrounds equestrian center.

The initial improvements will prepare the facility to host multiple equestrian events in 2020, according to an announcement from the Santa Barbara Equine Assistance and Evacuation Team. The showgrounds will remain open during the renovations and will maintain its full schedule of community events.

"The facility was built in the '50s. It has aged and been well used during that time, particularly during the recent evacuations," said showgrounds board member Mary Rose.

The showgrounds is a state facility but has not received enough state funding over the years to keep the stables and the arenas up to date. Ms. Rose said.

"It's old and needs to be made safer and more modern. Think of it like an old running track made of decomposed granite versus a modern turf track. It's what's expected in today's equestrian events."

During the first stage, SB Equine Evac will purchase needed equipment, including a water truck and a new drag, to maintain the arena. The second phase will address the footing in the Mountain View and warm-up arenas, and the third stage will provide upgrades to as many as three barns.

Please see **RENOVATION** on **A3**



COUNTY TO SET RANKING PROCESS FOR CANNABIS RETAIL APPLICATIONS

By CHRISTIAN WHITTLE
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Santa Barbara County supervisors are approaching the final stages of establishing a selection process for cannabis retail operations that could result in six new storefronts by the end of 2020.

Dennis Bozanich, deputy county executive officer, outlined the process for supervisors on Dec. 17 and explained two amendments expected to be adopted at the next Board of Supervisors meeting on Jan. 14.

Mr. Bozanich presented a follow-up to the discussion that the board had in early November on the options to consider a criteria-based retail selection process, outlining how the process would work and what would be a factor for scoring applications. Based on the recommended changes, Mr. Bozanich presented an amendment to licensing fees.

The amendments are the final steps in establishing a process for selecting which applicants will be among the six cannabis retail operations to be allowed in the county. The supervisors originally considered allowing eight, but decided not to include Vandenberg Village or Cuyama among areas eligible for cannabis retail. Although there will be six opportunities for storefronts in the county, all six might not be approved.

"I guess my philosophy on this is just because you have five opportunities or six, doesn't mean we have to approve five or six. I do think that we still have some discretionary control if something comes along that isn't appropriate for a given community," 1st District Supervisor Das Williams said at the meeting.

Please see **CANNABIS** on **A3**



RAFAEL MALDONADO / NEWS-PRESS

ALL LIT UP: An ode to county Christmas lights. See **A6**.



Local SANTA BARBARA COUNTY NEWS

Rehearing denied in Sherpa Fire case

By PAUL GONZALEZ
NEWS-SPRESS STAFF WRITER

The California Second Appellate District's Sixth Division has denied a rehearing request by Presbyterian Camp and Conference Centers Inc. (PCCC), which argued Santa Barbara Judge Thomas Anderle wrongly denied their pleading to throw out a Cal Fire lawsuit for the costs of suppressing the 2016 Sherpa Fire.

According to court records, the

Court of Appeal denied the request on Dec. 9. The order affirmed the court's Nov. 18 published opinion that found that the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's lawsuit should survive because state law allows corporate liability in wildfire cases.

PCCC, which does business as Rancho La Sherpa, contended it should not be held responsible for the actions of an employee who accidentally started the Sherpa Fire.

"But corporations cannot act

on their own; they "necessarily act through agents." Thus the law draws "no distinction between [a] corporation's 'own' liability and vicarious liability resulting from [the] negligence of [its] agents," wrote the court in its opinion.

Rancho La Sherpa argued the legislative history of the relevant wildfire laws suggests corporations are not meant to be considered persons in wildfire cases.

The Court of Appeal disagreed, explaining that at the time the rel-

evant code sections were written, the legislature must have been aware of existing case law and related enacted laws and it "intended to maintain a consistent body of rules."

"We interpret the words in the context of related statutes, harmonizing them whenever possible," the court wrote.

"It (PCCC) contends the (trial) court erroneously overruled its demurrer because sections 13009 and 13009.1 do not permit it to be held

liable for its employee's negligent or illegal acts. We disagree and deny the petition."

"We also presume the Legislature was aware of the judicial interpretations of those laws, and that it intended that the same interpretation apply to related laws with identical or substantially similar language."

The Sherpa Fire broke out in June 2016 and burned 7,474 acres in the Refugio hills. It was fully contained July 12, 2016.

Santa Barbara County Fire Department investigators determined the Sherpa Fire was started by an employee living on Rancho La Sherpa who was burning a log in his indoor fireplace. The wind picked up, causing smoke to fill the residence, and when the resident carried the burning log to an outside water faucet, hot embers fell to the ground and ignited vegetation.

email: pgonzales@newspress.com



The Equestrian Center at Earl Warren Showgrounds will undergo a three-phase renovation that is set to begin in 2020.

RAFAEL MALDONADO / NEWS-PRESS

Equestrian Center to get long awaited renovation in 2020

RENOVATION

Continued from A1

"And this is just the beginning. There is much more that needs to be done but this is what the (Showgrounds) board has approved so far," said Kathy O'Connor, president of SB Equine Evac.

These improvements are the minimum necessary to bring the big equestrian shows back to Santa Barbara, Ms. O'Connor said.

"They want to come here, every show that comes to Santa Barbara loves it here. We just need to address these footing issues," she said.

SB Equine Evac will establish

an endowment for continued maintenance of the arena footing for 5 years.

The renovations are expected to improve the condition of the grounds and ensure Earl Warren becomes financially sustainable in the long-term.

"The first phase is expected to begin shortly after the first of the new year," said Ms. Rose.

The plans still must be formally approved by the showgrounds board.

Funding for the first phase has already been secured from private donors and more are expected to commit to the project once they see progress on the renovations.

Donations will be received by

Santa Barbara Equine Assistance and Evacuation Team Inc, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Ms. Rose added that the renovations will make conditions safer for animals that need to take shelter at the showgrounds during natural disasters or other emergencies.

"We had over 1,200 animals with us during the Thomas Fire and debris flow, and not just horses. We had everything from a longhorn steer and cows to chickens and goats. This is going to allow us to better serve them," said Ms. Rose.

SB Equine Evac board member Karen Christensen will manage the project with showgrounds CEO Ben Sprague.

An equestrian advisory committee and showgrounds staff will also provide input on the project.

"If there's a time to donate, it's now. This is an important resource for the community and those of us who are passionate about these (equine) events," said Ms. O'Connor.

To donate, visit <http://www.sbequineevac.org/about-us>.

Checks should be made payable to "Santa Barbara Equine Assistance & Evacuation Team, Inc" with the memo being "Showgrounds Equestrian Restoration Fund," and sent to P.O. Box 60335, Santa Barbara, CA 93160.

email: pgonzales@newspress.com



County to set a ranking process for applications

CANNABIS

Continued from A1

Amendments presented on Dec. 17 replaced the ordinance's lottery system with a merit-based application and selection process.

The proposed process would begin with a public meeting in each of the six community plan areas. Following each community plan meeting, the resulting list of neighborhood compatibility priorities will be posted on the county website. The county will then publish a notice of availability of applications and the deadline for their submission at least 30 days prior to their availability.

Applicants would be required to include a business operations proposal and a neighborhood compatibility proposal. Accepted applications may then be forwarded to a

third-party contractor for scoring and ranking based on a scoring sheet.

A second item on Dec. 17 amended licensing fees and established a cannabis retail application fee of \$4,100. Once the application is accepted the fee is non-refundable.

At the meeting, Devon Wardlow, a representative for Santa Barbara's Coastal Dispensary, thanked supervisors for their work but warned against giving an advantage to multi-state cannabis operations over local businesses in the way points are awarded for how much money an applicant has available for the investment.

"For local operators and small businesses, obviously we don't have the same access to capital as huge operators, as multi-state operators do. This ordinance is going to attract a lot of multi-state operators that have a much higher

level of access to capital than local operators do," said Ms. Wardlow.

Ms. Wardlow suggested a \$1 million cap on required capital, which the supervisors said they will consider.

According to the estimated timeline given by Mr. Bozanich, applications could be due in June 2020 and selections could be made by September or October.

The application and selection process is expected to be formally adopted by the supervisors on Jan. 14.

"This might be the last cannabis retail meeting we have with an empty room," noted board Chairman and 5th District Supervisor Steve Lavagnino. "I've got a feeling once we select somebody and have a location we may be receiving more public input."

The meeting was also the last for Mr. Bozanich, who has become

known for his work developing cannabis regulations in Santa Barbara County over the last two years. As Mr. Bozanich moves to Northern California after a decade working with the county, he will be replaced by former Undersheriff Bernard Melekian, who has served as assistant CEO over public safety since September 2018.

In thanking Mr. Bozanich for his work, County Executive Officer Mona Miyasato listed a number of his accomplishments, including work on the Chumash fee-to-trust proposal, county emergency air-support, and the fire tax.

"He's done a lot for this county during his tenure, and I just want to thank him for all his work and wish him well in his next phase of his life," said Ms. Miyasato.

email: cwhittle@newspress.com

Let us give you
a helping hand

Saturday's
HOME &
Garden

HEALTH & FITNESS

7 DAY

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS

Tuesday's
Life
Section