

RESURRECTING
THE
FAIRGROUNDS
IN
CALISTOGA

A proposal
from the
City Council of Calistoga
to the
Board of Supervisors of Napa County

AUGUST 10, 2023

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Calistoga’s Vision, Assumptions	2
Some History—why Napa County Owns the Calistoga Fairgrounds	3
Napa County as Custodian	4
What Repairs Will Cost	14
What Calistogans Have Done	15
How the Fairgrounds Was Used	17
Public Comments—a sampling	19
Calistoga’s Fairgrounds Plan	26
What’s Different	28
At What Price?	29
Benefits of Fairgrounds Revitalization	30
Reassurances	31
Objections, Responses	32

INTRODUCTION

1

For almost a century the Fairgrounds in the center of Calistoga has been integral to the life of our town. Long before any of us was here, the Fairgrounds helped build community and a strong safe town. It encouraged social ties and neighborly interaction. Its recreational activities made Napa County unique and renowned.

For decades these 70 acres delighted generations of families. Napa County is not an inexpensive place to visit, but the Fairgrounds, with activities such as the county fair, sprint car racing, and RV camping, provided recreational opportunities for visitors of widely varying means. For locals the event buildings were the site of countless philanthropic and community gatherings such as fund-raisers and quinceaneras. Not least of all, the fairgrounds has proven itself a critical emergency center that hosted refugees from North Bay wildfires in 2015 as well as an army of firefighters to protect our county in 2020. Even now it is the food distribution center for over 300 needy families every week.

In the future, these traditional activities could be continued—and imaginative new activities undertaken for the benefit of the entire county! The County of Napa and the City of Calistoga have received hundreds of letters testifying to the significance of the Fairgrounds for generations of families. We simply cannot ignore that testimony.

The recent Proposition E before the Calistoga voters to purchase the Fairgrounds failed because the price and associated property tax to repair the buildings was just too high. It was *not* for lack of interest in restoring the fairgrounds. Immediately after the vote both proponents and opponents of E met and agreed that revitalizing the Fairgrounds was important to them all. Calistogans are united and remain deeply committed to restoring the Fairgrounds.

It's a mistake to look at the property as a disposable real estate asset, like we would if we were private investors. No; it's a public trust for public use. Invoking the Surplus Land Act when Calistoga is so demonstrably engaged in this process would be inconsistent with our duty as elected officials to represent our constituents and respect the history of the property. For Calistogans, removing that public space for private residential or commercial development is not an option.

Napa County Supervisors, the City Council of Calistoga is pleased to meet with you, so together we can resurrect this unique public asset, and serve our residents and visitors alike.

CALISTOGA'S VISION, ASSUMPTIONS

2

Vision The Calistoga fairgrounds, an open-space venue for public recreation and community cohesion, is an historical and integral component of the life of the city. Calistoga wants to develop its potential as a resource for residents, an attraction for visitors, and a haven in emergencies.

Assumptions

Calistoga wants to revitalize the entire Fairgrounds-Open Space.

Calistoga doesn't want commercial/residential/civic development there.

Historic activities will be revived to the extent possible/desirable.

Public will participate in decisions.

Napa County and the City of Calistoga are like-minded and united in their desire to serve the public, care for public property, and work together for the public good. We both want this endeavor to succeed.

WHY OPEN SPACE (from *Napa County General Plan* , emphases added)

(Policy ROS-24): A range of recreation opportunities should be provided to serve the diverse recreational interests of children, adults, seniors, families, people with disabilities, and individuals. a) **Where possible, recreational opportunities, and particularly those which are youth oriented, should be provided within walking or bicycle distance, or accessible by public transit, of population centers.**

(Policy ROS-30) : . . . **recreational facilities should be designed and scaled to serve the needs of county residents, recognizing that facilities that serve local residents will also serve visitors, that visitors can help pay for the construction and operation of recreational facilities beneficial to residents,** and that the provision of additional nature based recreational opportunities is an important tool for achieving economic development goals while also reducing potential adverse impacts of tourism.

SOME HISTORY---WHY NAPA COUNTY OWNS THE CALISTOGA FAIRGROUNDS

3

(Staff Report, Joint Meeting Napa County Board of Supervisors and Calistoga City Council, October 4, 2016)

“This land was acquired by Napa County in several transactions between 1935 and 1976. Today, The Napa County Fairgrounds comprises about 70 acres and is located entirely within the City of Calistoga’s boundaries. According to a 1996 Dickenson, Peatman & Fogarty title search and an August 2016 First American title search, the County of Napa owns all the property within the Fairgrounds boundary. The following is a brief chronological history of these acquisitions:

- October 15, 1935: Phillip E. Kelley and his wife, Lilius, sell a 32-acre parcel to the Calistoga Fair Association for \$10 **to help establish a permanent physical home for the Napa County Fair** (emphasis added).
- May 17, 1938: The Association sells the former Kelley property to the County of Napa for \$40,000. *[Note: the property was transferred to the County in order to obtain pari-mutuel funding from the state—Napa Valley Register, 3/9/37, p.1.]*
- January 29, 1951: The County of Napa takes small triangular piece of property of about an acre by condemnation order from several property owners. Price not disclosed on condemnation order document.
- July 2, 1957: Louis Rubbattino and his wife, Tillie, sold about 22 acres, contiguous to the Fairgrounds, to the County of Napa for about \$40,000 **to expand the Fairgrounds** (emphasis added).
- May 18, 1966: The County of Napa takes 1.77 acres by condemnation order from John Logvy, his wife Valentina, and several others for \$13,500.
- January 29, 1976: The County of Napa takes 14.86 acres by condemnation from John Logvy for \$94,800”

Conclusion: The purpose of the transfer of these properties from Calistogans to the County of Napa was, either explicitly or implicitly, to support “permanently” the activities historically associated with a county fair, e.g. community events, recreation, camping, etc.

In its 2017 report what “the Grand Jury found was disturbing: A chronic lack of oversight by Napa County. The condition of the golf course was . . . merely symptomatic of the neglect and lack of maintenance that affected every element of the Fairgrounds properties, including the buildings, the grounds, and all the facilities intended for public use.” (*The Napa County Fairgrounds: The County’s Orphan Asset*, issued by the Napa County Grand Jury, May 24, 2017; p. 3)

“It is clear to the Grand Jury that the Napa County Fairgrounds has been the victim of long term neglect, both in terms of the maintenance of the on-site facilities and in terms of the lack of direction in the purposes to which the site is put. Over decades, the County Board of Supervisors has given little attention to the site, its development, or the uses to which it is put. Instead, the Board has delegated that responsibility to a private organization” with “neither the incentive nor the power to do the systematic maintenance and long term development that such a facility requires. For all its good intentions, the Napa County Fairgrounds Association is unable to do more than maintain current operations while incurring an ever-growing backlog of deferred maintenance.” (*The Napa County Fairgrounds: The County’s Orphan Asset*, issued by the Napa County Grand Jury, May 24, 2017; pp. 10-11)

"The Grand Jury could find no evidence of County investment in the fairgrounds or fairgrounds facilities other than its initial purchase of the various parcels that make up the current fairgrounds." (*The Napa County Fairgrounds: The County’s Orphan Asset*, issued by the Napa County Grand Jury, May 24, 2017; p. 8).

The County did not dispute this statement in its Official Response.

“Karan Schlegel, a former president of the Fair Board, said that over the years, the county has invested very little money into upkeep of the Fairgrounds buildings and its major amenities, the racetrack, RV park and the golf course.

‘Almost everything was done by volunteers,’ she said. ‘My husband, for probably 10 years, mowed the grass at the golf course. People helped out with everything, whether it was mending fences, getting things ready for one of the races or just fixing things at the campground.’

The county didn’t contribute, she said.

‘They didn’t give us any money from their budget. Whatever we earned here was put back into the property. That’s how we sustained everything.’ ”—(*Calistoga Tribune*, June 2, 2023)

light poles



the welcome sign



Fairway golf cart path



Golf club house



Golf cart bridges



Fairway number sign

8



Golf course bench



Corroded fence to race track



Terrible ticket booth roof

This roof is non-functional and needs to be replaced





MAIN HEADING: 15.00 TUBBS KITCHEN

SUB HEADING: 15.01 PAINTED CONCRETE FLOOR



SUB HEADING:

20.08 WOOD SIDING

The exterior wood siding throughout through-out this building as in generally poor condition and needs replacement.



Butler doors



Butler building Ceiling

The suspended ceiling is in need of significant repair.



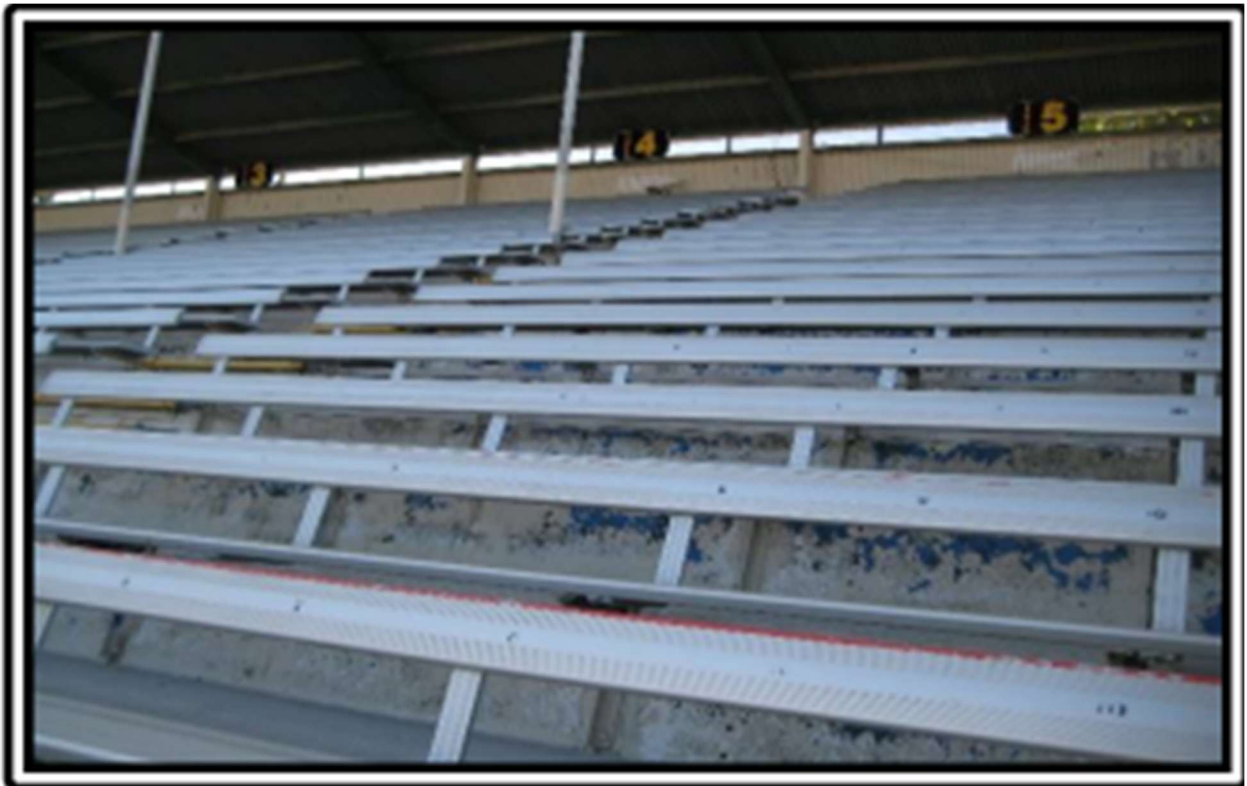
Butler men's restroom



Art center walls



Race track seating



What Repairs Will Cost

14

Reserve Consulting Analysis, in Sausalito, CA, estimates costs of \$22M over ten years to restore the grounds and buildings of the property, excluding the golf course. A sample of the analysis is below. The complete report is available upon request.

9.00 COMPONENT DATA

1.00 FAIRGROUNDS - INFRASTRUCTURE

2.00 SIGNAGE

2.01 Directional, Emergency, Address, Hours 2023 15 PROPOSED 1 LS	\$16,853
2.02 Wood Carved/Painted Sign @ Fairgrounds Admission Bldg. 2023 20 PROPOSED 1 LS	\$3,145.80
2.03 Wood Carved/Painted RV Park Sign 2023 20 PROPOSED 1 LS \$2,022.30	\$2,022
3.00 ASPHALT @ FRONT & WEST SIDE OF TUBBS BUILDING	
3.01 Seal & Stripe 2025 5 POOR Notes 57996 SF \$0.36	\$20,851
3.02 Paint Handicap Signs & Striping 2025 5 POOR 122 EA \$39.32	\$4,797
3.03 Asphalt Repairs w/ Sealing Cycle 2025 5 AS NEEDED 1 LS	\$16,853
3.04 Asphalt Replacement 2025 50 FAIR/POOR 3912 SF \$7.86	\$30,766
3.05 Painted Curbs, Throughout Fairgrounds 2025 5 POOR 1606 LF \$1.40	\$2,255
4.00 ASPHALT @ NORTH SIDE OF TUBBS BUILDING TO GRANDSTAND	
4.01 Seal & Stripe 2025 5 POOR Notes 16128 SF \$0.36	\$5,798
4.02 Paint Handicap Signs & Striping 2025 5 POOR Notes 278 LF \$1.40	\$390
4.03 Asphalt Repairs w/ Sealing Cycle 2025 5 AS NEEDED 1 LS	\$7,865
4.04 Asphalt Replacement 2025 50 FAIR/POOR 16128 SF \$7.86	\$126,839
5.00 ASPHALT @ GRANDSTANDS TO MAINTENANCE BUILDING	
5.01 Seal & Stripe 2025 5 FAIR 24395 SF \$0.36	\$8,770
5.02 Asphalt Repairs w/ Sealing Cycle 2025 5 AS NEEDED 1 LS	\$9,550
5.03 Asphalt Replacement 2025 50 FAIR 15159 SF \$7.86	\$119,218
6.00 ASPHALT @ BUTLER BUILDING & COVERED PARKING AREA	
6.01 Seal & Stripe 2025 5 FAIR 17994 SF \$0.36	\$6,469
6.02 Asphalt Repairs w/ Sealing Cycle 2025 5 AS NEEDED 1 LS	\$6,741
6.03 Asphalt Replacement 2025 45 FAIR/POOR 12594 SF \$7.86	\$99,046
7.00 ASPHALT @ RV PARK	
7.01 Seal & Stripe 2025 5 FAIR 42220 SF \$0.36	\$15,179
7.02 Asphalt Repairs w/ Sealing Cycle 2025 5 AS NEEDED 1 LS	\$8,988
7.03 Asphalt Replacement 1983 50 POOR Notes 36964 SF \$7.86	\$290,703
8.00 CONCRETE	
8.01 Pavers @ Fairgrounds Front Entry 2024 50 FAIR/POOR Notes 4606 SF \$16.85	\$77,623
8.02 Pavers @ Rear of Tubbs Building 2025 50 FAIR/POOR 5040 SF \$16.85	\$84,937
8.03 Slabs @ Grandstand Picnic Area 1963 100 FAIR 5392 SF \$22.47	\$121,158

Calistoga has not had a representative on the BOS for 69 years, since the end of Charles Tamagni's term in 1954. Nonetheless, Calistogans have devoted countless hours worth millions of dollars to the success of the Napa County Fairgrounds. Note this observation from a history of the fairgrounds:

“Why a fair? Let's say there is no fair in Calistoga. This area then would be just another residential district within the city limits of Calistoga. It would seem to me that first **one should consider the investment in property and buildings plus the many improvements that belong to the people that has not cost them a single Napa County tax dollar** [emphasis added]. With today's dollar value you are looking at a million and a quarter dollars.”* (*The History of Napa County Fair and Calistoga Fair Association, 1935 to 1966 Inclusive*, by Roy F. Schoepf, p. 28.)

* equals approximately \$11,775,000 in 2023

And from the Grand Jury report: “The Grand Jury learned that essentially all of the golf course maintenance is being done by **volunteers** [emphasis added] from the Mount St. Helena Men's Club, not by fairgrounds staff.” (*THE NAPA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS: The County's Orphan Asset*, issued by the Napa County Grand Jury, May 24, 2017, p. 8).

The Fairgrounds for decades has been an integral to the social structure and strength of the upvalley. Calistogan Cindy Yant describes some of the historical activity at the fairgrounds:

Many of the organizations/service clubs helped with the development of the facility and all had many events there: Lions, Native Sons of the Golden West, Native Daughters of the Golden West, American Legion, Women's Golf Club, Men's Golf Club, Garden Club, Rock Club, Sharpsteen Museum, Rotary, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Cub Football, Calistoga Little League, Calistoga Wildcat Athletic Boosters, Calistoga Music Boosters, 4-H, FAA, Safe Grad Night, Silverado Riders, NARC/Racing groups, Equestrian groups, Calistoga Firefighters, Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Mountain Volunteer Fire Department, Cal Fire/Napa Fire just to name a few....

Often many people in town belonged to more than one group or club so it is difficult to mention what group they were representing or **volunteering** for or with. And looking at the long list of organizations we can think of, I don't think any of the groups as a whole or any member of these groups hesitated to **volunteer** or help with any event at the fairgrounds. Here are some examples:

FAIR ENTRIES: some years there was a Hospitality Room for the **volunteers** to have food

BOOKS: **Volunteers** would distribute Exhibit books throughout the County to banks and other places, and would address and mail them to previous participants.

TICKET BOOTH - CASHIERS: Most were **volunteers** after 2012 for any Fair event that needed people as cashiers, ticket takers, Beer Servers, or workers at the Rodeo, Beer Booth, or Concert.

ENTERTAINERS: There was probably someone to greet and organize the entertainers with areas for dressing rooms and to answer any questions they might have.

I remember one of the Board members organizing the group of students from Japan to be in the parade and perform at the fair.

EXHIBIT BUILDINGS: **Volunteers** would spend long days accepting entries, labeling and placing them on tables for judging. Sometimes the judging was done with the Judge walking around the tables with a **volunteer**/secretary making notes. Other times the Judges would sit at a table and there were **volunteer** runners that brought exhibits to the table for the judge. Then the displays were brought out and exhibits arranged. During the Fair there were always 2 to 3 **volunteers** in each Exhibit Building. The office was staffed with more people to help during this time, there were always questions on entries and runners going back and forth from the office to exhibit buildings. Bob Pusey (Calistoga Mineral Water) would have a booth and storage area set up under the eaves of the Tubbs Building at the main entrance. Bob had **volunteers** set up the booth, decorate, and bring in the product. Each day **volunteers** would make sure the booth was clean, stocked and sometimes would clean the plaza area. The booth was operated by the Calistoga Music Boosters members and **volunteers** handing out product and the Music Boosters keeping any donations. Also, Soroptimists would have the Art Preview before the opening day of the Fair. And N.D.G.W would organize the Miss Napa County contest. All were **volunteers**. At one time the Napa Co. Historical Society had a Museum room that was open during the Fair likely staffed by a **volunteer**.

EMERGENCY AID: When the Valley Fire incinerated Middletown and hundreds of Lake County residents fled to Napa County, scores of Calistogans responded to aid the evacuees at the Fairgrounds with food, clothing, comfort, and shelter. Local **volunteers** worked day and night for the refugees, *who otherwise would have had to continue their flight to downvalley towns ill-equipped to accommodate their needs.*

HOW THE FAIRGROUNDS WAS USED—building a solid

17

community upvalley

FUNDRAISING EVENTS: these were all by **volunteers**

Rotary - Pancake Breakfast and Hoe Down Dance

Sharpsteen Museum - Fashion Show, Dance; Bingo with Rotary

Lions Club - Dances, Egg Hunt

N.S.G.W. & N.D.G.W - Crab Feed, BBQ

Garden Club - Daffodil Tea

Calistoga Little League - Pancake Breakfast, Opening Day - photo and Long Ball Contest

Calistoga Chamber of Commerce - Appreciation Awards & Dinner

Men's Golf Tournament

Women's Golf Tournament

Soroptimist - Crab Feed

Calistoga Fire Association - Card Party and Bingo Night, New Year's Dinner & Dance

Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Department - Mardi Gras Dinner & Dance

Mountain Home Volunteer Fire Department - Dance

Calistoga High School Education Auction

Silverado Riders - Horse Shows, Rodeos and Gymkhanas

USE & EVENTS FOR YOUTH:

Calistoga High School Graduation

Calistoga High School Graduation all night party (safe & sane)

Classrooms when the schools needed more space

Cub Football games and practices - Tucker Building bathrooms and locker room were built for the Cub players with a donation from a local

Calistoga High School Games and practices for football, baseball and soccer and golf.

At one time there was a Youth Summer Camp for horse handling

MEETING PLACE: Boy/Cub Scouts, Rotary, Lions, American Legion, N.S.G.W. (Native Sons of the Golden West), Garden Club, Rock Club

COMMUNITY EVENTS:

Christmas Bazaar - to benefit non-profit organizations.

Beer & Sausage Festival

Mustard Festival

18

Car Shows

Antique Show & Sale

Classic Horse Show

Sprint Car Races - concession stand benefited Calistoga Athletic Boosters
(previously operated by American Legion who likely built the
concession stand, with the Lions Club building the BBQ Area)

Napa County Fire & Cal Fire - Appreciation Dinner

Food Bank - Food distribution center

Napa County - COVID vaccination location

EMERGENCY USES:

Cooling Center - during recent power outages and PSPS events

Red Cross - as an Evacuation Center (during heavy rains the Napa river floods
along Cedar Street)

Valley Fire Evacuation Center for Middletown

Cal Fire/Napa County Fire – firefighters' camp during wildfires

There were also numerous weddings, wedding receptions, family reunions,
family BBQ's, quinceanera celebrations, camping reunions for travel groups,
and memorial services (some that filled the Tubbs Hall).

PUBLIC COMMENTS—a sampling

19

June 21, 2023

The Fairgrounds have been a vital part of life in Calistoga and the Napa Valley since it was established in 1935. For the Napa County Supervisors to not understand and be supportive of the importance the facility has for the locals when so much of Napa County is geared to the Tourist industry is absurd. The entire facility, as it once was, is a gem for the area to be used and enjoyed by locals and visitors in times of fun and in times of need. For the Napa County Supervisors to not be aware of this need in the upper Napa County is a very sad thought. I would hope that each group in negotiations could come to a favorable resolution for the Napa County Fairgrounds to be rejuvenated and return to what the founders set out to establish.

Best Regards,

Cindy Yant

May 16, 2023

Dear Napa County Board of Supervisors,

...from the 2017 Napa County Grand Jury Report: “the Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors assume a proactive position and take full responsibility for the future of the Fairgrounds, and that it work cooperatively with the City of Calistoga to transform the facility from a relic of a fading tradition into a vital addition to the upper Napa Valley community.”

I want to highlight the original 32-acre transaction in 1935: “October 15, 1935: Phillip E. Kelley and his wife, Lilius, sell a 32-acre parcel to the Calistoga Fair Association for \$10 to help establish a permanent physical home for the Napa County Fair.”

This transaction was conducted to create a PERMANENT home for the Napa County Fair. What has happened to this commitment? The County has abdicated its duty to provide a PERMANENT home for the Napa County Fair. The County has lost sight of what their obligation is in relation to this piece of land. If the County is not ready and willing to upgrade this piece of land back to its intended purpose . . . as the permanent home for the Napa County Fair (and other related events), then the County needs to be held responsible for its abdication of responsibility. . . .

Given all of this, I do not see how the Board can look any resident of Calistoga in the eye and legitimately think that you offered a fair deal, nor can you legitimately look us in the eye and say you are really going to sell it “to the highest bidder.”

We have heard numerous times that the County has an obligation to maximize the value of its assets. You know what would extract maximum value? Offering a deal to the city that does not put our financial solvency, which we have worked hard to achieve, in jeopardy for years to come. I am not suggesting that the County give us anything for free. But, selling “to the highest bidder” is absolutely not maximizing value. You are not in the real estate business, as much as you think you are. You are in the governing business. Governing includes providing happy, healthy communities for which people to work and live in. Selling to the “highest bidder” would

not maximize the *net* value for the county. If, by structuring a transaction that puts too much financial burden on Calistoga, you allow one of only five incorporated cities in the county to struggle . . . you will . . . minimize the value of the transaction by now having a struggling city that is the lifeline of the economy in the northern part of the county.

Thank you,

Doug Allan

Calistoga

July 6, 2023

Subject: Urgent Request to Return Calistoga's Fair Grounds to the City

Dear Board of Supervisors,

I write to you today as a concerned resident of Calistoga, urging the County of Napa to reconsider the current state and future of the Napa County Fair Grounds located in Calistoga, California. It has come to my attention that the fairgrounds, once a cherished community asset, are deteriorating at an alarming rate under the county's stewardship.

As you may recall, the fairgrounds were sold by the City of Calistoga to the County of Napa with the understanding that they would be maintained and preserved for the benefit of the community. However, it is disheartening to witness the fairgrounds fall into disrepair, losing value and neglecting the potential they hold for our city.

I implore the Board of Supervisors to consider a fair and just resolution to this matter by returning the fairgrounds to the City of Calistoga for the same price it was sold to the County. By doing so, Calistoga would be granted the opportunity to take responsibility for the fairgrounds' upkeep and restoration, ensuring that this valuable community asset is preserved for future generations.

The Napa County Fair Grounds have long been an integral part of Calistoga's identity, serving as a venue for cherished events that have united our community. The fairgrounds hold immense potential for hosting a variety of cultural, recreational, and educational activities that can bring residents and visitors together, fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

It is evident that the fairgrounds' current state not only tarnishes their historical significance but also diminishes the overall appeal of our city. By returning the fairgrounds to Calistoga, we can tap into the community's collective resources, passion, and commitment to restoring this invaluable asset to its former glory.

I understand that decisions of this nature require careful consideration and 21
evaluation of multiple factors. However, I urge the Board of Supervisors to prioritize the
well-being and aspirations of the Calistoga community, which has been deeply affected by
the diminishing condition of the fairgrounds. Returning the fairgrounds to our city would
not only rectify the present decline but also instill a renewed sense of hope and unity.

I kindly request that you give serious consideration to this matter and initiate discussions
with the City of Calistoga to negotiate a solution that would transfer ownership of the
fairgrounds back to the city. By doing so, you would demonstrate a genuine commitment to
preserving the cultural heritage and communal spirit of our beloved Calistoga.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing issue. I trust that you will carefully weigh the
concerns raised by Calistoga residents and make a decision that supports the best interests
of our community. I eagerly await a positive response that acknowledges our request for
the return of the Napa County Fair Grounds to Calistoga.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Skinner

From: Ctwiley <ctwiley@aol.com>
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 10:03 PM
To: Donald Williams <DWilliams@ci.calistoga.ca.us>
Subject: Calistoga Speedway

To Whom It May Concern:

In these days of desperately needing to find a way to spend "quality family time"
together, this is exactly the place that is needed. In my younger years, my husband and
myself and our two sons went to "the races" every Saturday night, whether it be at
Calistoga or Petaluma Speedways. We spent quality family time and made many
friends along the way and bonded. This is what is desperately needed nowadays by
families.

In later years, my husband and myself often drove to Calistoga (we live in Sonoma)
and parked the car and had a lovely dinner in downtown Calistoga, then walked up to
the speedway to watch a wonderful summer evening of racing. Then headed back
downtown for a nice dessert and then drove on home. If more families spent evenings
like this bonding together and sharing great memories, which our family still does, the
world would be a better place. The Calistoga Speedway is a landmark and a tradition -
don't throw this away. We often saw Joe Montana and his family in the grandstands
enjoying a night out. Such tradition!

I'm aware that the City of Calistoga will soon request a renewed conversation regarding the acquisition of the Napa County Fairgrounds. I support the City of Calistoga in its effort to preserve what is, in effect, a center of community life in Calistoga. 22

This historic property in Napa Valley has served residents for over 80 years. Some of us who don't live in the City or County also have strong and long-time ties to the Fairgrounds. Calistoga Speedway, which attracts fans and racers from throughout California, the US, and the world, is renowned for the quality of its events. The Louie Vermeil Classic honors the legacy of a local family that devoted decades of their life to the success of both the Fairgrounds and the Speedway. Race fans have honored that effort for over a decade, a tradition we are eager to continue. Their contribution and many others deserve to be honored and not forgotten.

Please make a dedicated effort to draft a financial plan that is within reach of the City of Calistoga, which will ultimately benefit the County as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,
Steve and Nancy Weiler

Social Media (notice how many are from beyond Calistoga)

June 20, 2023

Fairgrounds on Grant street. Fire hazard.....the rest of fairgrounds looks the same. Napa County definitely not doing it's job. **David Shaw** • Calistoga

Everyone let our new supervisor know what we think about the county letting it go downhill. Not acceptable. **Larry Swearingen** • Pope Valley

Yes , I drove by the fairgrounds last week and was surprised at the condition. Sad that the county has overlooked this mess ! **Margaret Mangan** • Calistoga

It's a disgrace. **Margaret L.** • Calistoga

Shame on Napa County. **Lori Baker** • Calistoga

I drove through there just this evening....made me very sad...all the memories of the grounds looking so festive and alive with colors of the flowers and decorations during fair

July 1, 2023. David Shaw: 30 years ago I would probably be on my second beer and headed to fairgrounds for an afternoon of fun. Seeing old friends walking the grounds looking at exhibits and attractions, and getting ready for a night of sprint car racing. Or a well known musical act with a first class fireworks show afterwards. If you never got to experience fair time in Calistoga then it's impossible to explain how our little town would let it's hair down and welcome strangers and locals alike in a once in a lifetime experience every year over the fourth. Man I miss it!

Tara Pelter

- Knights and Franz Valleys

We miss the fair and spring car races so much. Such wonderful memories.

Jan Montelli

- Alpine Valley

ALWAYS GONNA MISS THAT! WAS SO MUCH FUN!!

Jack Martin

- Calistoga

Going to the hardware store weeks in advance to buy books of discount ride tickets for the kids. Fun for all. Let's work together to bring it back.

Carol Fellion

- Deerpark Estates

Those days were the highlight of our summer.

Angie Benjamin

- Napa, CA

I feel so lucky to have grown up in Calistoga during the years we had the fair, large parade, sprint car races and amazing fireworks. Thanks to the hard working fair board directors, there was always top music acts, a large carnival and cool exhibits, I'm sure I have the fair to thank for my love of live music with friends. I hope the community can bring at least some of that back one day. After all, Fairtime is Funtime!

Lisa Carey

- Calistoga

Small town Americana 4th has definitely taken a back seat not just here but across the country and it's sad. The Calistoga Fairgrounds was a real gem, the definition of summertime

Andrew Smith

- Zinfandel

Me too, some of my earliest memories are of sitting on the infield between races looking straight up watching fireworks launched from the golf course. Also all the Carnies trying to get you to play their games in the carnival midway. Also carnival food is the best! Giant corn dogs, cotton candy, and of course turkey legs!! Ah, the good old days!!!

Andrew Smith

...and funnel cakes and snow cones!

Sara Anderson

- Calistoga

I used to enter the competitions. Won lots of ribbons. I miss those, too. So many creative 24 entries.

Cassandra Gonder

- Mt St. Helena

I know I miss the fair I wanted so bad to bring my daughter to it like when I was a kid now we have a laser show 🤖

Chase Neal

- Upper North East Windsor

100% miss the sprints. Best place to watch them. I never went to the fair but coming from a racing family I saw the outlaws every year.

Marilyn Vix

- Calistoga

@Chase

I hear the stories now. I hope we're still able to buy the fairgrounds and bring it all back.

Diane Taylor

- Deer Park

I also, miss those days!

Jenele Saunders

- Calistoga

Me too

Kirsten Magario

- Rutherford Hill

I miss us it too.went to the races a lot.great memories 💕

Cassandra Chastain

- Angwin

Lots of fun times we're had at the fairgrounds. Don't forget the crab feeds!

Cindy Y.

- Calistoga

To David Shaw Thank you for the years you served on the Napa County Fair Association Board and as President for the years of 1988, 1995 and 2000 your time and dedication.

... [See more](#)

Carol Fellion

- Deerpark Estates

Cindy

Thank you for highlighting Dave. It does take a village to prepare for all the fun. us 💕

Leslie Stanton

- St. Helena II

I won a blue ribbon for the largest pumpkin and my baby son got a trophy for being the fastest boy crawling back toward their mom (crying the whole way!).

Cathy Bohan • Calistoga

the Diaper Derby!!!☺

Lily Berlin

- Mill Creek

I remember ♡

Richard Crowell

- Berryessa Estates

Why did those activities go away

David Shaw

Author

- Calistoga

Richard

County closed fairgrounds and want to sell it to city for many millions. Sad part is city gave it to county for a few thousand back in 30's so it would receive state funding.

Frank Murphy

- Hidden Valley Lake

Miss that whole scene, especially the races

Susan Bernardi-LeStrange

- South HVL and Ranchos

The old fair board members who had that fair up and running are more than likely doing flip flops in their graves as what has happened to the Napa County Fair So sad to see what has happened.

Kira Matthews

- Calistoga

Me too ! Really miss the old fairground festivities on the 4th, and the sound of sprint cars and music on many other occasions. Calistoga use to be such a fun and friendly town.

Melissa Wilson

- Vintage Greens & Vintana

Me too!!!!

tracy odetta

- Clearlake, CA

SO TRUE! Couldn't of said it better

Frank Murphy

- Hidden Valley Lake

Back in the 50s the parade was huge, sprint car racing was awesome, I remember seeing Roger Collins in concert there

yvonne hove

- Calistoga

me too!!

Acquisition, Development, Operation

Improve property as funds allow. Hire professional operators when appropriate.

First Steps, upon acquisition

Hire Fairgrounds Manager

Appoint citizens' oversight committee

Commence clean-up, continue maintenance, of property

Continue existing revenue-producing operations

Start operations that generate income (e.g. RV Park, weddings)

Next Steps, as revenue allows

Make event buildings available

Seek operator for speedway

Consider golf options (3 – 6 holes; driving range, pitch-&-putt, "top golf," pee-wee golf)

Consider other options: new event buildings, Airstream lodging; skateboard park, dog shows, flea market; movie nights; classic car show; music festival; food-wine festival; Frisbee-golf; food-trucks; etc

Possible Sources of Funds

Ordinary city revenue

Revenue from operations/rents at the fairgrounds

Fundraising; naming rights

Increased sales tax

Calistoga General Fund Budget Summary 2023-24 (in millions)

27

Revenues

Property taxes	\$2.3
Sales taxes	1.4
TOT	11.5
Vehicle, in-lieu, fees,	1.0
Other fees	<u>1.8</u>
Total	18.0

Expenses

General Support Services	2.3
Police	3.8
Fire	2.5
Public Works	1.9
Recreation	1.2
Building/Planning	1.1
Economic Development	.5
Other (legal, com'ty services, etc)	<u>3.6</u>
Total	16.9

We have met extensively with the public. We are careful with our budget but a high price for the fairgrounds would be untenable and irresponsible. We can't develop property for the public welfare if we're paying a high mortgage. We all want this project to succeed.

A property transaction between public agencies need not mimic a transaction in the private sector, nor be primarily about real estate and “market” price. It must be about public service and the wishes and welfare of the community. We should consider a fairgrounds transaction *not as a private property sale (to maximize profit)*, but as a *transfer of the operating authority of a public asset from one agency to another*.

From the beginning, the primary point or purpose of ownership of the property was to foster and sustain the county fair. It's understood the County is legally the “owner” of the land—but conceptually it's the *custodian* of the land held for a particular purpose. The legal distinctions between government jurisdictions (e.g. a city, a county) obscure the fact that regardless of which jurisdiction “owns” the property, it really belongs to the public.

Calistogans sold the property to the County expressly to be used as a fairgrounds. It was sold inexpensively because it was essentially encumbered by the expectation that it would remain a fairgrounds for public recreation. A sale of the fairgrounds for profit for another purpose would betray the public trust and the original purpose, intention, and expectations of the property. It would be like selling property in a land trust. *The fairgrounds should be considered land held by the County essentially in trust for public use as open undevelopable space, not as a marketable real estate asset.*

From the public's perspective . . . the people already own the property. They just want their government representatives to manage it; they care less which government. They do not agree that changing management from one agency to another—which is all we're really talking about—should cost them money.

What's different? We have new city council, a new board of supervisors. We want to start a new conversation without reference to the old agreement. Unlike a real estate transaction between two parties in the private sector (to maximize return etc.), our purpose is different—to bring the property back to public use. We want to work *with you, together—to get us government agencies out of the way*—so the people can bring it back into use again!

AT WHAT PRICE?

29

What did the County pay for the property? The County bought the fairgrounds for the equivalent of approximately \$1,938,882.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Value in 2023 dollars</u>
1938	32acres	\$40K	\$860,604
1957	22acres	\$40K	\$431,833
1966	1.8acres	\$13.5K	\$139,796
1976	<u>14.9acres</u>	\$94.8K	<u>\$506,649</u>
	70.7acres		\$1,938,882

Our Proposal: We propose to buy the property for \$2,000,000. That would make the County whole for its investment. *Any sale price over \$2M would amount to a profit for the County at the expense of Calistogans.*

Previous valuations of the Fairgrounds compared it to property available for development. But a proper valuation acknowledges it is encumbered by the expectation that it remain zoned for public use as a fairground and is unavailable for development. The historical Profit & Loss Statements show no significant profits from that property—another indicator its true value is minimal.

The property was transferred to the County *primarily in order to obtain pari-mutuel funding from the state*. For all intents and purposes subsequently, Calistogans—though no longer the legal owner—operated the property. The transfer of ownership from Calistogans to the county was a device to improve funding for the fair for the benefit of the entire county. It wasn't a real estate investment to be exploited. Treating it that way betrays the original purpose of the transfer to the County.

This proposed transaction would essentially be simply a return of the property back to its origin. (In a sense, we—Calistogans and all the public—already own the fairgrounds: we're one public. Transferring the fairgrounds to Calistoga is essentially just people transferring property we already own back to ourselves.)

Let us be united in our desire to serve the public, care for public property, and work together for the public good. We want this endeavor to succeed.

Benefits of Fairgrounds Revitalization

The foremost benefits are vital for the county:

- 1) **sense of purpose**—a project uniting a community provides meaning, direction, enthusiasm, and spirit that will infect the entire region.
- 2) **social**—an active fairgrounds means people working and playing together, building community
- 3) **financial**—visitors will spend money throughout the county and contribute to economic diversification (e.g. RVers, golfers, race-track people, other kinds of events)

This fairgrounds is a *potential source of social capital* that's bursting at the seams to energize the region. It only needs to be unharnessed.

REASSURANCES

31

Selling the property for \$2M . . . the County loses nothing.

Selling the property for \$2M . . . costs the County nothing.

Selling the property for \$2M *saves* the County maintenance expenses (\$15,000/month?)

If the County transferred the property to Calistoga for \$2M—*who would object?*
There is no public clamor to sell the property for as much as possible to Calistogans. The mayors representing more than half the population of the county (Napa, Calistoga) are on record supporting a transaction of this nature.

Transferring care of the property to Calistoga with the expectation that it will be revitalized as a fairgrounds honors the original agreements that the property permanently remain open space for public use.

The 70 acres is an asset; but the greater asset for Napa is a strong, healthy, vital upvalley community, which is available with the transfer of fairgrounds responsibility to Calistoga.

We have met extensively with Calistoga public in many meetings.

Everyone wins: Upon transfer of ownership, Calistoga relieves the County of its upvalley property burden and can commence revitalizing the Fairgrounds. The County is returned its original investment and recognized to be fair and honorable in its commitments; supportive of local communities; and deeply interested in their welfare.

**This asset is returned to public use asap.*

**Repays County for its initial investment plus the improvements it made*

**Emergency use guaranteed for entire county (recall Middletown evacuees who didn't have to search downvalley for refuge).*

**Calistoga is energized to undertake this new project to benefit entire county*

Objection: The County needs money to buy Skyline Park or other property.

Response: It looks bad and makes no sense anyway to peddle property upvalley, which has a large constituency and high community interest, in order to obtain property or services downvalley or elsewhere. The point of holding public property is not to make money . . . if it was, there's a portfolio of park property that could be sold!

The County has received hundreds of communications from the public asking for the revitalization the Calistoga Fairgrounds. That can't be ignored. The best course is to transfer the Fairgrounds property to Calistoga and let us assume the obligation to serve the public with that property as it was intended.

Objection: Just \$2M?—this is a sweet deal for Calistoga.

Response: Calistoga's purchase of the property for \$2M would be astute if we were going to turn around and sell it for its development value. But we're not. This is different from a transaction in the private sector. We're going to invest our community funds and energy in the property in the service of the greater public. We expect there will be benefits to the county from this upvalley activism: greater community cohesion, diverse recreational opportunities.

In the unlikely event that Calistoga would sell the property for a profit, we are prepared to agree to share the proceeds with the County.

Objection: \$2M is too low. \$10M is a more reasonable price for valuable property.

Response: If the fairgrounds is sold for anything above \$2M, the sweet deal will be the county's. It would pocket a gain after having paid just \$2M and merely holding the fairgrounds. The county never invested resources in the fairgrounds. It was never a burden to county taxpayers; there is no return Calistogans owe the County. It would be unfair to expect from Calistogans more for the property than the County itself paid.

The transaction needs to be understood not as a private sector sale, but simply as a transfer of operating authority from one agency to another. The county has many issues to deal with besides its obligation to the Calistoga fairgrounds. This transaction would relieve the County of its implicit obligation to promote the fairgrounds. It would make the County whole on its purchase investment. And it would provide Calistoga the opportunity to develop the property for the benefit of all Napa County residents and visitors.

Objection: County Supervisors have a fiduciary duty to serve the entire county.

Response: Calistoga's focus is not merely self-serving. We wish to sustain the fairgrounds in the public trust for all the citizens of Napa County and beyond, not exclusively for Calistoga residents. Please do not look at this as simply an up-valley matter. Your actions are critical in establishing this alliance for all your constituents. We ask that you join us in the highest spirit of cooperation in attaining this goal that with certainty benefits all of us.

Besides the fiduciary responsibility to our constituents, we have an even greater responsibility to maintain and enhance the quality of life for all Napa Valley residents. The fairground amenities (golf course, race track, RV park, horse pavilion and event spaces) are not exclusively for the use of Calistoga residents, nor are the amazing events that happen there from the 4th of July fair to the sprint car races. They are facilities enjoyed by everyone in the county, and the home to many events that make life in Napa Valley so rich (not just wineries and tourist attractions). And the Fairgrounds as an emergency shelter has shown itself to be vital in recent years. Calistoga is willing to take on the financial and management burden of these facilities, and continue to offer them for everyone in the county to enjoy.

33

Objection: Is there a downside to rejecting Calistoga's proposal?

Response: If BOS doesn't accept \$2M offer, Calistogans may say---The County wants us to pay a premium for the privilege of taking back the property which we transferred to them at minimal cost to run a fair (which the County didn't do; Calistogans did). As "owner" the County gave the fairgrounds little money or attention. It delegated operation of the property to upvalley volunteers. When state funding dried up and the volunteers were unable to maintain it, the County let it go derelict. Then the County has the temerity to try to make a profit off the property on the backs of the residents of the town that transferred it in trust to the County in the first place, believing the County would cultivate it as intended as a fairground

**Please read all this document including public comments; don't just skip to the money part. Reiterate: it's not a real estate transaction so much as a return of the public property to public use.*

**Public hasn't seen this document but it's mostly in the public domain. Public knows county "paid" just \$2M for FG. You may release it or keep it confidential, as you wish. We'll email it to the others on the BOS also.*