

Community Members Upset with Transition of Ace Arena for Vehicle Storage

June 19, 2025



Members of the equine community have expressed disappointment and disapproval of the Del Norte Fair Board intent to transition the ACE Arena into a revenue-generating vehicle storage facility. Parents are concerned their children will have no place to rodeo practice or livestock train during the rainy winter months.

Del Norte Sheriff Garrett Scott, speaking as a private citizen and as a member of the Lake Earl Grange, and not the Sheriff's Department, released the following statement. "I attended the Del Norte County Fair Board meeting (last week) after receiving many phone calls from community members concerned that the ACE Arena (enclosed) was likely to be transition to a storage facility. As a local Lake Earl Grange Board member and Rodeo leader for our local youth, I attended public comment along with many folks to ask the fair board members to reconsider the transaction. I expressed that I was more than happy to be on any committees to help keep the Arena open for our youth. After some discussion and public comment, the Fair of board has moved to discuss the transition at the next Fair Board meeting. I felt as though the Board was receptive and

appreciated the public input. I did not feel there was negative from the Board and willingness to discuss and reconsider.”

Scott continued, “My opinion on the transition is the impact it will have on our youth who use the facility for so many livestock opportunities and rodeo practices. The ACE arena is the only covered Arena in Del Norte County and there would no longer be any place for our youth to practice for rodeo events during the winter months. I am more than willing to solutions to the costs associated with the maintenance and use of the ACE Arena. Potentially, one of our local groups such as the Lake Earl Grange, may be willing to enter into an agreement with the Fair Board to manage the facility; however, both groups would have to come to the table to discuss an, of course, require majority votes from both boards.”

The Fair Board released the following statement from Kara Miller, President of the 41st District Agricultural Association:

“Recently, the 41st District Agricultural Association Board- the Del Norte Fair Board- made a difficult decision in the best interest to the long-term future of the Del Norte Fairgrounds. It should be said that more tough decisions are coming.

Earlier this year, the board unanimously voted to use the indoor arena for long-term public storage. It is estimated this decision will bring in approximately \$30,000 in revenue, annually, with minimal expenses.

The facility has been used for horse riders to exercise their mounts, especially during the winter months; however, over the past three years, usage and revenue generated and dropped dramatically.

In 2023, usage of the arena earned about \$5,600. Last year, the figure dropped to \$3,900. This year the board expects income to be less than \$2 000. In April, the arena was used by registered riders just four times.

Outside arena usage, with proper paperwork and insurance remains available

Admission prices to the fair have increased modestly over the past few years but creating a more sustainable interim revenue source will help keep the admission costs down for the whole community.

Please be assured these decisions are not taken lightly. But without these tough calls, the future of the fair and the Fairgrounds will be bleak.”

The fair board and the equine community plan to hold additional meetings in an effort to find common ground.