SOLANO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC) MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING ON January 9, 2008

The meeting of the Solano County Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) was held at the Department of Agriculture and UC Cooperative Extension Building, Downstairs Conference Room, 501 Texas Street, Fairfield, CA.

Members Present:

Bruce Brazelton, Barbara Comfort, Jeff Dittmer, Donald Johnson, Craig Leathers, Russell Lester, Susan Lippstreu, Betty Mason, Al Medvitz, Mary Helen Seeger.

Others Present:

Carole Paterson UC Cooperative Extension
Birgitta Corsello Resource Management

Kathy Gibson CAO

Sabine Goerke-Shrode Aide to Supervisor Spering

Jeff Henderson

Mike Yankovich Resource Management
Fred Zaragoza Aide to Supervisor Reagan
Ed Padilla Resource Management

Jon Fadhl Jovia Farms
Don Pippo Pippo Ranch

Item 1 Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 2:10. A guorum was not present.

Item 2 Introductions of Members and Guests

Members and Guests in attendance introduced themselves.

Item 3 Changes and Approval of the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda offered.

Item 4 Review/Approval of the Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2007

Due to the absence of a quorum, the Committee moved on to Item 5a New Business. At the conclusion of this item at 2:20, a quorum was present due to the arrival of another Committee member. At this time it was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2007 meeting as presented. The motion carried on a unanimous vote of the members present.

NOTE: After approval of the minutes, Mr. Medvitz arrived and stated that although the minutes had been approved, he wanted it to go on record that some statements with regard to the Farm Bureau portion of the minutes were misrepresentative. Committee member Mary Helen Seeger pointed out that these statements were made by Mr. Richter, and the minutes did not reflect that the Committee necessarily agreed with the statements.

Item 5 New Business

(a) Report on Board of Supervisors Meetings – Board Topics Related to the Subject Matter of the AAC – Birgitta Corsello

Ms. Corsello stated that there really had not been pertinent items before the Board since the last AAC meeting. She informed the Committee that next regular Board meeting is January 22. January 15 is a special meeting where the Board of Supervisors will be reviewing the Williamson Act contract modifications. The Planning Commission has recommended no changes based on language. However, there will be possible recommended changes with regard to horses defined as ag use along the same lines as Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties.

There were no land use or general plan topics that went to the Board per se on January 8th, but the Board received the Solano Ag Futures Project presentation. The Board accepted the report and referred recommendations back to the Agricultural Commissioner/Resource Management, Cooperative Extension and the AAC. In February the General Plan Update will come back to AAC with recommendations. Ms. Corsello stated that the Board wants to move forward with as many of the recommendations from the Solano Ag Futures Project as possible.

Ms. Corsello stated that the Board reaffirmed their commitment to funding and supporting two positions targeted at supporting agriculture. They asked that a draft description of what those two positions might entail be brought before them at the February 5th meeting. The position descriptions will revolve around agricultural advocacy and marketing. Information will be gathered from similar positions that exist in Marin, El Dorado, San Luis Obispo, and Placer counties (to name a few). The Board does not want to wait, and wants funds allocated to these positions. If approved, the HR director will move quickly to set salaries, and allocate positions. It's possible that the positions could be filled by as early as May of this year.

Mr. Leathers stated that he attended the January 8th meeting, and said that the Board seemed very impressed by the Solano Ag Futures Project presentation, and there was little discussion. It was noted that Supervisors Vasquez, Spering, and Silva had supported these positions in June of 2007, but wanted to wait until the Solano Ag Futures Project was completed to move forward.

(b) Report on Japanese Dodder-Linda Pinfold

Ms. Pinfold passed out brochures and maps and began her report on Japanese Dodder. She informed the AAC that in December there were two finds of Japanese Dodder. This is an exotic parasitic plant native to Japan. This particular dodder has a wide range of appetite and likes a variety of woody-type plants. It has no natural enemies and has an accelerated growth rate; sometimes as much as six inches per day.

The first find of Japanese Dodder was at Allen Witt Park near the condos that share a fence line with the park. It is integrated with English ivy at this fence line. The other location is in Suisun City at the Mike Day Park, and is integrated in blackberry bushes; this is a more extensive infestation. On the scale of the CDFA pest rating system, this is considered an A-rated pest. As a point of reference, other A-rated pests are the Mediterranean fruit fly and Light Brown Apple Moth. CDFA sent out postcard mailings to people in Solano County, and subsequently the Japanese Dodder was recognized.

In response to the infestation, Ms. Pinfold met with all parties (City of Fairfield, City of Suisun, as well as the president of the homeowners association for the condos). All

parties have been issued hold notices, which means the infected plant material cannot be moved without working with the Agriculture Department. Ms. Pinfold stated that what makes this pest bad is that it propagates readily from vegetation. It has does not produce from seed, but it is brittle and can break and fall off. If it lands on a viable host, it will take over that host. If a piece falls and does not land on a host, it does not root nor produce roots.

Ms. Pinfold said that it necessary to monitor the Japanese Dodder over a two-year period. If no more is found at the end of that time period, the state will declare eradication. Presently Ms. Pinfold is in the process of securing bids to have the host plants and Japanese Dodder removed. The best scenario goal is for the Japanese Dodder and hosts to be removed by the end of January. The Committee asked why the removal is not presently happening since this is such an aggressive pest. Ms. Pinfold stated that she has met with the parties involved, and the parties involved understand that they are dealing with an A-rated pest. However, the best plan for removal is through private contractors, and a bid process must be followed before hiring a company.

Ms. Pinfold stated that when Sacramento County dealt with Japanese Dodder, they were able to prune out the host, and this is the most effective way of eradication. However, in this case the dodder is intermixed with blackberries and English ivy, and in this case the entire host and pest needs to be removed. The Agriculture Department does not have the necessary tools at our disposal to go in and kill the Japanese Dodder. This is why the Agriculture Department is working with CDFA to follow the process and procedure that is normally used.

How do you identify the exotic Dodder from native Dodder? Ms. Pinfold said that it is relatively easy to tell the difference, but all samples are sent to CDFA for identification.

In response to a question from a Committee member, Ms. Pinfold stated that the plant cannot be burned. Both the host and dodder should be removed; once removed, it will be moved to a landfill facility for disposal. It will be double-bagged and deep buried. An Agriculture Department employee will accompany the contractor to the landfill site when this occurs.

<u>Item 6 Continuing Business</u>

(a) General Plan Update/Review of CAC Recommendations Related to Ag-Jeff Henderson

Mr. Henderson presented the agricultural portion of the General Plan Update (Board of Supervisors Workbook, Agriculture, Preliminary Goals, Policies, and Programs) via PowerPoint presentation. Throughout this presentation he frequently commented that many things in this agricultural section were influenced by the Solano Agricultural Futures Project report produced by UC Davis. The Committee members each received a hard copy of the presentation.

As Mr. Henderson moved through the presentation, the Committee at times asked for clarification, and then made comments and recommendations for correction. Mr. Henderson verbally acknowledged the information and made notes, stating that the Committee's input would be included when this document was presented before the Board of Supervisors on January 15, 2008. He also stated that once he revised the document to include the Committee's input, he would e-mail it to the Agriculture Department, would forward it to the Committee members.

The Committee's input is as follows:

1) Policy AR-4: Application for a development permit that changes the use of land from agriculture to a nonagricultural use, regardless of the General Plan designation.

AAC Input: The intent of this policy should allow for exemptions for agri-tourism and agricultural processing uses on agriculturally designated lands. The intent of the policy is to prevent agricultural land conversion, not to present regulatory barriers to agri-tourism and agricultural processing. The implementation program accompanying this policy has been updated to incorporate these comments.

 Policy AR-5: Create an Agricultural Resource Overlay designation on the Land Use Diagram to identify lands in which mitigation for farmland conversion be encouraged.

AAC Input: The Committee indicated that the proposed farmland mitigation strategy and overlay needs to be designed to provide for just compensation to participating landowners. AAC indicated it is important to ensure that the program does not result in degraded agricultural property values. It was recommended that the word "required" should be substituted for the word "encouraged".

3) AR-19 Require agricultural practices to be conducted in a manner that minimizes **effects** on soils, air and water quality, and marsh and wildlife habitat.

AAC Input: Add the word "harmful" before "effects".

4) AR-21 Promote natural carbon sequestration to offset carbon emissions by supporting non-traditional farming methods (such as no-till farming, crop rotation, cover cropping, and residue farming), encouraging the use of natural vegetation within urban-agricultural buffer areas, and protecting grasslands from conversion to other non-agricultural uses. (Staff addition to reflect prior Board input regarding air quality and climate change.)

AAC Input: Change "non-traditional" to "sustainable", replace "natural" with "appropriate", and take out "other" from in front of "other non-agricultural uses".

At this point it was requested by the Committee that a policy be added to support nursery crop industries, as well as a policy to encourage greater interaction between farming practices and habitat conservation.

5) AR-25 Use the regions to direct marketing or economic efforts. Encourage landowners and producers in a region to work together to create strategic action plans.

AAC Input: Add "agencies" along with landowners and producers.

6) AR-30 (b) That no land proposed for redesignation is prime agricultural land as defined pursuant to California Government Code Section 51202 (the California Land Conversation Act of 1965, also known at the Williamson Act)

AAC Input: Requested that County Counsel evaluate to make sure this is consistent with remaining policy recommendations.

7) AR-34 (e) 1st Point: A farmland conversion **mitigation program**. Require compensation for loss of agricultural land as described in Policy AR-4. Establish appropriate mitigation ratios for the program or utilize a graduated mitigation mechanism. The established mitigation ratio should be at least 1:1 (one acre of farmland protected through mitigation for each acre of farmland converted).

AAC Input: Insert "ordinance" after "mitigation program". The Committee also felt that language should be added to reflect that this should not discourage agri-tourism and ag processing in areas where these uses are encouraged. They also felt that it should be stated that mitigation should be encouraged within the same ag region as the proposed development requiring mitigation as far as is feasible.

AR-34 (e) 2nd Point: A farmland conservancy program. Protect agricultural lands by purchasing development rights and conservation easements from willing sellers, and offer conservation easements, or other innovative programs. Coordinate efforts with conservation organizations and other municipalities and agencies.

AAC Input: The Committee felt that this language should somehow include providing just compensation for the landowners and also to prevent lowered ag property values.

The Committee suggested that the County become more proactive in being aware and participating in the state and federal processes that involve developing and forming new regulations that affect agriculture.

AGRICULTURAL REGIONS

As Mr. Henderson moved into the "Agricultural Regions" section, the Committee pointed out that agriculture can change rapidly (what crops are grown where, etc.), and although the Solano Ag Futures Project has defined agricultural regions, this is more a less a snapshot in time, and represents agricultural conditions at present. They wanted this sort of statement included in the general plan update. It was also suggested that the word "General" be inserted in front of the heading "Uses" in Table AR-2.

The Committee recommended that the Board consider a larger 80-acre minimum lot size for the Winters and Dixon Ridge regions, if feasible, rather than the 40-acre minimum as shown in Table AR-2. They suggested that the Green Valley region minimum lot sizes should be defined with a specific plan for that area. They also recommended that a larger 40-acre minimum lot size be considered for the Pleasants, Vaca, and Lagoon Valleys region rather than a 20-acre minimum lot size.

WESTERN HILLS

In the last paragraph of the report entitled "Western Hills", the Committee suggested that the word "currently" be inserted in front of "characterized", and that the word "primarily" be inserted in the sentence, "The steep slopes and soil types limit the productive use of this land *primarily* to grazing."

It was the overall feeling of the Committee that in general that they were encouraged by the contents of the presentation, and the Committee thanked Jeff for the excellent presentation.

It was moved that the comments as given to Jeff during this meeting be presented to the Board. It was seconded and so moved.

Mr. Henderson informed the Committee that the Board has received the same packet as was given to them today, and it is his intent to type in the revisions as suggested by the Committee today, highlighted in yellow, and get those distributed to the Board as soon as possible. The Committee asked that this version, with the AAC suggestions highlighted in yellow be provided to them as well. Mr. Leathers stated that the Agriculture Department has a list of the AAC e-mail addresses. Ms. Corsello confirmed with Ms. McKay (Agriculture Department Office Supervisor recording the minutes) that the report will be forwarded to her, and she in turn will forward the document to the AAC members. Ms. McKay acknowledged that she would distribute the report with the highlighted comments by the AAC when she receives it from Mr. Henderson.

(b) Report Farm/Agriculture Education Tour Planning Work Group Update - Work Group

The work group had not met. There was some confusion as to who was in this work group. It was asked that Carole Paterson please e-mail the work group members and a plan be formulated. The names of the members of this group are in the November minutes.

Item 7 Identify and Clarify Future Agenda Topics and Timing of Discussion

The Future Agenda Topics and Timing of Discussion are as follows:

(Fee schedule should be an item on here somewhere-also check with Carole/Birgitta as to time frames and subjects that should be on this list; isn't the Agricultural Center defunct?)

- a. Items from Board of Supervisors on Subject Matter of the AAC Ongoing
- b. Recommendations from the UC Davis Ag Futures Project-Ongoing
- c. Compatible/Incompatible Land Uses-Fall/Winter
- d. Horse Facilities/Farming Operations Update TBA
- e. Farm/Agriculture Education Tour-Ongoing
- f. Large Animal Catastrophe/Carcass Disposal Plan Fall/Winter
- g. Trails Update on Regional Project Status TBA
- h. Antiquated Maps TBA
- i. Agricultural Center TBA

<u>Item 8 Public Comments/Announcements/Correspondence</u>

This is the opportunity to address the committee on a matter not listed on the agenda, but within the subject jurisdiction of the Committee.

(a) Public Comments

It was announced that there is a new website for the Farm Bureau. Type www.cfbf.com in the browser address bar; then click on the "County Farm Bureaus" link, and click on "Solano" to get to the Solano Farm Bureau website. To access the Solano Farm bureau website directly, type www.solanocountyfarmbureau.org in the browser address bar.

(b) Announcements

There were no announcements.

(c) Correspondence

A letter received from a private citizen who had attended the December 10, 2007 General Plan Update CAC meeting was distributed to the Committee, and the concerns expressed in this letter were noted.

Item 9 Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, February 13, 2008 at 3:00 p.m., first floor conference room, 501 Texas Street, Fairfield.

Item 10 Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.