

**SOLANO COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING ON
March 8, 2006**

The meeting of the Solano County Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) was held at the Department of Agriculture, Downstairs Conference room, 501 Texas Street, Fairfield, CA.

Members Present:

Bruce Brazelton, Barbara Comfort, Donald Johnson, Craig Leathers, Russell Lester, Susan Lippstreu, Betty Mason, Mary Helen Seeger

Others Present:

Jearl Howard	Agricultural Commissioner
Carole Paterson	Director, Cooperative Extension
Harry Englebright	Principal Planner, Resource Management
Mike Yankovich	Department of Resource Management
Sabine Goerke-Shrode	Assistant Board of Supervisor, District 3
Steve Pierce	Assistant Board of Supervisor, District 5
Steve Ingram	County Counsel
Chris Rogers	County Administrators Office
Rick Roberts	Assessor/Recorder's Office
Joetta Griffin	
Edward Griffin	
Mary Aiu	
Jonnie Thrower	

Item 1 Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. A quorum was not present.

Item 2 Introductions of Members and Guests

Members and Guests in attendance introduced themselves.

Russell Lester Arrived at 3:12 p.m. and Mary Helen Seeger arrived at 3:18 p.m. to make a quorum.

Item 3 Changes and Approval of the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Item 4 Review/Approval of the Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2006

A typographical error was noted on item 5b, page 3 of the minutes and corrected. An error was also noted under 5c, page 6 under the discussion of whether or not horse breeding operations should be a primary agricultural use or a compatible use on Williamson Act Land. The last

sentence in paragraph four of this discussion should read: A show of hands by the committee indicated there was not support to pursue the issue further.

The minutes of February 8, 2006 were approved after correction of the errors noted above.

Item 5 New Business

(a) Report on Board of Supervisors Meeting – Topics Related to the Subject Matter of the AAC – Mike Yankovich for Birgitta Corsello.

Mr. Yankovich reported that recent Board actions of interest to the AAC involved items already on the agenda.

Jerry Howard advised the committee that the Board has been discussing the topic of attendance of appointed committee and commission members. He noted that there may be a change in the number of absences allowed per year in the near future.

There was discussion of how any changes would affect absences do to illness or other family emergencies.

(b) 2006 Sustainable Community Food System Grants – Carole Paterson

Ms. Paterson provided an overview of the Sustainable Community Food System Grant Program through the University of California. She stated that grant awards are typically for \$5,000 to \$10,000 and are for one year projects. She reviewed the goals of the grant and noted that most areas are very consistent with the overall goals of the county's Ag Sustainability study.

The committee noted that most of the grant goals are consistent with issues that were discussed at the Ag Summit in 2000. The committee enthusiastically encouraged Ms. Paterson to develop and submit a grant proposal.

(c) Wine Services CDBG Grant Proposal – Harry Englebright

Mr. Englebright informed the committee about an effort to secure a CDBG Grant to develop a business plan that would attract investors to build a centralized Wine Services Facility that would be available to local grape growers and help establish an identity for the Solano County Wine Grape Industry.

Conceptually, the Wine Service Facility would be a centralized facility where local growers could crush, bottle, and label their wines for a fee. Individual growers would be responsible for marketing their own product.

Mr. Englebright stated this concept originated with the Suisun Valley growers. Due to their relationship with the Suisun Valley Fund, the city of Fairfield can not apply for the grant, so the county has agreed to apply. He also stated that the facility will not necessarily be limited to growers in the Suisun Valley.

Comments from the committee stressed that such a facility should be available to all Solano County wine grape growers.

The Chair recessed the regular meeting to convene a Special Meeting of the AAC at 3:36 p.m. The regular meeting of the AAC was reconvened at 4:08.

Item 6 Continuing Business

(a) Ag Sustainability Study Update and Discussion – Carole Paterson

Ms. Paterson reported that the Ag Sustainability Study was presented to the Board of Supervisors on February 28th. She also reported that the study was not approved at that time pending further development and definition of the rolls at the University of California and the American Farmland Trust (AFT) with respect to the Suisun Valley Sub-Study. Staff will return to the Board of Supervisors on March 28th with revised scopes of work and contracts. Ms. Paterson stated the study is expected to get underway in April.

(b) General Plan Update/ Status Report – Harry Englebright

Mr. Englebright reported that on February 28th, the Board of Supervisors established the General Plan Citizens Advisory Committee. The committee has 20 members, five of which are from the agricultural community. There was an organizational committee meeting on March 6th. The committee membership is listed on the County website, solanocountygeneralplan.net. There will be a link from the Resource Management website within the next several days Mr. Englebright reported. The General Plan Update process will include in-depth looks at specific areas of the county.

(c) Habitat Conservation Plan Update – Bruce Brazelton/ Harry Englebright

Mr. Brazelton reported that there were more developers present at the last Steering Committee Meeting than in the past. He stated the main concern expressed was increased development costs that will be associated with implementation of the plan. He stated that the Habitat Conservation Plan is required by the Bureau of Reclamation and if not completed in a timely manner, could result in the Bureau shutting off the water they deliver to the county.

(d) Williamson Act Issues Update/Review/Discussion – Harry Englebright

Comments submitted by Albert Medvitz were distributed for review and consideration by the committee.

Mr. Englebright requested input from the committee on how to define Commercial Agriculture. He stated that one method would be to apply production values reported to

the Assessor for prime and non-prime Williamson Act contracted land. He suggested using minimum per acre values that would be updated annually by the Assessor.

Mr. Englebright stated that production values would typically be applied or considered at the time applications for new contracts are filed and when applications for building permits are made. In order to implement such a system, the Assessor would need to ensure that a mechanism for annual reporting by contract holders be included in the Uniform Rules and Procedures.

It was the consensus of the AAC that the process described by Mr. Englebright was a reasonable method of defining Commercial Agriculture with regards to Williamson Act contracted lands.

Mr. Englebright continued his review of the Williamson Act "Draft" Rules and Procedures and tables of permitted and conditional uses with the AAC. He began by explaining the various types of Williamson Act Contracts in Solano County; Agriculture, Open Space, Recreational, and Wetlands/Marsh.

There was a question about how some of the earliest contracts will be affected with regards to minimum acreage requirements. When the Williamson Act was first implemented, there were no minimum acreage requirements. Mr. Englebright responded by saying that in those instances where the minimum acreage can't be met, existing contracts will be grandfathered in. He went on to say the minimum acreage to establish an agricultural preserve is 100 acres, contiguous parcels of 10 acres for prime land, and 40 acres for non-prime land, which may be under separate contracts, can be combined to meet the acreage requirements for an agricultural preserve.

Mr. Englebright reviewed the Lot Line adjustment/sub-division provisions and explained that they are merely being brought into conformance with existing state law. He also stated that application procedures are being added for those procedures.

Mr. Englebright was questioned about the contract renewal date. He responded that the renewal date of individual contracts is the date they were approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Englebright informed the AAC that the proposed definition of Agricultural Commodity does not include horses. He also explained that there are typically two methods of terminating a contract; Non-Renewal – The contract expires after nine years, and Cancellation – The contract ends immediately, requires payment of substantial penalties for early termination, requires the Board of Supervisors to make specific findings and is very difficult to accomplish.

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

The AAC reviewed the list of Future Agenda Topics and added Agricultural Pesticide/Hazardous Waste Disposal Day, and Large Animal Carcass Disposal to the list.

Item 8 Public Comments/Announcements/Correspondence

(a) Public Comments

There were no public comments.

(b) Announcements

There were no announcements.

(c) Correspondence

There were no correspondences.

Item 9 Next Meeting Date

April 12, 2006 at 3:00 p.m., first floor conference room, 501 Texas Street, Fairfield.

Item 10 Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08 p.m.