

**SOLANO COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING ON
December 12, 2007**

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, John Mangels, Betty Mason, Mary Helen Seeger.

Others Present:

Jearl Howard	Agriculture
Carole Paterson	UC Cooperative Extension
Birgitta Corsello	Resource Management
Kathy Gibson	CAO
Sabine Goerke-Shrode	Aide to Supervisor Spering (BOS)
Carolyn DeBuse	UC Cooperative Extension
Kurt Richter	UC Davis
Matt Walsh	Resource Management
Paul Wiese	Resource Management

Item 1 Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 3:02. A quorum was 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 November 14, 2007

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2007 meeting as presented. The motion carried on a unanimous vote of the members present.

Item 5 New Business

<p>(a) Report on Board of Supervisors Meetings – Board Topics Related to the Subject Matter of the AAC – Birgitta Corsello</p>
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Ms. Corsello stated that the Board adopted their legislative platform at the December 4 meeting. One of the items included was a continuance of the request to seek a legislative amendment to the Williamson Act to allow horse training and breeding facilities as an

accessory use under the Williamson Act. Matt Walsh will cover more of this topic under the General Plan Update.

Ms. Corsello reported that at the December 11 Board meeting, the Strategic Plan for the county was approved, which will span from 2008-2012. There are four main goals, one of which is sustainable land use and viable agricultural economics. One of the objectives that have been laid out, in the near term, is the prioritization and implementation of the recommendations from the agricultural studies. The expectation in this next spring season will be taking the recommendations before the Board and prioritizing and getting the Board to allocate resources. After the groundwork has been laid, implementation can begin.

Ms. Corsello suggested that the AAC could go the county website to look at the Strategic Plan as a whole. A member asked if the Board came up with a definition of sustainable agriculture and sustainable economics of land use. Ms. Corsello stated that it has been necessary to move from goals to objectives that were measurable to actual activities or projects. One of the measurable objectives is to see an increase in the farm gate values. There are real programs that are anticipated, and then outcomes that should be measured as part of that process.

The Board has approved a change in the uniform building code, effective January 1 countywide. No changes have been made to the local amendments with regard the size of agricultural structures and sprinkler requirements. Ms. Corsello did state that there have been problems with getting the fire districts to hold the line with these local amendments. The State decided to delay some components until July, but this mostly has to do with watershed and hills as a result of the recent fires in southern California. Two sections of the law have been pulled back; high fire areas-ridgelines and steeper sloped hills. For these high fire areas the plan check and building permit will not be issued by the local jurisdiction, they will be issued by the state. The second section deals with high and medium risk areas the changing of building materials and structural configurations to minimize fire hazard/risk.

Ms. Corsello pointed out that when the current fire codes were adopted, a group from the AAC worked with Resource Management and the fire chiefs to come to agreement at that time, and this may need to happen again to resolve the issues with the fire chiefs, who appear to have different interpretations of the code. As far as the new codes versus the old codes, Ms. Corsello stated that her office can be contacted and her staff will look through plan checks that are in the queue and work with people.

Ms. Corsello stated that at the December 11 meeting, the Board reviewed the proposed project description for the General Plan Update. The Citizens Advisory Committee will get one final review of this update in January. A lot of farm/agricultural reps are attending the meetings. Two most notable things coming out of the CAC and what the Board has approved in concept are the elimination of intensive and extensive agriculture somewhat tied to soil and somewhat tied to irrigation. This no longer exists on the land use map. Agriculture is all one category. The General Plan has taken some of the recommendations from the Solano Agricultural Futures Project and the General Plan will reflect the nine regions that are discussed and a lot of the policies for the individual

regions that are discussed in the Solano Agricultural Futures Study are reflected in the General Plan document that is being prepared.

In about a week everything should be available to look at on the website. At the end of January it is anticipated that there will be a draft document and the next step will be public workshops, and outreach meetings to explain the process. It is hoped that they will go before the Planning Commission and the Board beginning in the April, May, and June time period with the expectation that there will be a certified EIR and there will be an adopted General Plan in July 2008. It would then go before the voters in November 2008. The Board expects that this process will be on time. Ms. Corsello pointed out that there are significant changes to the agricultural piece of the General Plan, approaching it from the recommendations taken from the agricultural studies.

She stated that a special meeting was requested and granted, for January 15 to discuss only agricultural issues. Everything that the CAC has recommended will be presented. Ms. Corsello offered to have her staff come to the AAC January 9 meeting and present what the CAC has recommended so that the AAC input can be factored into the Board of Supervisors, and will also let the AAC know what the Board is considering.

Ms. Comfort asked the Chair if the January 9th meeting could start at 2:00 in order to accommodate this presentation. After discussion, the Chair asked if the information that will be presented would be available in advance. Ms. Corsello stated that the packet would be provided before the meeting. The Chair declared that the meeting will start at 2:00 on January 9th. The main agenda item will be the presentation of this information.

(b) Introduction of Carolyn DeBuse, Orchard Systems Advisor –Carole Paterson

Ms. Paterson introduced Carolyn DeBuse who is joining the Cooperative Extension Staff and will also be working in Yolo County. She is the new Orchard Systems Advisor. She starts on December 17, and comes from the Davis Campus.

Ms. DeBuse thanked Carole for the warm welcome. She has been in California for 18 years. She fell in love with apples and pomology in England. She did her undergraduate in plant pomology. All of her work experience has been pomology, with a hiatus in sunflowers. She has been working with prune development for the last six or seven years. Ms. DeBuse is excited about the challenges of being a farm advisor, and being a part of a great team.

The Committee individually introduced, and shared what crops they were associated with. They welcomed Ms. Debuse. The visitors and other attendees introduced themselves as well.

(c) Review/Approval of 2008 AAC “Draft” Meeting Schedule – Jerry Howard – ACTION ITEM

Mr. Howard produced a 2008 schedule that followed last year’s schedule. He submitted it to the Committee for their approval. It was moved and seconded to accept the schedule as submitted. Motion carried on a unanimous vote of the members present.

(d) Selection of AAC Chair and Vice-Chair for 2008 – ACTION ITEM

Mr. Leathers nominated John Mangels as Chair for 2008. the motion was seconded. Mrs. Mason moved that nominations be closed. Mr. Mangels accepted the nomination.

Mr. Leathers was nominated as Vice-Chair for 2008. The motion was seconded. It was moved to accept Chair and Vice-chair. Motion carried on a unanimous vote of the members present.

(e) Review House Agricultural Consultants General Plan Background Report for Agriculture and Recommendations to the Citizen’s Advisory Committee – Birgitta Corsello/Jerry Howard - ACTION ITEM

Mr. Howard asked Mrs. Corsello how pertinent it would be to go over this in detail. She stated that it would be better, and have more relevance to wait for the review of the CAC recommendations at the next meeting.

(f) Review Ag Futures Project “Draft” Recommendations – Kurt Richter – ACTION ITEM

Mr. Howard and Ms. Corsello stated that it was critically important for the Kurt to go through the recommendations contained in the Ag Futures Project Report.

Mr. Richter stated that he believes that at the heart of what’s going on in Solano County, there needs to be new information used to make land decisions.

Recommendation 1: The County has a bit of an image problem. The agricultural community has been left feeling like second class citizens and steps should be taken to support the agricultural community and recognize the importance of agriculture to the County’s economy.

Recommendation 2: There is no better way than to do it on a regional basis. Solano is so complex and diverse there will be disjointed land use policies if planning is not done on a regional basis. This is a major change for the General Plan and is an opportunity to craft plans that will work for each region. This will probably lead to a more complex set of codes and policies, but it is necessary if agriculture is to survive.

Recommendation 3: Give priority to Dixon Ridge and Winters. These are the most productive areas of the County.

Recommendation 4: Mechanisms need to be developed to support value-added; a special committee or group could be formed to advise county in this area.

Recommendation 5: There are issues with rural residences. They don’t add value to agriculture. The County must find a way to minimize or eliminate the creation of rural residential parcels in agricultural areas, especially the Dixon Ridge and Winters areas.

Recommendation 6: An additional study on regulatory obstacles is needed.

Recommendation 7: Solano County production is small, but tied into bigger economic regions, and linked to growth in other areas. Protect and encourage processors on a regional basis.

Recommendation 8: County mechanism that supports commodities (Solano-grown). Solano needs to showcase agriculture.

Recommendation 9: There is no way we can expect the county to produce better land use decisions without better data. We need to improve information and expertise on ag issues; need info at the parcel level; GIS database needs to be maintained and expanded.

Recommendation 10: There is an important role for the AAC to play. The AAC should be trained and educated on land use issues. It would be good to have more give and take between the county and agriculture. The agricultural community needs to be more upfront about what's going on, share with the county; the county needs to take this information and make better decisions. Both need to find a way to help each other.

Mr. Richter feels there is a major lack of overall agriculture information in California. There is no information on what is grown where, overall in the state of California. Solano is the first county that is getting information like this from which to make land use decisions. Cities will get bigger, and there will be more pressure for land for ranchettes.

Ms. Corsello felt that the recommendations were targeted toward the County, and expressed that they should be directed to all levels of government, and that her department only has so much ability to effect change. She also stated that the business community has a responsibility to learn about agriculture and not just listen to the new person coming in the door or to the loudest. Also, politics is an issue that has to be dealt with. Mr. Howard recalled a comment made by an AAC member that agriculture needs to be recognized as a business. There needs to be a change in mindset in how agriculture is viewed.

It was noted that the nursery component is missing from the report and not shown on the map; however it is agriculture and is an intensive use and employs a lot of people and provides work in the spring. This should be acknowledged.

It was pointed out that this group (AAC) and others in agriculture need to take a more aggressive role. This group was originally formed because the Farm Bureau failed to speak out on ag issues. This group is seven years old, and there is a report recommending another advisory committee. AAC members—go to meetings but are just an audience, they do not have input into the land use process. No one from the Planning Commission knows anyone on the AAC, nor have they ever heard from anyone on the AAC. The agricultural community has a Board who says they want to support agriculture, but they need to hear from agriculture, not just the urbanites. Every Tuesday the Committee has the opportunity to address the BOS as members of the public under public comment. The AAC needs to let their voices be heard.

Mr. Richter would like to have AAC members at the BOS on January 8 when the Solano Agricultural Futures Project is presented. He stated that the agricultural community needs to step up. Ms. Paterson said that one of the workshops offered in 2008 will be

advocacy training, which will provide opportunity to come and learn to advocate to a group of people who may not understand. It was stated that Supervisor Sperring has been very receptive to one-on-one communication and is willing to meet with members of the AAC. Aide to Sperring Sabine said that the Supervisors are willing to meet with AAC as a group or one-on-one. Supervisor Sperring is planning to meet with the agricultural community in January; the committee will be advised as to when.

Mr. Howard said that Mr. Richter's report is still draft until Friday so if you have recommendations or input, now is the time.

Item 6 Continuing Business

(a) General Plan Update – Matt Walsh

A little over a year ago a set of revisions was put together for the Williamson Act. There was much discussion on the policies, but it was approved by the AAC. Nothing has changed, with one primary exception-horse boarding and breeding facilities. This was a hot button topic at that meeting. It was approved with the understanding that horse boarding and breeding facilities would not be deemed compatible.

The County Counsel will be taking closer look at Government Code with regard to uses. The Government Code states that animal boarding is not agriculture. The County is going forward with the idea that small scale boarding in non-prime areas could be compatible. Solano is looking at what other counties are doing. The most recent county to revise their regulations is Santa Barbara; threshold of 3% of parcel size or whatever is smaller to be allowed to be used as a footprint for an animal breeding facility.

A special planning commission meeting is scheduled for the 10th of January to handle this particular project. The General Plan is going on the 3rd of January. It will be presented as an alternative that the Planning Commission could add to the guidelines that the AAC had approved. The horse-boarding will be introduced as something to be considered. A member noted that the AAC as a group did not favor horse-boarding/breeding as an alternative use. Ms. Corsello pointed out that we continue to have the horse riding/breeding community in Solano County and Board members who continue to insist that it is compatible. So it will be presented and the Planning Commission and the Board decide if they wish to include it; from there we will be dealing with the Department of Conservation

A member asked then what is non-prime ag land? Mr. Walsh stated that the Williamson Act has a definition of prime and non-prime. It is very clear. There was extended discussion on this subject, and then Ms. Corsello stated that Mr. Howard would provide the AAC with the report.

Mr. Howard gave the AAC a heads up that Mr. Fox is still lobbying for the thoroughbred race horse association. The intent this year is to find support to classify horses as an agricultural commodity. If successful, he suspects in two years they will be back to try to make them an agricultural use within the Williamson Act. They will be meeting with the State Board of Agriculture, which has been supportive of that concept. Along those same lines, right now agricultural commodities don't include alternative fuel crops.

Mr. Paul Wiese presented a report on the road improvement plan for 2008. The good news is that Solano County has a healthy road improvement plan for 2008. Prop 1B funds are the source of financing for road projects. There are no bridge replacement projects planned for 2008. There are several roads slated for reconstruction or improvement. One road of most interest is the easterly end of Midway Road, and the addition of shoulders to Pitt School Road will continue. Overlay projects will occur (financed by Prop 1b) to improve overall road conditions in Solano County. There will be approximately 17 miles of overlay in various locations, and 40 miles of chip seals (less expensive road treatment). There are a few slurry-seal projects (more residential type streets) planned for approximately six miles on five different roads. It is hoped that the plan will go the Board for adoption on January 22.

In 2009 it is hoped that the Grizzly Island Bridge (1st bridge south of Suisun City) project will commence. A new bridge will be built parallel to the old bridge, and old bridge will be left as a possible fishing pier. The year after that, the one-lane bridge on Suisun Valley Road near the Napa County line will be rehabilitated with a two-lane bridge, with a more gradual approach to the bridge rather than the hairpin turn that exists now. A corner of an orchard will need to be used in order to accomplish this.

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

The work group has not met since the last AAC meeting, but members will begin discussions.

(c) Prioritization of AFT Suisun Valley Study Recommendations – Jerry Howard

This item will be scheduled for another meeting.

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

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

- a. Items from Board of Supervisors on Subject Matter of the AAC – Ongoing
- b. UC Davis Ag Futures Project-Ongoing
- c. Compatible/Incompatible Land Uses-Fall/Winter
- d. Horse Facilities/Farming Operations Update – December
- 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

Item 8 Public Comments/Announcements/Correspondence

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

There were no public comments.

(b) Announcements

The Committee expressed its gratitude to Mr. Brazelton for serving as chair. It also expressed its gratitude to Mr. Howard for his support, and wished him well in his retirement.

Mr. Howard updated the committee on the progress of the recruitment of the new agricultural commissioner. January 8 is a possible date for recommendation from the BOS if a candidate is selected and accepts the position. If this happens, it is possible that a new agricultural commissioner could come on board by February 1. Mr. Howard will continue on a part-time basis until the end of February. He will not be available for the January meeting, but in the event that no agricultural commissioner has been selected, he may be available to attend the February meeting.

(c) Correspondence

There were no correspondences.

Item 9 Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, January 9, 2008 at 2:00 p.m., first floor conference room, 501 Texas Street, Fairfield.

Item 10 Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 5:12 p.m.