SOLANO COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING ON
October 11, 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, Jeff Dittmer, Alan Freese, Donald Johnson,Craig Leathers, Susan Lippstreu, John Mangels, Albert Medvitz, and Mary Helen Seeger

Others Present:

Jearl Howard	Agricultural Commissioner
Carole Paterson	Director, UCCE
Birgitta Corsello	Director, Resource Management
Ester Armstrong	Dixon May Fair
Mike Yankovich	Department of Resource Management
Kurt Richter	U.C. Davis
Sabine Goerke-Shrode	Assistant Board of Supervisor, District 3
Kathy Gibson	County Administrative Office
Shaun Pritchard	Solano LAFCO
Linda Pinfold	Department of Agriculture

Item 1 Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m. 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

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried by unanimous vote of the members present.

Item 4 Review/Approval of the Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2006

It was moved and seconded to approve the meeting minutes of September 13, 2006 as presented. The motion carried by a unanimous vote of the members present.

Item 5 New Business

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

Ms. Corsello reported that the Board of Supervisors considered an application (Olsen) for compliance with the Orderly Growth Initiative on October 10, 2006. The Board upheld the Planning Commission's decision to deny the application, but left the door open for the applicants to bring the matter back for reconsideration if the necessary findings can be satisfied. Ms. Corsello stated this was the first request of its kind since Measure A took affect.

Ms. Corsello also reported that the Board of Supervisors recently approved a rezoning of a parcel near Suisun Valley from Agriculture zoning to Rural Residential. She stated the land has been in wine grape production.

Ms. Corsello informed the AAC about a presentation to the Board of Supervisors on October 10, 2006 regarding ABAG's "Green Business Program". She stated the program has been implemented in seven of the nine Bay Area counties to date. The program is completely voluntary and provides assistance to businesses that are interested in becoming a "Green Business". She stated there are a few agriculture related businesses in the program but that most participants are automotive businesses at this time.

Ms. Corsello reported that the Board of Supervisors recently approved the division of 1000 plus acres in the Dixon area into twenty 40-70 acre parcels upon making the finding that the land is "highly productive" land. She further stated the land is currently subject to a Williamson Act Contract and therefore, must stay in agriculture production as long as the contract remains in affect.

There was discussion by members of the AAC that some 40 acre plantings are not economically viable units. Walnuts and prunes were specifically identified. It was suggested that there is a need to amend the General Plan to increase the 40 acre minimum standard. It was suggested that perhaps the AG Study will address the issue.

Ms. Corsello discussed Proposition 90 (Eminent Domain) with the committee. She explained that this initiative could be problematic for counties if it is passed by the voters. It may require counties to compensate landowners if the land is down zoned for any reason.

Ms. Corsello advised the committee that resource management is beginning the process of reviewing all of the various zoning ordinances for consistency. She noted that the Board of Supervisors recently adopted changes to the Rural Residential Zone. On parcels of 2.5, 5, and 10 acres two homes per parcel are allowed; a primary and a secondary residence. She noted there is no size limit on the primary residence, but the secondary can be no larger than 1,500 square feet. She noted that there is a need to review the agricultural zones to insure residence size restrictions are consistent with the Rural Residential zones. Ms. Corsello indicated she would schedule this matter for the AAC meeting in the winter.

It was moved and seconded to request Resource Management provide the AAC with a review of the requirements for General Plan Amendments, definition of Prime Agricultural Land, differences between the General Plan and zoning North and South I-80 and the ABAG "Green Business Program" for the November meeting. The motion carried by a unanimous vote of the members present.

(b) 2007 Dixon May Fair Showcase of Solano County Agriculture – Ester Armstrong

Ms. Armstrong began by stating the dates for the 2007 Dixon May Fair are May 10-13, 2007. The theme of the fair will be "Barn To Be Wild". She stated that the fair has not showcased agriculture in over 20 years and that she plans to change that trend.

Ms. Armstrong stated that she has a 75' x 100' building that she plans to dedicate to a "Salute to Solano Agriculture". The displays will feature dried products and packaged goods that are representative of Solano County Agriculture. She hopes to feature products from Campbell's, Hines Nursery, Mariani Nut, Sunny Side Dairy, and others. She plans to provide space for eight to ten 8' x 8' booths for agricultural organizations such as the County Department of Agriculture, Co-Operative Extension, S.I.D., R.C.D's, Farm Bureau, etc. She has also commissioned an 8' x 8' mural to be crafted from dried Solano County agricultural products.

The AAC was very supportive of Ms. Armstrong's effort. Several suggestions were offered to enhance the displays and exhibits. These suggestions included offering booth space to the Sheriff's Office to promote relations with the agricultural community, invite local agricultural equipment dealers to display free.

(c) LAFCO Study of Resource Conservation Districts- Shaun Pritchard

Mr. Pritchard stated that the study was a Municipal Service Review of the four RCD's in Solano County; Solano RCD, Dixon RCD, Suisun RCD, and a portion of the Napa RCD. He stated the study involved the examination of six required areas.

He reported that the study concluded that there is no compelling need to merge the Dixon and Solano RCD's. Mr. Pritchard reported that at one time the Solano RCD was interested in expanding its boundaries to include the unrepresented areas of the county. When it was determined that they would be unable to collect taxes from the unrepresented area to support the expansion, there was no benefit in pursuing the matter.

Mr. Pritchard provided the AAC members with copies of the "Draft" study.

Mr. Pritchard was asked if LAFCO looked at the impact to those areas of the county that are outside of the RCD boundaries. He responded in the negative, due to the fact that there is no revenue stream to support any level of activity in unrepresented areas.

Concern was expressed that RCD's have become the conduit for transferring Farm Bill Funding to local growers in recent years. Growers in unrepresented areas such as Rio

Vista are put at a disadvantage. Mr. Pritchard was encouraged to have the consultant explore this issue further before issuing their final report.

It was noted that the Solano RCD has had a high rate of staff turn-over which impacts on the efficiency of the agency. Mr. Pritchard was asked if the study examined this issue. He answered in the negative and stated that staffing issues do not come under LAFCO's scope. It was requested that the consultant look at turn-over as it relates to efficiency of the agency.

(d) Review of Requirements for Produce Stands, Farm Stays, Bed and Breakfast Inns, and Special Events in Agricultural Zones – Birgitta Corsello

Ms. Corsello referred the committee to various matrix that were prepared by Resource Management that list the agency responsible for regulating the various potential uses. She stated that this has been done primarily because of questions from Suisun Valley Growers and the Suisun Valley Fund's effort to explore potential value added concepts. She stated that there is considerable mis-information in this area, so Resource Management developed the table to help the farming community better understand their choices and the consequences of those choices. The matrix was developed to help clarify changes verses no change based on codes, laws, and ordinances.

Ms. Corsello guided the committee through the various Matrix. She explained the differences between a Bed and Breakfast and a Farm Stay. She pointed out that size and scope is a major factor in the level of regulation. Ms. Corsello emphasized that Planning was not solely responsible for regulations that impact these facilities. There are a combination of regulatory requirements ranging from the Orderly Growth Initiative, the Williamson Act, Public Health Codes, and even the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Ms. Corsello also discussed Produce Stands and some of the requirements that apply after the first level of processing. She explained that the reason wineries are not included is because they have a separate section of code and are an allowed use. She said the AAC worked on winery issues in 2001.

The AAC indicated an interest in discussing these issues in greater depth at a future meeting, perhaps January. The AAC requested Resource Management to gather requirements from other counties for the purpose of making comparisons. Counties specifically mentioned were: Calaveras, Sonoma, El Dorado, Santa Barbara, and Mendocino. It was stated that there is a need to establish reasonable permitted uses.

(e) Agricultural Advisory Committee Review – Jearl Howard

Mr. Howard discussed a "Draft" AAC Review of the committee's accomplishments over the period of October 2005 through September 2006. He stated that the report would be going to the Board of Supervisors in November along with similar reports from other Board appointed committee's, commissions, and boards as a part of an annual process. He stated the list of accomplishments was extracted from meeting minutes over the last year. He also discussed the attendance records and Brown Act training. Mr. Lester stated that he had received Brown Act training as a member of the school board and

asked if that was sufficient. Mr. Howard indicated that he would check. There were no suggested changes to the report.

(f) Sustainable Agriculture Forums –Carole Paterson

Ms. Paterson distributed a brochure to the AAC members and gave an overview of the Sustainable Agriculture Forums she is conducting. She explained that a total of five forums will be held; one in Dixon, two in Vacaville, and 2 in Fairfield during the month of October. She encouraged members of the AAC to attend in order to insure that agriculture is represented noting that pre-registration is required. Ms. Paterson stated the forums are being announced through press releases, public service announcements on KUIC radio, brochures in public places and by word of mouth.

Ms. Paterson also advised the AAC members that her office has been granted additional staff resources. Plant Pathologist Jenny Broome is already on board. She is based in Sacramento County, but is assigned to work in Yolo and Solano Counties as well. She also reported that she recently received word that a pomology position has been approved; effective July 2007.

Item 6 Continuing Business

(a) Ag Sustainability Study Update and Discussion – Kurt Richter

Mr. Richter reported that the U.C. Study is moving from the Focus Group phase to the Agri-Business Interview phase.

He stated that not all segments of agriculture in Solano County are healthy.

Mr. Richter stated that the team is on schedule to deliver the Focus Group Summary Report on or before January 1, 2007. He further stated that a commodity report is being compiled as well with an anticipated delivery date of some time in January 2007.

Mr. Richter said some AAC members will be contacted in the near future for personal interviews. He encouraged the committee to send any ideas or comments regarding the study to him, Carole Paterson, Mario Moratorio, or Jerry Howard.

(b) General Plan Update/ Status Report – Birgitta Corsello

Ms. Corsello advised the AAC that the Citizen's Advisory Committee has been meeting with cities which will continue through November. She stated that the committee will receive Ethics training at their December meeting. She also invited the AAC members to participate in that training if they are unable to attend other scheduled training classes. She stated that the committee is scheduled to review a number of reports in January and then begin reviewing agricultural matters in February.

(c) Dixon Downs (Racetrack) Project Status – Mike Yankovich

Mr. Yankovich reported to the committee that the Dixon City Council could make a decision on the project as early as Friday (October 13, 2006). He also reported that enough signatures have been gathered to put the matter to a vote of the people.

It was stated that the agricultural community was well represented throughout the public hearing process. The most consistent message was that the racetrack would not be a boom for local hay producers. Thoroughbred breeders do not use local hay.

It was reported that the E.I.R. has been completed. Comments from the County focused on the I-80 interchange at Pedrick Road and on the impact to Campbell's and county roads.

(d) Ethics Training – Jerry Howard

Mr. Howard reminded the AAC members of the need to attend one of the upcoming Ethics training sessions and provided a copy of the scheduled training sessions.

(e) SB 1556 (The Great California Delta Trail System) Update – Jearl Howard

Mr. Howard stated that he put this item on the agenda as the AAC has discussed the bill in detail at their May 10, 2006 meeting and expressed considerable concern about how the legislation might impact agricultural lands. Mr. Howard reported that the bill passed both the Senate and the Assembly and is currently on the Governor's desk.

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

a. Items from Board of Supervisors on Subject Matter of the AAC – Ongoing
b. Dixon Downs (Racetrack) Project Status – Ongoing
c. Trails – Update on Regional Project Efforts
d. Resource Conservation Districts, LAFCO Study Update – October
e. Horse Facilities/Farming Operations Update - October
f. Agricultural Pesticide Hazardous Waste Disposal Day – November
g. Large Animal Carcass Disposal – Fall/Winter
    1. Overview of county plans – December
    2. CDFA – Animal Health Branch
h. Agricultural Disaster Notification Network – October/November
i. Agricultural Center
j. Antiquated Maps – Ongoing

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

November 8, 2006 at 3:00 p.m., first floor conference room, 501 Texas Street, Fairfield.

Item 10 Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.