SOLANO COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING ON
March 12, 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, John Mangels, Betty Mason, Al Medvitz, Mary Helen Seeger.

Others Present:

Carole Paterson	UC Cooperative Extension
Birgitta Corsello	Resource Management
Sabine Goerke-Shrode	Aide to Supervisor Spering (District 3)
Fred Zaragoza	Aide to Supervisor Vasquez (District 5)
Moira Burke	
Jon Fadhl	Farmer-Dixon

Item 1 Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting began 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 January 9, 2008 and February 12, 2008

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of January 9, 2008 and February 12, 2008 as presented. The motion carried on a unanimous vote of the members present.

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 reported that on March 11 the Board approved the Parcel Map for Minor Subdivision MS-07-08 (John F. Gonge primary partner). She stated that this property had been in alfalfa and hay for the past 10 years. It has been approved to go into 40-acre parcels.

The Board also received a report on a variety of legislative proposals, including a status report with recommendations for policy direction with regards to the Delta and different proposals that involve the agricultural land both on the islands in Solano County and agricultural land at the southeastern end of the bypass. The Board is working with consultants to understand the implications of the recommendations in the reports, to agriculture and to the county as a whole. The governor wants to make decisions in the next year. The potential loss to this county would be the loss of agricultural land. This would involve

approximately 2800 acres. Future discussion/dialogue is planned for the Board of Supervisors meeting on March 25.

Ms. Corsello stated that she and Mrs. Paterson would provide the AAC with the information from this Board of Supervisors agenda item from March 11.

Mr. Lester asked if it would appropriate to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that they consider a moratorium on subdivisions until such time as the General Plan is adopted. Ms. Corsello stated that it was within the prerogative of the AAC to make such a recommendation (suggest a moratorium between now and the time they adopt the General Plan), but once they adopt it they will still be working to develop the specific area plans. She stated the Board is thinking about these things; they asked at the meeting on March 11 if the subdivision (Parcel Map for Minor Subdivision MS-07-08 as referred to previously) was consistent with the General Plan. Ms. Corsello suggested that this might be a good item to put on next month's AAC agenda along with the legislative items.

Mr. Lester asked that discussion by this committee regarding major land use decisions between now and adoption of the general plan be placed on the April 9, 2008 AAC agenda.

(b) Prioritize Recommendations from Ag Futures Study-Birgitta Corsello/Carole Paterson

After discussion, the AAC prioritized the recommendations from the Ag Futures Study as follows:

1st: Recommendations 1 & 10 (1. Adopt throughout County government a more informed and proactive approach to agricultural issues in the work of the Board of Supervisors and county staff), (10. Bring more agriculture-related expertise into County government).
2nd: Recommendations 2, 3 & 5 (2. Establish, in the general plan, a regional basis for policies, land use designations and zoning code standards that accommodates important geographical differences in local agricultural conditions), (3. Give priority in zoning and other farmland protection policies to the Dixon Ridge and Winters agricultural regions of Solano County), (5. Minimize the negative impact of rural residential development in agriculturally zoned areas).
3rd: Recommendations 4 & 7 (4. Profitable or potentially-profitable farms and related value-added enterprises on small parcels present different policy challenges than the large-scale agriculture typical of the Dixon Ridge and other regions. Zoning and other land use standards in regions like the Suisun Valley should address the unique production and marketing needs of small-scale growers and methods for buffering their operations from adjacent or nearby urban land uses. To this end, we suggest the creation of a Small Scale/Value Added Agricultural Committee, composed of successful small-scale producers, to advise county government on pertinent land use, permitting, and other issues. A sub-committee of the Agricultural Advisory Committee may be able to fill this role), (7. Protect and encourage agricultural processors through local and regional actions).
4th: Recommendation 8 (Consider county government funding and other support for promoting local agriculture).
5th: Recommendations 6 & 9 (6. Commission a detailed study of County regulations and their implementation with the intent of minimizing the regulatory obstacles to value-added opportunities for local agriculture.

It should be noted that the Committee agreed that this was only the first go-around of discussion of these priorities, and that the recommendations need further fleshing out at a future meeting.

Item 6 Continuing Business

(a) General Plan Update-Birgitta Corsello

Ms. Corsello stated that tomorrow (March 13) the Planning Commission would be reviewing the draft General Plan document for their comment and input. The intent is to determine if the document is sufficient to go forward for public comment. These comments will be incorporated into the presentation to the Board of Supervisors on March 18.

She stated that a newsletter will be sent out to every address in Solano County, announcing that the General Plan document is out for public review and comment, and will include information about community meetings as well as the process going forward for the update. In April the environmental document should be out for public review and comment as well.

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

On behalf of the work group (comprised of Mrs. Paterson, Mr. Leathers, and Mr. Russell), Mr. Leathers asked for participation from the committee in setting up and running the actual tour. Friday, May 30, was the original proposed date of the tour; however, due to various conflicts, the following week (first week in June) is before the Committee for consideration.

Topics for discussion on the tour were discussed, as well as what stops will be made and in what order events should occur. It was stated that along with the bus tour, there will also be a group of invitees to the forum at the end of the tour. Mrs. Paterson stated that Mr. Lester would be hosting a catered lunch that would be prepared with local products. The working group had compiled a list of possible contributors of products for this lunch. Mr. Medvitz offered to contribute two lambs for the event. Numerous other suggestions for contributors and contributions were offered by members of the committee, which Mr. Lester took note of.

Mrs. Paterson said that the work group wanted to get the committee's approval on a date and the plan, and based on that the work group would then move forward with the funding/budget piece. It was suggested that Mrs. Paterson could look into the dates to ascertain any major conflicts that may keep key people from attending the tour. It was also decided that Mrs. Paterson would be the contact person by e-mail if there was any further input from committee members before the next AAC meeting. It was determined that the work group would meet again before the next AAC meeting, and that the committee would stand by for further word on a date for the tour.

The work group will continue to meet, and as such more details will be available at the April AAC 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 the Board of Supervisors on Subject Matters of the AAC - Ongoing
b. Compatible/Incompatible Land Uses – Fall/Winter
c. Horse Facilities/Farming Operations Update - TBA
d. Large Animal Catastrophe/Carcass Disposal Plan – Fall/Winter
e. Antiquated Maps – 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

Mr. Jon Fadhl, a local farmer from Dixon asked for clarification as to whether or not there was going to be a recommendation going forward to the Board from this committee requesting that there be a moratorium put on submission for subdivisions. He asked if this discussion was going to occur before or after public comment.

Mr. Mangels stated that the Committee did not act on that topic when it surfaced; it was not an agenda item. He stated it was a comment as to whether there should be a moratorium on subdivisions before the general plan is approved. Mr. Fadhl asked if an action was going to be made on this comment today. Mr. Mangels' answer was no.

Mr. Fadhl then requested that his comments be made part of the record. He stated his name and then said that he felt that if this committee, as an agricultural advisory committee, makes a recommendation that takes away somebody's first vested right, they may be opening up a situation for a liability issue. He then asked if this committee wanted to represent that liability issue for the farmers in this community.

Mr. Mangels restated that the committee took no action on this today. Mr. Fadhl said that he knew this, but also went on to say that if this recommendation comes forward he is making a public comment that the farmers have vested rights as they are today and if this committee wants to make a recommendation to the board in contradiction to these vested rights there could be a liability issue that the committee is opening the door for. Mr. Mangels said it is not on this agenda. Mr. Fadhl said that if the issue comes up he is speaking as a farmer who farms in this community, to the Ag Advisory Committee that he believes there is grave concern that if they make this recommendation there will be a liability issue. Ms. Corsello stated that there is no liability issue.

Ms. Corsello then clarified that this will be on next month's agenda, as discussion of impact of agricultural subdivisions that are allowed under the General Plan and to consider input from the committee as to what advice they may want to provide to the Planning Commission and Board. This could be in the form of suggestion of a moratorium or any variety of things to consider in that dialogue.

Mr. Mangels stated that to address Mr. Fadhl's concerns, there will be some discussion next month regarding the impact on agriculture of divisions of agricultural property. It is not known at this point where that discussion will go, or what the committee's input will be.

(b) Announcements

Mr. Brazelton brought it to the committee's attention that he recently discovered it is illegal to have a campfire in Solano County, including on private property. This is covered in Section 19-250 (Parks & Recreation.

Mrs. Paterson directed the committee's attention to a flyer for the Yolo/Solano Economic Development Summit to be held March 26, at UC Davis. She was directed to specifically invite the AAC.

(c) Correspondence

There were no correspondences.

Item 9 Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, April 9, 2008 at 3:00 p.m., first floor conference room, 501 Texas Street, Fairfield.

Item 10 Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.