

**SOLANO COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING ON
November 14, 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, Jeff Dittmer, Donald Johnson, Craig Leathers, Russell Lester, Susan Lippstreu, John Mangels, Al Medvitz, Mary Helen Seeger.

Others Present:

Jearl Howard	Agricultural Commissioner
Carole Paterson	Director, UCCE
Rick Wood	City of Fairfield
Napoleon Britt	City of Fairfield
Brian Miller	City of Fairfield
Narcisa Untal	Resource Management
Fred Zaragoza	Aide to Supervisor Reagan
Kurt Richter	UC Davis Ag Issues Center

Item 1 Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m.; a quorum 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 October 10, 2007

Action to approve the Minutes of the October 10, 2007 meeting was deferred pending a quorum being present.

At approximately 3:30 a quorum was established when an additional AAC member arrived. At this time it was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the October 10, 2007 meeting 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 was not present. However, a member asked what was going on of significance at the Board of Supervisors, and Mr. Howard replied that the Board, along with staff, has been working on updating the Strategic Plan. He informed the Committee that the County hired a new consultant to help facilitate revisions to the Strategic Plan. It has gone from a very laborious process with numerous goals, to a far more strategic process with over-arching goals, and objectives. The revised Strategic Plan has been simplified and aligns the goals and objectives to be more in line with what the Departments are doing or have the capacity to do if the Board chooses to fund new initiatives to accomplish the established goals and objectives.

For the land use portion of this, there are two goals: 1) Complete/get consensus on the General Plan, and 2) Increase the farm gate value of agriculture by 5% adjusted for inflation by 2010. Implementation of recommendations identified in the Ag Futures Project and the AFT study, as well as a number of other suggestions to help address some of agriculture's concerns will be used to meet this goal. Mr. Howard stated that 5% did not sound like much, but when things are on a downward skid it would be a significant improvement and good starting point. The goal was to keep that number realistic, and the Board agreed.

Mr. Howard stated that a special Board of Supervisors' meeting was held on Thursday, November 8 with the consultant and County Department Heads. They were able to produce a finished draft Strategic Plan which will go before the Board for their adoption on the 27th of November. Mr. Howard said that once it is in its final form, it would be good for the Committee to review at a meeting in the near future.

The Board received an update from Resource Management approximately a week and a half ago with respect to where the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is in the General Plan Update process. They talked about septic issues, land uses, and some of the broader issues of that process. It was a benchmarking of sorts to determine whether or not the CAC is on target with their timeframes; the consensus was that they were moving along at a steady pace and generally within the timeframes that the Board of Supervisors had set. Mr. Howard's understanding was that they were perhaps a couple of weeks behind and would be done in mid-January. Mr. Howard inquired of Ms. Untal of Resource Management if this was her understanding as well. She stated that she believed that February was now the projected end date.

Mr. Howard stated that the CAC received a presentation from Al Sokolow and Kurt Richter on the 29th of October, and were extremely impressed with what they heard. It was possible that the CAC had underestimated some of the issues that agriculture is dealing with, as well as the complexity of Solano County's agricultural regions; it may take them some time to work through those concepts. Mr. Howard said that Al and Kurt did an outstanding job of identifying some of the problems that agriculture is facing, especially with regard to agricultural land being bought for non-agricultural use.

<p>(b) Request by Suisun Valley Fund Advisory Committee support request for County Matching Funds for Custom Crush Facility Study RFP. Rick Wood/Napoleon Britt. - ACTION ITEM</p>

Discussion of this item was initially deferred pending a quorum being present.

At approximately 3:30 p.m. a quorum was present with the arrival of an additional Committee member.

Mr. Howard prefaced the presentation of this item with the following remarks: Several months ago the Suisun Valley Fund (SVF) sent a request to Resource Management seeking matching funds to conduct a feasibility study for a custom grape crush facility. Subsequent to receiving the request, a meeting was held which included representatives from the City of Fairfield, County Administrative Department, Resource Management and the Agricultural Department. There was productive discussion about this topic and whether or not the County should be a partner in the study. During this meeting the question arose as to whether this issue had gone before the Agriculture Advisory Committee for a recommendation. It had not, and that is why it is on the agenda today.

Mr. Wood began by stating that agriculture needs to have more infrastructures to support the industry. He gave a bit of history of the Suisun Valley Fund. He stated that the City of Fairfield and SID had an agreement with Suisun Valley agreement the Suisun Valley Fund and the Suisun Valley Fund Advisory Committee (SVFAC) was created. An eight-year agreement, it provides \$200,000 per year to enhance and preserve agriculture in Suisun Valley. It is stated in the General Plan of the City of Fairfield that Suisun Valley will remain agricultural

Although the SVFAC would like to do more, its jurisdiction is limited to assisting agriculture in Suisun Valley. Mr. Wood stated the SVFAC would like to use this project as the catalyst to recruit the County as a partner, and feel it is logical for the County to become involved. They would like to create a model for what other cities can do throughout the county to enhance and support the agricultural industry.

One of the activities identified early was the idea of a custom crush facility. The committee thought that one of the things the Fund could do to further its mission would be to conduct a feasibility study on how to attract private investors to come to Solano County to build a custom crush facility; something nearby so growers could use the facility and produce a product with their label on it. The study would explore ways to lower the threshold to make this possible. The City of Fairfield would like to see the County engaged in this process, and possibly provide life beyond the Fund. He stated that what they are doing now is viewed as transitional and are looking beyond the life of the SVF.

Mr. Wood stated that he had provided the Committee with copies of the RFP (proposal). It is proposed that Solano County and the Fund enter into an agreement of matching funds to engage in a feasibility study for building a public crush facility in Solano County. He stated that this facility would not necessarily be in Suisun Valley. If the study showed that the best place for the crush facility to be was Ryer Island, then it would be built at Ryer Island. He presented this example to say that although the crush facility would be to benefit agriculture in the Suisun Valley, it would not necessarily be built in Fairfield. It could be anywhere in the County.

Mr. Wood then opened the floor for discussion. It was clarified that matching funds meant that the County would contribute \$25,000. A member asked if there had been a

polling of the local grape growers to gauge the demand for such a facility. Mr. Wood said that the Grape Growers Association was consulted, but there was no polling of individual grape growers. A Committee member stated that there was already adequate capacity with existing crush facilities in the County; private facilities. He then stated that County funds were being requested to do a study which would bring in an outside facility that would not live by the same rules as the private facilities. Mr. Wood acknowledged that putting a custom crush facility on industrial zoned property was much different than a crush facility on privately owned property.

There was much discussion with regard to the private versus public facility and whether or not the County should contribute funds to a study that may tell us that there are an abundance of crush facilities in the County. One of the members stated that he has a crush facility, but the problem is that you can only crush your own grapes. No one else can use your facility to crush grapes. It was suggested that a poll should be taken of the grape growers in Solano County to see if they are truly interested in a crush facility. Mr. Britt stated that this is one of the things that the feasibility study would explore. Mr. Wood stated that the purpose of the feasibility study is to determine whether or not such a facility would be feasible. Mr. Wood stated that the SVF is restricted to only use the Suisun Valley Funds for projects that preserve/enhance agriculture in Suisun Valley. Mr. Britt added that a percentage of local grape growers are going out of Solano County to have grapes crushed.

Another issue, a Committee member stated, was that a facility like this would only be used seasonally, possibly only a few weeks, and then sit unused for the rest of the year. It was felt that this would not be feasible. It was suggested that perhaps the use of the facility could be expanded to include a storage facility. Mr. Wood said that the feasibility study would explore these types of issues. It was also stated that a public crush facility may undermine the private facilities already in use.

Mr. Wood was asked if the City of Fairfield had investigated whether or not other counties who have custom crush facilities had used public funds for a feasibility study. Mr. Britt replied in the affirmative, stating that in other counties some cities have been able to use public funds for a feasibility study.

A Committee member inquired as to whether a motion could be made that states the Committee would like to see a broader scope of the proposal: to see what specifically is going on now as a first phase and then if the first phase proves there is a need and interest then it would go forward. It was clarified by the Chair that the Committee's part was to recommend whether or not the County should provide matching funds for the Custom Crush Facility Feasibility Study and then add their comments to make sure their concerns are being addressed. Mr. Britt stated that the proposal could not be broken into parts and still be workable.

A motion was made that the Committee support the request by the City of Fairfield asking the County to authorize \$25,000 in matching funds to conduct a feasibility study for a custom crush facility in partnership with the Suisun Valley Fund Advisory Committee. It was again asked if the proposal could be amended to broaden the scope of the proposal.

Discussion continued as to what or what not could be done to change the proposal, and Rick Wood said that this was ready to go now, and that changing it would incur more expense, and was not feasible.

A friendly amendment was offered to the motion to include a cold storage and other complimentary facilities to the scope of the feasibility study. The maker of the motion agreed to the amendment. The amended motion was seconded. The motion carried by the following vote: 7 in favor and 1 opposed.

(c) Farm/Agriculture Education Tour Planning – Jerry Howard

Mr. Howard stated that this item was placed on the agenda per the Committee's request. He stated it would be appropriate to start planning this event now. He asked what the Committee envisions for this tour, stating that there should be discussions on this. He would like the Committee to keep in mind that the General Plan is going on; the CAC will have completed their work by spring time, along with the Planning Commission. Several things have brought to the Committee's attention with regard to what agriculture needs to be sustainable into the future. An agricultural would be a great way to showcase some of the most critical issues to decision makers first hand.

The Committee members discussed a possible timeframe, being mindful that it did not conflict with other events happening in the County, such as the May Fair and road tours of Solano County.

A Committee member felt the Delta area should be included in this tour. Mr. Howard stated that there are a number of issues that are starting to surface with respect to the Delta such as expansion of the Yolo Bypass, etc. The general feeling was that the public should be educated with regard to the Delta. The question was raised by a member as to what types of things could people see on a tour of the Delta area in the spring. It was stated there are lambs in the Delta area, and also people could be educated as to the issues with the levee and flooding, and the importance of Delta water; 50% of urban water comes from the Delta, not just SID. It would be good to educate people on the economic importance of the Delta.

There was further discussion revolving around how the previous tours had been done, what time of the year, where the tour should go, what the objective of the tour should be, and who are we trying to educate. It was suggested that perhaps it should center on the sustainability of agriculture in Solano County. Mr. Howard agreed.

It was suggested by the Chair that this item be put on several agendas, and perhaps a subcommittee should be formed to discuss ideas, timing, etc. The Committee was in agreement. Mrs. Paterson offered to help facilitate such a committee. Mr. Medvitz, Mr. Leathers, and Mr. Lester volunteered to be on the committee.

(d) SAREP Grant Project for 2008 – Carole Paterson

Mrs. Paterson began with an update of the 2007 SAREP Grant Project. On October 19 the last of the SAREP dollars were used to hold an expo at the Vallejo Ferry Building on a Friday evening. When people came off of the ferry, they were provided with fresh and

processed items for free (the grant paid for this) by producers of Solano County to help people understand what's in their own backyard. She stated that people were thrilled. They were able to work out an agreement with the City of Vallejo to have folks on the Plaza and it was quite an evening. There was squash, pumpkins, pomegranates, etc. Mrs. Paterson believes this is an area that can be further developed in the future. This was called "Savor Solano", Mrs. Paterson expressed the hope that an ongoing agreement could be developed with the City of Vallejo for the Ferry Building to continue doing this in the future..

Mrs. Paterson stated that this year there will a somewhat similar program, and wants to do six workshops in the coming year. From knowledge gained last year about what people are interested in, those workshops will include teaching business plan development, teaching people how to advocate for themselves in situations such as talking to their policy makers, and teaching how to use websites for marketing information.

Mrs. Paterson also said that she was going to do a section on focus group interviews to find out what people; both consumers and producers want to see when it comes to branding. Although Suisun Valley has worked very hard on this, this focus group would include all of Solano County. She said that as things begin to turn up during the month of December she will bring more information to the Committee. Mrs. Paterson said she would like to seek input from the Committee as to who would be good to talk to as focus groups. Along with this, Mrs. Paterson said that a young man from the Berkeley campus is interested in talking to local producers about ag tourism and how they see that in Solano County.

Item 6 Continuing Business

(a) U C Davis Ag Futures Project Update – Kurt Richter

Mr. Richter presented a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the findings of the Ag Futures Project. He began by saying that there is nothing that the County can do about regional and global economic forces.

Mr. Richter stated when he made this presentation to the CAC he encouraged them to take the time to understand Solano County from an agricultural regional basis because it is so unique in so many areas. He told them that the job of learning agriculture in Solano County is extremely difficult, and they should take their time in learning it. He wanted them to understand that they should not rush this learning process.

He shared how Solano County is divided up into different agricultural regions. He pointed out on the slides how Solano County is divided up into different land uses, and the economic value of production per acre basis in different regions. For example, Dixon Ridge produces about 33% of agriculture value in Solano County. A member asked if the percentages included nurseries. Mr. Richter said that nursery was pulled out in order to be able to look only at agriculture. He stated that, for example, if they included Hines Nursery in Winters, the value would be off of the chart.

Mr. Richter said different regions had different values according to the commodities being grown, and the boundaries were important to the analysis. He pointed out that Suisun Valley was low because of so much fallow ground (which equates to zero) which drops the value of per acre basis. Winters is doing excellent high value production, as well as the Dixon Ridge area. Suisun Valley is under-performing on a regional basis because of the fallow ground.

He stated that the challenge of Winters is related to the high rural residential encroachment and how it impacts agricultural areas. He said that people don't have an understanding of agriculture. He also said that Winters is a vital important part of agriculture of Solano County because of high value production per acre, and needs to be protected.

The Dixon Ridge is a much larger area, has smaller parcels, more commodities, and is a much more complex agricultural system. Dairy cattle production is the high agriculture production in this area. There were a lot of unspecified areas due to the fact that they could not access some of the properties to see what was grown there. His regional analysis is based on what is going into the parcels. Mr. Richter stated that there was not a lot of acreage in tomatoes at this time.

Mr. Richter pointed out again that it is not urban encroachment that is affecting agricultural areas, but rural residential encroachment on the agricultural areas that is what is really changing the systems in areas. Mr. Richter said that someone asked him how we can quickly raise the agricultural value in Solano County; his response was to bring in another dairy. He said that this surprises people.

He summarized all other areas, and stated that an important key was to keep population out. Problematic is that there are a lot of older agricultural landowners who want to get out of production. How do you make an area attractive for new landowners to come in and continue agricultural production?

In the area of ag tourism, Mr. Richter said that Napa Valley is a good model for that. He said that it is huge leap from being a producer to entering into ag tourism, and this involves a lot of planning; people will need help to do this.

There were several compliments from the Committee on Mr. Richter's presentation. It was very much in depth and a good visual of what is going on in Solano County agriculture.

(b) General Plan Update – Narcisa Untal
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Ms. Untal wanted the Committee to be aware of future dates for the General Plan updates. On November 26, the CAC will be discussing ag issues and opportunities, and on December 10 the CAC will be reviewing draft policy recommendations on agriculture.

She stated that it was important to note that the final report coming from Mr. Richter is due December 14, and the CAC has decided that when Mr. Richter's final report comes, there will be discussion of some of those policies from the December 10th meeting at the January 14 or January 28 meeting. Public discussion from the December 10th meeting

will be included. The time of the December 10th meeting is 6:00 and will be held at the multipurpose rooms in the Government Center.

(c) Status of UCCE Pomologist Position – Carole Paterson

Mrs. Paterson stated that the Pomologist position has been filled. Her name is Carolyn DeBuse and will start on December 17. Mrs. Paterson stated that although she starts on December 17, she would invite her to attend the December 12 AAC meeting.

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

Mr. Howard stated that due to time constraints, discussion of this item would be deferred to the next meeting. He encouraged AAC members who had not completed the prioritization questionnaire to please do so for the next 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 comments from the public.

(b) Announcements

Mr. Howard distributed a draft copy of a proposed fire ordinance from the Dixon Fire Department. Mr. Howard stated that he believed he had read something that said that the ordinance goes beyond what the law requires. He stated that the cover letter indicates that they desire to adopt this by late November, which does not give much opportunity to discuss it before action is taken. He strongly urged the Committee to read through the document and review and comment as appropriate.

Mr. Howard relayed information that there an economic summit will be held on December 13, 2007. Details were not yet available, but he wanted to the Committee to be aware that Kurt and Al will be making their presentation and are the featured speakers on agriculture. This is the third economic summit; agriculture has not been a focus of the previous summits. However, Steve Pierce, former aide to Supervisor Reagan, contacted Mr. Howard and Mr. Richter recently, asking that Kurt and Al make their presentation at this year's economic summit. Typically registration is around 8:30; Kurt and Al's presentation is scheduled tentatively for 10:00.

(c) Correspondence

There were no correspondences.

Item 9 Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, December 12, 2007 at 3:00 p.m., first floor conference room, 501 Texas Street, Fairfield.

Item 10 Adjourn Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.