

Solano County Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) Meeting
Wednesday, November 14, 2019
3:00 PM
501 Texas Street, Downstairs Conference Room
Fairfield, California 94534-9700
Phone 707-784-1310

MINUTES

Ag Advisory Meeting November 14, 2019

Meeting called to order at 3:04 by Moira Burke

Members present: Ian Anderson, Moira Burke, Barbara Comfort, Jeff Dittmer, Lisa Howard, Jennifer King, Al Medvitz, Mary Helen Seeger

Members not present: Bruce Brazelton, Craig Leathers, Russell Lester

Guests present: Ed King Agricultural Commissioner; Sharon Garrett, Agricultural Office Staff; Sarah Hawkins, Farmbudsman; Chris Rogers, County Administrator's Office; Mike Yankovick, Resource Management; Morgan Doran UC Cooperative Extension; Priscilla Yeane Deputy Ag Commissioner; Jim Currie Solano County Sheriff

Mary Helen Seeger moved and Lisa Howard seconded approving the agenda, passed unanimously.

Lisa Howard moved and Jennifer King seconded approving the minutes, passed unanimously.

New Business

A. Update on recent Board of Supervisor's activity

Mike Yankovich gave an update that the Planning Commission had recommended to the Board of Supervisors that the Sikh Temple, in an agriculturally zoned part of Suisun, be allowed to undertake its proposed expansion, and the BOS did vote to approve. The acreage will remain the same, just building improvements will be made.

B. Planning Commission

The board will be hearing about efforts to make a regional parks and open space district. If it moves forward, there may be some polling to see if it has enough support to go on the 2020 ballot. The park district wouldn't own new lands but would be about partnerships to open trails in lands that Solano Land Trust has acquired. Part of the plan is to get ranger services to watch over the lands and make sure nefarious activities aren't taking place. A

parcel tax of \$10-19 would be needed to fund this, and Resource Management believes that funding at the \$19 level would allow public access to all Land Trust properties. The BOS will discuss this on November 11, 2019.

C. Discussion of Committee Openings

Doug Stonebreaker has the application for the board in hand but hasn't submitted it as of yet. Committee members are encouraged to continue thinking of recruits.

D. Bucktown Energy Storage Facility

There was a huge turnout to the City of Vacaville's meeting regarding the proposed facility, and everyone opposed the plan, as it was a terrible fit for the location. The proposal was for 10 acres of building alone and was both inconsistent with the General Plan and a poor fit for an agricultural area. These sorts of battery storage operations are a brand new type of facility and the ordinances may need updating to deal with them.

E. State Water Resilience Portfolio

Governor Newsom is recommending a single Delta tunnel now to take water to Southern California, though it doesn't really matter how many tunnels when the issue is the volume of water being exported. The proposed tunnel intake has been moved north, most likely due to new studies on salt water intrusion into the Delta due to sea level rise.

A motion was made by Al Medvitz that the committee review water issues and write a letter to the Board of Supervisors expressing the views of the committee. Motion seconded by Mary Helen Seeger, passed unanimously. The Agricultural Commissioner will have a draft of suggested letter for review at the December AAC meeting.

F. Industrial Hemp Updates

First year of experience has now passed with CDFA regulating industrial hemp. There were three applications granted to grow in the county, on 475 acres, all on Ag-zoned properties. Each applicant has to say where the grow is located and what varieties they would be growing. The smallest grow was in a fairly obvious field near Davis, where it could be easily seen. The majority of hemp grown in the US recently has been for CBD oil, and that variety ends up looking a lot like the marijuana plants, which makes them of greater interest to passers-by. These grows ended up with thefts, increased traffic associated with them, a shooting, and some unsavory characters. Many of the "security" people at the grows were not licensed, and some had arrest warrants outstanding- and were possibly the source for some of the unpleasant activities happening at the grows. The Sheriff's staff has had to accompany the agricultural staff to the fields when they took samples of hemp to send in for analysis. Some samples went missing while in transit to the labs to be tested for CBD, so multiple sample collection was required.

The BOS enacted an emergency moratorium at the November 5 meeting to keep new permits from being issued. Current growers can continue activities until the end of the calendar year if they submit a security plan. So far, 23 counties in California have put moratoriums on growing hemp. The Solano Agricultural Department has put together a proposal for how to re-regulate industrial hemp.

Discussion ensued about how the committee feels about sending a letter to the BOS supporting an extended moratorium until solutions could be found to some of these issues. Motion was made by Al Medvitz to draft a letter, seconded by Jeff Dittmer, passed unanimously; Commissioner Ed King will draft a letter and distribute to the AAC for review.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- a. LESA progress
No Update

- b. Agricultural Updates

Dixon office has been open regularly Monday, Wednesday, Friday, for one hour each day, with extra office hours during permitting season. They aren't really getting much foot traffic, and are proposing ending these office hours, though still letting people make appointments there on an as-needed basis, and staff will still be there working on things, they just won't have dedicated hours for the public.

Trapping season has come to a close with no fruit fly detection this year.

Weed Management Group reconvened after several years of not happening. Next meeting will be December 3, any who are interested are welcome to attend.

Pesticide continuing education training is coming up.

- c. Farmbudsman

Succession planning class specifically for agricultural producers will be offered November 14, and possibly again in the spring. If there are ideas for classes that members would like to attend, the Farmbudsman is happy to hear them.

- d. Bicycles

Al Medvitz expressed concern about the older people in Rio Vista riding bikes along the busy roads and wanted to know if the county can put restrictions on those roads for safety reasons.

Barbara Comfort brought up citing bike riders who are breaking traffic laws, as she feels like there are many riders who are flouting the laws that apply to them.

- e. GSA report

Board is meeting tomorrow

- f. Ag Futures Study for Solano County working group

The study should probably coincide with the next General Plan update. Lisa Howard brought up looking at agritourism closely- it may be a controversial topic, but it also allows many people to keep farming in an environment with rising land prices.

The group was also curious as to what the Flannery Group is up to- they've spent tens of millions buying up land and have been tight lipped about their plans for the land. The group is fronted by a legal firm claiming to represent American farm families.

They're currently letting the farmers keep farming- they just have to cover their property taxes without needing to pay market rate rental prices. Al Medvitz requested this be on the December meeting agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE

Next meeting will be December 11, 2019

Adjourn meeting at 4:55pm

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Hawkins, Farmbudsman and Sharon Garrett, Agricultural Office Staff