



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 6, 2009

Farm Bureau Office
180 Industrial Way
Buellton, Ca

APPROVED MINUTES

These minutes reflect the actions and general discussion of the Committee.

The Agricultural Advisory Committee was called to order by Grant Cremers, Vice-Chair, at 2:00 pm at the Farm Bureau Office in Buellton.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: 6

Grant Cremers, Vice-Chair
Bradley Miles
Andy Mills (Alternate for Willy Chamberlin)
LeRoy Scolari
Paul Van Leer
June Van Wingerden

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: 5

Brian Caird
Kari Campbell-Bohard, Chair
Greg France
Dorothy Laine
Richard Quandt

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: 5

Mike Hays, Stephanie Stark, Brian Tetley & Justin Feek, Planning and Development
Bill Gillette, Agricultural Commissioner

NUMBER OF INTERESTED PERSONS: 7

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Public Comment

Re: Greenhouse operation along Hwy 101 in Los Alamos has a development permit being processed by P&D and is having issues with the fire department.

III. Minutes

Consideration of the March 4, 2009 and April 1, 2009 minutes was continued until the next meeting.

IV. Report from the Planning Director & Agricultural Commissioner – Bill Gillette

John Baker, Planning Director, was unable to attend due to a last minute schedule change. Bill Gillette addressed the Committee.

Re: SB 170 (Florez) – The bill proposed to give tribes the opportunity to cancel Williamson Act contracts. For now the bill is dead but may be amended and resurface next year.

Re: Disaster Declaration– If you are having ag related problems because of the drought please contact the Ag Commissioner's Office.

V. Reports From Agricultural Planners – Mike Hays & Stephanie Stark

Mike addressed the Committee regarding:

NRCS Permit Streamlining – In 2005, the Grading Ordinance was amended to exempt Federal Cost Share NRCS projects. Despite this amendment, the Grading Ordinance was never reprinted. NRCS practices are the same regardless of the funding source. Therefore, to resolve the Permit Streamlining issue, the Grading Ordinance will be amended a second time to also exempt NRCS non-federal cost share projects. The Grading Ordinance will be reprinted with new language that exempts all NRCS projects, regardless of the funding source.

Ag Buffer Policy – There are no updates to report at this time. However, Mike and Stephanie will be meeting with the San Luis Obispo County ag planners to discuss their existing ag buffer policy.

Ag Planning Roundtable Meeting – Mike and Stephanie will attend the Central Coast Ag Planners Roundtable meeting in June.

Land Use Development Code Permit Streamlining Process –The Draft Negative Declaration will be released soon and the Planning Commission hearing is set for July 15th.

Stephanie addressed the Committee regarding:

Grower attendance at planning meetings – Stephanie recently attended a Goleta Community Plan update meeting about agriculture. Also in attendance were several local growers who were able to answer ag related questions, provide a farming perspective and assist with the planning process.

VI. Santa Ynez Community Plan - Brian Tetley and Justin Feek

Brian Tetley and Justin Feek from P&D's Long Range Planning division provided a brief overview of the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan (SYVCP) and final EIR. Information was provided in the AAC pre-meeting packet. LRP staff will include AAC comments in their presentation of the SYVCP to the Planning Commission (PC) on May 13th but encouraged the AAC to send a formal transmittal directly to the Planning Commission as well. The presentation and discussion focused on the

Heritage Sites (HS) Overlay, Existing Developed Rural Neighborhoods (EDRN), and the Downzone Alternative (DA). HS parcels would retain their existing zoning and land use designations but future proposals to develop and subdivide them will be subject to additional policy and project review. The plan area includes several EDRNs and proposes to add more. The DA precludes larger ag parcels (mostly Heritage Sites) from further subdivision and would change the land use designation from Inner-Rural (AG-I) to Rural (AG-II) and increase the minimum parcel size to 40 acres. Overall, the DA would increase the amount of Rural land within the SYVCP, decrease the number of buildable lots and decrease the number of potential new residences. The EIR identified the DA as environmentally superior and Staff is recommending the PC adopt the DA. AAC discussion focused on the DA concept and whether factors such as type of ag, impact on landowners, and agricultural viability were considered. Some members were strongly opposed to including AG-II parcels in a community plan and others added that small parcels can support agriculture. Public comments were focused on the history of the SYVCP, ag buffers, loss of development rights under the DA, and ag potential on AG-I land.

Motion: The Agricultural Advisory Committee made the following recommendation to the Planning Commission:

1. Reduce the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan boundary so that it is co-terminus with the existing rural boundary line.
2. Within the rural boundary line, there should be no conversion of existing lots to Ag-II zoning.
3. Sites within the rural boundary line that are identified in the Downzone Alternative should be studied for their agricultural potential before rezoning is determined.
4. Study the appropriateness of retaining existing AG-II lots within the rural boundary line.

The motion was made by Andy Mills, seconded by Paul Van Leer and carried by a unanimous vote.

VII. SB 715 (Wolk) - Bill Gillette

Bill Gillette summarized the bill and explained the County's existing practices regarding land under a Williamson Act contract. The County Legislative Committee is looking at all bills involving the Williamson Act, including SB 715, and requested input from the AAC. SB 715 has three components: 1.) Verification of continuous agricultural income. Currently the County sends out a voluntary annual questionnaire and contacts the owner if there are continual reports of low production. The bill requires "verification of continuous ag income" via a mandatory annual questionnaire. The bill does not define the term verification of continuous ag income nor include a caveat for low production years. 2.) Land owner cannot subdivide land of it severely impacts the ag viability of the land. This is not a big issue because it is already in the County's Uniform Rules. 3.) Non-renewing contracts. The rate at which property taxes increase depends on who initiates the non-renewal. Currently, if the owner initiates non-renewal taxes increase significantly the first year. If the County initiates non renewal, the owner can protest and the taxes don't increase until four years later. SB 715 removes the option to protest (and delay property tax increase) and taxes increase in one year. The Farm Bureau and Cattlemen's Association oppose the bill and a FB letter dated 04/23/09 was distributed during the meeting. The FB and CA have met with the author, Senator Wolk, and some amendments have since been proposed. Depending on the amendments, Bill agreed to pass along the FB and CA concerns to the County Legislative Committee.

VIII. Committee Reports from Committee Members

Grant: The AAC welcomes Bradley Miles, a new member representing 1st District Supervisor Salud Carbajal. Everyone thanked Carl Stucky for his years of contribution as an AAC member.

Leroy: The City of Lompoc's proposed PXP annexation was denied by the City Council.

IX. Adjourned at 4:30 pm

NEXT MEETING: The next proposed AAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3rd.