

Solano County Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) Meeting
Wednesday, December 11, 2019
3:00 PM – 5:00PM
501 Texas Street, Downstairs Conference Room
Fairfield, California 94533-9700

MINUTES

Meeting called to order at 3:13 by Russ Lester.

Members present: Al Medvitz, Russ Lester, Jennifer King, Craig Leathers, Barbara Comfort, Mary Helen Seeger.

Members not present: Ian Anderson, Bruce Brazelton, Moira Burke, Jeff Dittmer, Lisa Howard.

Guests present: Ed King, Agricultural Commissioner; Sharon Garrett, Office Assistant II (C); Sarah Hawkins, Farmbudsman; Chris Rogers, Management Analyst (Principal); Dax West Lieutenant Sheriff; Bill Emlen, Director of Resource Management; Morgan Doran, UCANR; Priscilla Yeane Deputy Ag Commissioner.

Mary Helen moved and Craig Leathers seconded approving the agenda, passed unanimously.

Barbara Comfort moved and Al Medvitz seconded approving the November minutes, Craig Leathers and Russ Lester abstained, otherwise passed unanimously.

New Business

- A. Update on recent Board of Supervisor's activity
Board of Supervisors approved extending the moratorium on hemp production. Early next year, the BOS will be looking at regulation of the crop and whether it can be outlawed entirely. If it cannot, new stringent regulations will be put in place to try to avoid some of the problems encountered in 2019. The state has been putting a lot of time and effort into regulating hemp, and no one really expected so much time to be spent on hemp.
- B. Planning Commission
Planning commission did approve a modification of a horse stable operation just outside of Dixon to enlarge it- this was after the work was done without permits.
Al Medvitz brought up road work being done along Highway 12, and whether the committee can be updated on when/what work will be done before it happens. Bill Emlen offered to have the engineering manager update the committee on the capital improvement plan to give a heads up on where construction will be happening in the near future.
Russ Lester inquired as to what is happening with Stevenson Bridge and whether a new one will be constructed in the near future. An update will be provided on that at the same time as the capital improvement plan.

C. Discussion of Committee Openings

Still have three openings.

D. Flannery Group Land Aquisition

Bill Emlen brought a map of the land acquired by the Flannery Group. So far value is \$73 million, and 18,368 acres to date. State has been contacted to see if the same group is buying up land in other counties as well but has not heard back yet. Farmers are being offered above market rates for land and are being allowed to stay on the land as long as they pay the property taxes. The group has been contacted about some well problems, but calls have not been returned. Purchases only started in February of 2018 and the most recent was in November 2019, so has been a very rapid expansion of ownership. Bill will try to have an update about this issue for the next meeting.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

A. LESA progress No

Update

B. Agricultural Updates

Hemp harvest finished last week. Continuance of moratorium will allow the hemp growers to keep materials on site through March of 2020. Field work is done, and early next year the Ag department will be coming up with suggested regulations. There appears to be a bit of a glut of CBD oil on the market right now because so many speculators got into production. Hemp will be included in the 2019 crop report, but how exactly is still being determined.

Asian citrus psyllid trapping continues this year.

The Weed Management group is anticipating CDFA funding next year so small weed management/eradication projects and surveys can be done to tackle infestations before they get too big.

C. Farmbudsman

Succession planning class specifically for agricultural producers will be offered March 19, 2020 from 2-4pm at the Small Business Development Office, 505 Chadbourne Road, Fairfield. The class is free, sign up at www.solanosbdc.org

D. Bicycles

Barbara Comfort feels that the bike issue is getting worse, and nothing has changed. Sheriff Lieutenant Dax West attended to speak about bikes and bringing in CHP to address the issues and noted that some of the people driving vehicles are violating traffic laws as well when it comes to interacting with cyclists. Al Medvitz brought up the issue of bikes on the busy roads around Rio Vista and if they can be restricted for the bikers' own safety. Barbara Comfort brought up violation of traffic laws by cyclists on Pleasants Valley Road. Lieutenant West acknowledged general bicycle issues throughout the county, including mass bicycle groups in Vacaville, and the challenge of enforcing the traffic laws when there are such large groups bringing traffic to a standstill at once.

The problem of olives and their pits being on the road in the northern part of the county was brought up. Solutions were suggested for the issue to be addressed in the future.

E. GSA report

Russ was not able to attend the last meeting, however, the planning process for GSP is still moving along. North Bay-Delta GSA has fallen apart- two reclamation districts need to be integrated into a consortium, looks like they'll possibly be worked into the Yolo GSA. The districts don't pump much groundwater, so the process should be relatively easy.

USGS is working on determining historical groundwater levels to figure out where the base line should be established.

F. State Water Resilience Portfolio

Concern was expressed about the continuation of the water tunnel project by the Governor and how it will affect the farmers in the Delta. Farmers are worried about salt water intrusion as a result of taking so much water out of the Delta.

G. Ag Futures Study Working Group

General Plan next update is expected to be in 2028 at the earliest, so the committee is hopeful that the next Ag Futures study will happen before that takes place. A 2020 goal of the committee is to start the planning for the Ag Futures study to get a framework in place. The last study could be a good thing for members to review and use as a starting point. Including a closer look at water issues is probably merited.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE

Morgan Doran shared fliers for the Farming in the New Normal class happening January 7, 2020, and that the early bird registration deadline has been extended to December 16.

Next meeting will be January 8, 2020

Meeting adjourned at 4:47pm

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Hawkins, Farmbudsman and Sharon Garrett, Office Assistant II