County of San Luis Obispo
Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board

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Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board (ALAB)

Positions/Members/Terms

CHAIR: R. Don Warden

District One: Mecham Appt.
Dee Lacey, (1/13)

District Two: Gibson Appt.
Lisen Bonnier (1/11)

District Three: Hill Appt.
Tom Ikeda (1/13)

District Four: Achadjian Appt.
Bill Struble (1/11)

District 5: Patterson Appt.
Christine Maguire (1/09)

Agriculture Finance Rep.
Mark Pearce (8/10)

Cattlemen Rep.
Dick Nock

Coastal San Luis RCD Rep.
Jean-Pierre Wolff (8/11)

Direct Marketing/Organic Rep.
Eric Michielssen (4/12)

Environmental Rep.
Anne McMahon (5/11)

Farm Bureau Rep.
R. Don Warden

Nursery Rep.
David Pruitt (4/12)

Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD Rep.
Charles Pritchard (1/10)

Vegetable Rep.
Richard Quandt (4/12)

Wine Grape Rep.
Neil Roberts (4/12)

County Agricultural Commissioner
Bob Lilley, *Ex-Officio*

U.C. Coop. Extension / Farm Advisor
Mary Bianchi, *Ex-Officio*

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 6, 2009

Guests Present: Bill Robeson

Absent Members: Mark Pearce, Jean-Pierre Wolff, Neil Roberts, Christine Maguire

1. Call to Order: 6:10 PM. Quorum Present

2. Open comment: None

3. Member/agency reports

- Agriculture Department (Bob Lilley)
  - AGP 16 – Agricultural Land Conservation Programs has been discussed at five different ALAB meetings. Based on the information presented and subsequent group discussions, ALAB determined they would not recommend the county pursue a county initiated program. The final step in the process will include staff providing a summary of meeting discussion points and inventory of easements within the county as well as developing a web site page with links to additional easement information. ALAB will review and comment on staff information and confirm completeness.
  - Information was provided about the upcoming vector control district ballot measure (218 assessment), on behalf of Curt Batson, County Environmental Health Director. Ballots must be returned for votes to count and the assessment is estimated to raise a total $1.1 million per year.
  - Lynda Auchinachie indicated there will be a Planning Commission study session on the Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) May 28, 2009. Planning Commission hearings on the COSE are planned for June and July.
  - Mary Bianchi provided members a map of the Highly Productive Soils of San Luis Obispo County. The map was included as part of the soil subcommittee recommendation for changes to the COSE. The entire soil subcommittee

recommendation package can be found at
http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Page10826.aspx

4. Minutes: March 2, 2009, Motion – Anne McMahon. 2nd – Bill Struble. Approved: Unanimous.

5. Review Amendments to modify policies and ordinance language in the Ag and Open Space Element & Land Use Ordinance relating to Agricultural Cluster Subdivisions (policies AGP 5, 20, 21, 22, 23) – Bill Robeson Planning Department:

- Don Warden indicated he would recuse himself and step down as chairperson for the ag cluster discussion because he currently has an ag cluster application under review by the Planning Dept. Joy Fitzhugh will be the Farm Bureau voting member. As Vice Chair, Bill Struble took over the responsibilities of chairperson.
- Bob Lilley provided a brief history of the ag cluster ordinance. Agriculture and Open Space Element (AOSE) was adopted in 1998. During 2004 ag cluster ordinance changes were adopted that attempted to reflect AOSE policies. Planning Commission (PC) held a series of public study sessions on the effectiveness of a handful of AOSE policies during 2006 and 2007. Basically, PC determined policies were working well with the exception of ag cluster policies. PC identified the ag cluster policies as problematic and after numerous ag cluster specific study sessions wrote a letter to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) recommending a number of changes. On February 17, 2009, the BOS authorized staff to review and improve ag cluster policies and ordinance. In addition to reviewing cluster related policies, a recommendation was made to consider changing AGP5 by limiting the number of primary residences on land within the Agriculture land use category to one primary and any subsequent residences would be required to meet farm support quarters standards. Additionally, the BOS discussed the analysis should include elimination of all subdivision of agricultural land.
- Bill Robeson introduced himself as the lead planner for the ag cluster review effort. He provided a hard copy summary of the 1) authorization that included an outline of BOS direction identifying specific issues to be addressed as part of the review effort, 2) summary of the process, and 3) a rough timeline of the process. Bill indicated that elimination of all subdivision of agricultural land was not specifically authorized. Bill further indicated the scoping process was to include consultation with ALAB as well a questionnaire that was sent to a variety of stakeholders and community advisory groups. A questionnaire was provided to each ALAB member (responses due to the County Dept of Planning and Building April 27).
- ALAB members indicated it was extremely important that the goals of the cluster program be clearly articulated. If program is aimed to assist with estate planning, what does that mean?
- A variety of questions were raised regarding current level of development on agricultural parcels. In general, less than 10% of ag properties build a second residence. Additional questions will be answered as the review process progresses.
- Bill Struble indicated the existing ordinance is very complex and questioned the effectiveness of the way the questionnaire was being distributed. Discussion ensued and Dee Lacey indicated support for the focused distribution of questionnaires. Mary Bianchi indicated the questionnaire can provide cross tabulations.
- ALAB reviewed March 25 cover letter of questionnaire. Item 1 - proposed AGP5 limitation of primary residences discussed.
- Motion opposing proposal to reduce number of primaries on existing parcels with statement

that this limitation is not an appropriate way to deal with the cluster density issues – Dee Lacey. 2nd- Tom Ikeda. Motion approved. Anne McMahon opposed.

- Discussion regarding Item 2 – Reduce or eliminate the density bonus. Anne McMahon recommends ag cluster projects should have a cap (limitation) on the number of residential parcels created. How many parcels are necessary to achieve goal of providing options for estate planning and/or providing housing for those involved with the agricultural business? How many residential parcels does a farmer or rancher need to create to derive the additional income to supplement farming operations and protect the farm for on going agriculture? How many parcels can be created without creating all the problems identified and becoming the death knell for agriculture?
- Motion to support eliminating the density bonus and instituting a cap on the number of residential parcels created to a maximum of 8 parcels on project sites of 5,000 acres or less- Anne McMahon. Dee Lacey seconds for discussion.
- Lisen Bonnier suggests there needs to be a new way to determine the level of development associated with ag cluster subdivisions. She recommended eliminating the current standard that allows for higher development potential on the more productive farmland as well as eliminating NRCS land capability standards as criteria for generating residential development. She recommended an approach that would rearrange underlying lots. She also indicated support for a cap on development and the number of parcels created using the ag cluster tool.
- Mary Bianchi indicates that it is highly unlikely to work out formula tonight. She suggests the motion maker consider recommending to the Planning Dept. that the current density bonus is not achieving the intended goals and that the department should undertake an effort to come up with different scenarios in which density could be established for ALAB's comment. The motion maker and second agree and withdrawals original motion.
- Motion to recommend elimination of density bonus and encourage the Planning Department to explore a cap on the maximum amount of residential development allowed by the ag cluster ordinance taking into account a number of variables that have previously been identified - Anne McMahon. 2nd -Lisen Bonnier.
- Don Warden provides background on his project. He identifies that his project is not to generate additional income but for estate planning purposes. His project is 535 acres and totally different than the Santa Margarita Ranch project. His project includes compact design with the exception of a few lots that are not clustered due to a variety of environmental constraints. Roads and water tank included in the 5% area allowed for development. Without density bonus, project would not happen. The alternative to a cluster is not the desired outcome from Don's perspective and a cluster-type project is the most desirable because it preserves the most prime agricultural land and retains existing headquarters. Don also stated if members knew the cost, they would understand why the density bonus is critical. Each site is unique.
- Dee Lacey indicates that the cluster was a way to avoid standard subdivision. She states that the concept should work and all development was to be included within the 5% area allowed for development.
- Chuck Pritchard speaks to the need for economic viability of the land and what the options are. He indicates there needs to be flexibility.
- Lisen Bonnier indicates the fundamental question is when does it become a tool to keep the family farm alive and when does it become a developer's paradise. At what point does the cost of development drive the density too high? At what point can the farmer reap the benefit

or have all the profits gone to the consultants and developer's who buy the lots? Are we the generation who is going to keep the family farm or be the ones to sell out to developers?

- Chuck indicates the simple solution is waving of inheritance tax.
- Joy Fitzhugh supports Mary Bianchi's recommendation indicating goals are not being achieved. Joy stated she is not yet ready to dump the density bonus. She supports major revisions to the density bonus.
- Motion and second withdrawn by makers.
- Motion that ALAB recommends major revisions to the ag density bonus to meet intent of original goal to have adequate incentive to avoid standard subdivision – Mary Bianchi. 2nd – Joy Fitzhugh. Approved. No- Dick Nock and Tom Ikeda.
- Group moved from discussing items outlined in March 25, 2009, memo to a specific section of the questionnaire. Group discussed first four issues listed under the modification section of questionnaire.
- Motion to recommend Planning Dept. require project sites to demonstrate top four items (actively farmed history, adequate water supply, subdivision qualifies on use not potential, roads and water infrastructure counted as 5% of development area) at the time of application for subdivision – Chuck Pritchard. 2nd – Dee Lacey. Approved: Unanimous.

6. Future agenda items

- Agricultural cluster subdivision changes per Board of Supervisors direction continued to May 4, 2009.

Meeting adjourned: 8.35 PM