

ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 4, 2013

Members and Alternates Present: Jean-Pierre Wolff, Tom Ikeda, Jerry Diefenderfer, Claire Wineman, Eric Michielssen, Chuck Pritchard, David Pruitt, Lisen Bonnier, Chuck Pritchard, Mark Pearce, Mark Battany, Dick Nock, Neil Roberts, Don Warden and Dan Rodrigues.

Absent Members: Bill Struble, Cindy Steinbeck, and Richard Hawley,

Guests Present: David Broadwater, Center for Sludge Information; Patricia Wilmore, Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance; Lisa Bodrogi, Cuvee Consulting; Montgomery Norton, Atascadero Grange; Jenna Smith, Central Coast Grown, and Erica Crawford.

Staff: Rich Lichtenfels, Environmental Health Department; Marc Lea and Lynda Auchinachie, Agriculture Department.

Call to Order: 6:00 PM. Quorum present.

- **Open Comment:**

- Jenna Smith from Central Coast Grown (also known as CCAN) indicated they were working with the City of San Luis Obispo to lease productive agricultural land north of Calle Joaquin and east of Los Osos Valley Road. The goal of the effort is to create a demonstration farm for an educational experience. An irrigation well is being installed and the site consists of Class 1 and 2 soils. Jenna would like ALAB members to share information with their organizations.
- Lisa Bodrogi clarified that she is not representing the wine industry by her attendance at ALAB meetings rather she is representing her Cuvee land use planning firm. She did indicate that she is the executive director of CCWA.

- **Announcements from ALAB Members & County AG Dept Staff Updates**

- Claire Wineman reminded ALAB members about the irrigated ag order compliance deadline of March 15, 2013. The main goal is to have a cooperative groundwater monitoring program in place.
- Several members shared various meetings and workshops that will occur during March 2013 including the California Air Resources Board workshop for development of regulations for off-road mobile agricultural equipment and an *E. coli* and livestock discussion in Templeton.
- Chuck Pritchard indicated that the Paso Robles Chamber of Commerce Ag tour is set for May 1, 2013 and tickets are still available for \$65.
- Marc Lea indicated that there is a new proposed rule by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) that would allow the importation of avocados from Spain into the US as long as certain conditions are met. Comments on this proposal will be accepted until April 1, 2013.
- Lynda Auchinachie indicated that at the February 19, 2013, Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting regarding priorities for the Planning Department that both special events and the agricultural cluster subdivision ordinance had been removed from the top ten priorities.

1. Previous Minutes:

MOTION: Approve minutes: **Motion.** Eric Michielssen **2nd.** Lisen Bonnier **Approved: Unanimous.**

2. Presentation – “Biosolids – SLO County Ordinance Updates” (Rich Lichtenfels, Environmental Health Department)

- Rich Lichtenfels indicated that a hearing on the Biosolids Ordinance would be before the BOS on March 12, 2013. Rich shared that three options had been provided to the BOS for consideration. These options include: 1) extend current interim ordinance that was originally adopted in 2004, 2) make the interim ordinance permanent, and 3) move forward with a new draft ordinance that would become permanent. Rich shared that the staff recommendation is for extending the current interim ordinance until 2017.
- Rich indicated the current interim ordinance would be in place until 2014. The reason for the current BOS hearing is in case there was the decision to pursue a new permanent ordinance, the environmental review process could take more than a year and cost between \$300,000 and \$350,000. The biggest difference between a new permanent ordinance and the current interim ordinance is that the new ordinance would address composted biosolids. Rich shared that Kern County passed Measure E to prohibit land application of biosolids. The Measure was challenged in the courts and it appears as though such a prohibition may be overturned.
- ALAB members discussed what biosolids are generated locally and the fact that they are processed out of the county. ALAB members recognized the value of exceptional quality (EQ) biosolids but also raised concerns about the potential for heavy metal, personal care products, and pharmaceutical material being in biosolids. ALAB members discussed that biosolids are sold in bags at local stores and that application of such products are not regulated in these small amounts.
- Rich Lichtenfels indicated that the local biosolids task force and the BOS provided guidance for more stringent regulations than federal restrictions with the goal of protecting public health.
- David Broadwater, from the Center for Sludge Information, provided ALAB members an informational handout summarizing his research on biosolids. David highlighted several of his concerns including the fact that additional information is needed to understand potential contaminants in biosolids prior to adopting a permanent ordinance. David strongly encouraged ALAB members to support the staff recommendation for extending the existing interim ordinance.
- ALAB members discussed how the existing interim ordinance does not address composted material or have conditions such as setbacks, requirements for agronomic application rates etc. and that a comprehensive ordinance will be needed in the future.

MOTION: ALAB members to send a letter to BOS supporting staff recommendation to extend interim ordinance to 2017. **Motion.** Eric Michielssen **2nd.** Lisen Bonnier **Approved: Unanimous.**

3. Update on the development of the “Economic Contributions of San Luis Obispo County” (Marc Lea, Agriculture Department)

- Marc Lea, provided a brief update of the study. Marc asked ALAB members about data associated with: dairy cattle and milk production; poultry and egg production; livestock with the exception of cattle; fats and oil refinery; ice cream; snack foods; and wineries. In general, ALAB members indicated the data associated with the above categories was in substantial error. Marc indicated he would be working with the consultants to refine the information.

4. Review and Discussion of El Dorado County “Local Food and Community Self-Governance Ordinance” - (Eric Michielssen)

- Eric Michielssen refers ALAB members to the draft document he provided at the last meeting. Eric indicated that the proposed ordinance is almost identical to the one adopted by El Dorado County that allows for small farmers to engage in direct marketing and sales without interference from outside regulatory agencies.
- Montgomery Norton with the Atascadero Grange provided background information and indicated he supports the proposal as it was necessary to keep small operators/direct marketers in business.
- ALAB members questioned the division of regulations and/or exemptions based on size. Concerns were raised regarding safety issues that can occur on a farm regardless of the size.
- Marc Lea questioned whether a local law, such as what is currently being proposed, would in fact be superseded by state or federal law. Marc also indicated that the Public Health Department was reviewing the proposed ordinance and would have feedback for ALAB within the next month or two.
- ALAB members discussed the presumption that smaller farms or direct marketers do not have public health safety issues and shared that there are better opportunities for control and testing at larger facilities.
- ALAB members generally agreed that regulation can be burdensome but at the same time recognized that licensing and inspections play a very important role in food production and food safety as well as the protection of consumer confidence. Exemptions for licensing and inspections of a narrowly defined group was generally believed to be problematic for the agricultural industry as a whole.
- Lisen Bonnier stressed the importance of small farms for San Luis Obispo County as a whole and the need to preserve such operations. Lisen believes a strategy should be in place to meet this goal and the while the proposed ordinance may not be the right document there needs to be support for the smaller farmer that makes a huge economic contribution to this county.
- Jean-Pierre suggested that ALAB receive input from Public Health regarding the proposed ordinance and place the item back on the agenda once the input has been received. Jean-Pierre also requested Marc Lea solicit input from County Counsel to ensure such an ordinance would not be superseded by state or federal laws.

Future Agenda Items: April 1, 2013, to be determined.

Meeting adjourned: 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Auchinachie, County Agriculture Department.