

ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, January 6, 2014

Members and Alternates Present: Jean-Pierre Wolff, Lisen Bonnier, Don Warden, Mark Battany, Claire Wineman, Joy Fitzhugh, Melanie Blankenship, Bill Struble, Eric Michielssen, Tom Ikeda, Richard Hawley, David Pruitt, Chuck Pritchard, Jerry Diefenderfer

Absent Members: Mark Pearce, Dick Nock, Neil Roberts

Guests Present: Patricia Wilmore - Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance (Government Affairs Coordinator), Lisa Bodrogi

Staff Present: Marc Lea, Lynda Auchinachie – SLO County Dept. of Agriculture, James Caruso - Planning Department

1. **Call to Order:** 6:05 pm by Chair, Jean-Pierre Wolff. Quorum present.
2. **Open Comment:** Eric Michielssen shared that the United Nations has designated 2014 as “The International Year of Family Farming.”
3. **Announcements from ALAB Members & County Ag Department Staff Updates:**
 - Marc Lea announced that there will be a Mitigating Drought Workshop on January 29, 2014. A web-cast of the workshop will take place in San Luis Obispo UCCE Auditorium at 2156 Sierra Way. Contact UCCE office to register.
4. **Previous Minutes: MOTION:** Approve December 2, 2013, minutes: **Motion:** Don Warden **2nd:** Bill Struble **Approved: Unanimous with two abstentions due to absence**
5. **ALAB Governance: Report from the Vice-Chair Nominating Committee and Election of New ALAB Vice-Chair** (Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff)
 - Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff requested Lisen Bonnier report back on the Vice-Chair nominating committee’s recommendation.
 - Lisen Bonnier indicated that she worked with Mark Pearce and together they concluded that Eric Michielssen was their choice for Vice-Chair. Lisen shared Eric’s strengths with the group and that he had agreed to accept the nomination.
 - Jean-Pierre acknowledge Eric’s excellent record of attendance and participation in meetings and subcommittee work.

MOTION: Elect Eric Michielssen as Vice-Chair of ALAB. **Motion.** Claire Wineman **2nd.** Tom Ikeda **Approved: Unanimous.**

6. Report from ALAB Housing Element Update Subcommittee (Richard Quandt, Eric Michielssen, and Neil Roberts)

- Eric Michielssen provided ALAB members with a handout of facts and figures on farmworker housing. Eric put the information together with the assistance of People's Self Help. Eric indicated that the 2008 Housing Element underestimated the number of farmworker's housing in the county. Eric calculated that currently the People's Self Help has 57 dedicated farmworker units. Eric indicated that there are waiting lists for all of the apartments. Eric emphasized there is a need for additional housing particularly for the single worker category that are often transitory. Eric estimated that based on the waiting lists for apartments there is a need for 15 units in South County and 45 units in North County.
- Eric communicated that Richard Quandt was aware of mobile housing units provided on-site by Talley Farms. Eric also mentioned that Richard Quandt sent comments directly to the Planning Department suggesting that housing be built near fields but not on productive farmland.
- Chair Jean-Pierre Wolff indicated there is a correlation between housing and transportation. ALAB members discussed the need for housing to be close to services and available transportation.
- Lisen Bonnier asked about the group quarters discussion in the existing Housing Element. Eric Michielssen clarified that group quarters are the type of single worker housing that is needed.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff thanked Eric Michielssen for his efforts and indicated there is more farmworker housing than he realized.
- Melanie Blankenship indicated that there is less of a housing need for small farms with short term employment as the majority of the time the workers are gone between November and March and most people don't want to pay rent when they are gone.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff suggested that perhaps there are indirect ways to help the farmworkers. Jean-Pierre shared that he has provided land to grow food and a chicken coop to his workers. This enable farmworkers to live near schools and services while providing an area for them to grow food for the family. Jean-Pierre advocated thinking outside the box and using a more holistic approach to help farmworkers when on-site housing may not be possible.
- Melanie Blankenship recommended that ALAB members read "The Way America Eats" as it describes many of the issues farmworkers face.

7. Renewable Energy Streamlining Project (James Caruso – Planning Department)

- James Caruso stated that the Board of Supervisors approved a renewable energy grant agreement with the California Energy Commission on July 9, 2013. The County was awarded \$638,150 to develop a streamlined development program for solar, wind, and geothermal energy projects. The County partnered with the Economic Vitality Corporation's (EVC) green cluster business group. The streamlined program will identify

areas suitable for a Renewable Energy (RE) combining designation and will focus on infrastructure, energy, process improvement, and economic development. The completion date for the grant work is scheduled to be March 2015.

James shared that the grant funding is being used for consultants to map resources, reach out to stakeholders, create new policies, change existing policies and ordinances, and complete a programmatic environmental impact report. Aspen Environmental Group has been hired due to their extensive energy generation, distribution, and siting knowledge. Initial mapping suggests that large scale wind turbine opportunities are surprisingly limited in the county with only a few ridge top areas identified as suitable. James indicated that stakeholders thought an RE combining designation would be compatible with agriculture but most productive lands should be protected, that urban area locations should be targeted, and that infrastructure is key.

The next steps in the process include developing the project description and streamlining program with performance standards/mitigation. Tier 2 projects located in urban areas such as parking lots and Tier 3 projects that may be as large as 100 acres in rural areas will be the focus of the streamlined program. Infrastructure is key to identifying suitable areas for larger projects.

- Richard Hawley asked if the streamlining program was going to be proposed in the coastal zone or just the inland area. James Caruso clarified that the streamlined program will only be for the inland area of the county because of grant funding and timeframe limitations.
- Joy Fitzhugh asked about how the streamlining program would work for land under Williamson Act.
- James Caruso indicated that the Agricultural Preserve Rules Committee (APRC) will be discussing potential changes to the Rules of Procedure to allow for compatible renewable energy facilities on contracted land.
- Claire Wineman expressed her concerns about having utility scale energy facilities in agricultural production areas. Claire raised concerns about compatibility and conversion. James Caruso indicated that the resource mapping was based on the COSE Important Agricultural Soils classifications and policies.
- Jean-Pierre Wolff shared his concerns about the large footprints of some renewable energy projects such as solar. Jean-Pierre suggested that small scale wind turbines might have more potential and that biodigesters should be part of the mix of technologies considered for streamlining. Jean-Pierre indicated he discussed biodigesters with the consultants during stakeholder outreach and encouraged more forward thinking.
- James Caruso clarified that the legal requirements of the grant are limited to solar, wind, and geothermal projects. James also indicated that the consultant has prepared

information regarding the universe of renewable technologies available and this information will be included in the public documents.

- Richard Hawley inquired about the amount of acreage that has been identified for streamlining and if the program would include streamlining infrastructure as well. James Caruso indicated he was not certain of the total acreage at this time.
- Patricia Wilmore asked if the property owners were going to be informed that their property will be within a proposed RE designation. James Caruso responded that the property owners would be informed and could comment.
- Mark Battany shared that smaller wind turbines are being tested that could also provide for frost protection.
- James Caruso clarified for Lisa Bodrogi that the RE designated areas are for streamlined projects and does not include all possibilities for renewable energy projects. RE areas will be the areas with the greatest potential that meet identified performance standards.
- Joy Fitzhugh wondered if a land owner could request to not be included within an RE designation even if the project description included the area. James Caruso admitted he had not considered such a possibility but thought that “donut holing” could be accommodated.

8. Urgency Ordinance and Conservation and Open Space Element Updates (James Caruso – Planning Department)

- James Caruso summarized the highlights of Urgency Ordinance No. 3246 adopted on August 28, 2013, for unincorporated properties overlying the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin with the exception of specific urban areas. The ordinance established a moratorium on irrigated crop production unless total projected water use was offset by a ratio of 1:1 and required the installation of meters on new wells. Vested rights have also been defined as well as exemptions for 20 acre parcels that have a well. James indicated that Planning staff is currently working with the Upper Salinas- Las Tablas Resource Conservation District (RCD) to design and operate an irrigated ag offset program.
- ALAB members discussed the potential complexities of a water offset program such as water banking potential and creating a water market. James Caruso indicated that on January 14, 2014, the RCD proposal will be discussed at a Board of Supervisors’ hearing.
- James Caruso informed ALAB members that the BOS had requested information regarding the implementation of specific Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) Strategies and changes to county ordinances and general plan policies relative to the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin. James summarized potential changes that may include but not be limited to the following:
 - Amend the Growth Management Ordinance to create limits for non-agriculturally related development

- Amend the Land Use Ordinance (LUO) to establish larger minimum parcel sizes in some rural areas and require merger of substandard rural parcels in order to protect agricultural water supplies.
- Amend LUO to require water supply assessments with some land divisions.
- Amend Title 8 to improve data obtained from well permit applications regarding location, depth, yield, use, flow direction, and water levels.
- Amend Framework for Planning and the LUO relative to collecting pumping data.
- Establishing a new agriculture land use category that would focus on non-irrigated uses.
- ALAB members discussed metering and reporting of water use and that many users prefer to keep this information confidential.
- James Caruso indicated the potential amendments will go to the BOS for authorization the first quarter of 2014.

9. Future Agenda Items: Next meeting: February 3, 2014

- Courtney Howard discussing countywide water challenges; Marc Lea update on goldspotted oak borer.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Auchinachie, County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures