

ALAB MEETING MINUTES

Monday, August 3, 2020

MEETING HELD REMOTELY DUE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS – ALL ATTENDED EITHER BY WEBINAR OR CONFERENCE CALL

Members and Alternates Attending: Lisen Bonnier, Sarah Kramer, Melissa Danehey, Kaylee Ellis, Tom Ikeda, Mark Pearce, George Kendall, Jean-Pierre Wolff, and Mark Battany

Staff Attending: Marc Lea and Lynda Auchinachie – San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture; Kylie Hensley, Kip Morais, and Airlin Singewald – San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building; Mladen Bandov – San Luis Obispo County Department of Public Works

Absent Members: Craig Pritchard, Daniel Chavez, Krista Burke, Jerry Diefenderfer, Dick Nock, Jutta Thoerner, Don Warden, Butch Yamashita, Dan Rodrigues, and Claire Wineman

Guests Attending: Brent Burchett – San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau, Patricia Wilmore – Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance

- 1. Call to order, introductions, quorum determination:** The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Bonnier at 5:05
- 2. Open comment: (for items not on the agenda):** Vice-Chair Bonnier shared that on August 5, 2020, the American Farmland Trust would be holding a “Women for the Land Virtual Learning Circle” webinar.
- 3. Review/approval of May 2020 meeting minutes:** Delayed until next meeting due to the lack of a quorum.

4. ALAB Membership Updates – Marc Lea

- A reminder, as voted on at the ALAB meeting in March 2020, there is a new ALAB chair and vice-chair. Dan Rodrigues will serve as the chair for the next 2 years and Lisen Bonnier will take over the Vice-Chair role.
- On May 5, 2020, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) reappointed Butch Yamashita, Dan Rodrigues, and Claire Wineman for another 4-year term.
- Direct Marketing/Organics Representative: Jutta Thoerner’s term has expired. She can continue to serve until that position has been filled. Larry Kandarian, who is the current alternate for that industry group, has indicated that he is willing to take over that position. According to the ALAB bylaws the nomination for that position comes from the local chapter of CCOF with input from the SLO County Farmers Market Associations and other industry groups; CCOF has been contacted and their Board will be providing an official nomination at their next scheduled meeting in October. In the meantime, either Jutta or Larry can serve as the voting member until the term of the new representative is officially established.
- The terms of the Districts 1, 3, and 5 representatives will expire in January 2021. Those appointments, whether re-appointments of the current representative or a newly appointed ALAB member, will be decided upon by the Supervisors themselves.

5. Updates from Ag Department staff and members

- Marc Lea indicated carbaryl remains a restricted product available for agricultural use, however, it is no longer available for residential use.
- San Luis Obispo residents have turned in several packets of seeds from China to the Agriculture Department, which will be destroyed according to guidelines established by state and federal agencies. The seed packets turned in by local citizens are of many different varieties, and nobody is clear exactly why they are being sent.
- 2019 crop report figures will be presented to the Board of Supervisors on September 22, 2020.
- The Board of Supervisors passed a permanent hemp ordinance in May 2020, that took effect in early June. A number of restrictions on cultivation, including large minimum parcels sizes and large setbacks from adjacent property lines, were included in that permanent ordinance that will make it very difficult for interested growers to qualify. A lawsuit was filed due to the restrictive nature of the ordinance and because many changes were made from the proposed version of the ordinance that went to the Board, but an injunction has not been issued and the permanent ordinance remains in effect.

6. Presentation/Discussion: COVID-19 related impacts on local agricultural businesses

Brent Burchett, San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau

Marc Lea, San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture

- To help protect agricultural workers against COVID-19, the Agriculture Department has distributed over 75,000 disposable surgical type masks and a small number of available N95 masks to local growers and agricultural businesses (the N95 masks distributed are to be used as PPE when needed for pesticide handling activities). Those masks were obtained through a statewide effort being led by the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA). CDFA is expecting to acquire additional masks and those shipments should be arriving to the Agriculture Department in the next two weeks. The Agriculture Department has also participated in industry outreach regarding COVID-19 and is working with the county Public Health Department to assist in their efforts to provide critical COVID-19 related information to agricultural workers.
- Brent Burchett shared several statistics regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on the business of agriculture. Brent recommended a report developed by the California Farm Bureau Federation and other agricultural organizations: https://www.cfbf.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FinalReport_COVID19_AgImpacts_062520Updated.pdf . In general, some direct marketers and CSA's have benefited from the disruptions associated with COVID-19, but most growers have been negatively impacted as consumer purchasing trends have changed drastically, with most produce being purchased in grocery stores and enormous reductions in the produce demand from restaurants. Brent indicated the Farm Bureau and other agricultural organizations have been instrumental in COVID-19 outreach to protect farmworkers and the encouragement of COVID-19 testing for farmworkers.
- Kaylee Ellis also mentioned that the Strawberry Commission and Western Growers Association websites have a lot of helpful information regarding COVID-19 protection.

7. Presentation/Discussion: Proposed Ordinance Amendments affecting the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin and the Agricultural Offset Program

Kylie Hensley and Airlin Singewald, San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building

- Kylie Hensley from County Planning gave a presentation titled “Water Neutral New Development Phase 1.5 Ordinance Amendments and Phase 2 Environmental Determination.” Kylie provided an overview of what occurred at the Planning Commission hearing in June 2020.
- That presentation is available at the following link:
<https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Departments/Agriculture-Weights-and-Measures/All-Forms-Documents/Information/Meeting-Minutes/ALAB-Meeting-Agendas,-Minutes,-Presentations/2020/WNND-Phase-1-5-Presentation-8-3-20-ALAB.aspx>
- A hearing on these proposed ordinance changes is expected to go to the Board of Supervisors on August 18, 2020.
- Patricia Wilmore questioned if the recommendations for a fallowing program from the Planning Commission were adequately represented. Kylie and Airlin Singewald explained the current land use ordinance allows for fallowing. Airlin also clarified the differences between the land use ordinance and the groundwater sustainability plan (GSP). To date, the BOS has not authorized funding for GSP implementation.

8. Presentation/Discussion: Phase 3 Proposed Changes to the San Luis Obispo County Cannabis Activities Ordinance

Kip Morais, San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building

- Kip Morais provided an overview of the proposed Phase 3 Cannabis Activities Ordinance changes. Eight changes are to be discussed including: 1) More enforcement actions for illegal cannabis activities, 2) Increased buffer distances from schools and other sensitive receptors, 3) Disallowing outdoor cultivation, 4) Disallowing the payment of water offset fees over the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin, 5) Prohibiting re-permitting if an operation ceases or a violation occurs, 6) Requiring enclosed ventilation systems for indoor grows, 7) Revising standards for ancillary nurseries to be encompassed in the overall cannabis cultivation area, and 8) Expanding manufacturing to allow infusion.
- The above changes will be discussed at the August 18, 2020, BOS hearing.

9. Future agenda items: none identified

Next meeting – September 14, 2020

Meeting Adjourned 6:10 pm

Respectfully submitted by Lynda Auchinachie, San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture