



County of San Mateo Planning & Building Department Agricultural Advisory Committee

Natalie Sare, Chair
Peter Marchi, Vice Chair
Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou
Crystal Chaix
Daniel Theobald

Eric Hagstrom
James Oku
John Vars
Marilyn Johnson
Ryan Casey

Dr. Igor Lacan
Jess Brown
Koren Widdel

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Redwood City, California 94063
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MINUTES

Monday, February 9, 2026

IN-PERSON WITH REMOTE PARTICIPATION

Once available, a full recording of this meeting can be accessed on the official government YouTube channel of the County of San Mateo at: <https://www.smcgov.org/planning/event/agricultural-advisory-committee-meeting-february-9-2026>

1. Call to Order

Chair Natalie Sare called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

2. Member Roll Call

Regular Committee Members Present:

Natalie Sare
Peter Marchi
Ryan Casey
Crystal Chaix
Marilyn Johnson
John Vars
Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou

Regular Committee Members Not Present:

Daniel Theobald
Erik Hagstrom
James Oku

Nonvoting Committee Members Present:

Koren Widdel, San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner

Nonvoting Committee Members Not Present:

Igor Lacan, UC Co-Op Extension Representative
Jess Brown, San Mateo County Farm Bureau Executive Director

Planning Liaisons Present:

Robby Miller, Planner II, San Mateo County Planning & Building Department

SPEAKERS

Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, announced that Daniel Theobald is out of town and is listening to the meeting, but County Counsel recommended he not participate as a Member or Public.

Committee Member, Marilyn Johnson, asked when Committee Members are allowed to participate remotely.

Chair, Natalie Sare, responded to Marilyn Johnson's question and suggested it be agendaized for clarification.

- 3. Oral Communications** to allow the public to address the Committee on any matter **not** on the agenda. If your subject is not on the agenda, the Chair will recognize you at this time.

SPEAKERS

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, voiced concern that the mitigation measure for replacing prime soils for the fire station in Pescadero was approved by the Board without AAC input as requested.

Chair, Natalie Sare, confirms that AAC did write a letter to the County requesting AAC input on the mitigation property.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, recommends that Environmental Health provide AAC opportunity to provide input to any proposed changes to Well Ordinance, update on Farm Labor Task Force and improvements, and update on expedited process for CDx that Steve Monowitz mentioned in previous presentation.

Chair, Natalie Sare, asks a clarifying question.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, responds.

Chair, Natalie Sare, states that she worked with the County to write the letter, but implied that County did not send it to Board.

Public Speaker, BJ Burns, states that County was not transparent on this project with public funds involved.

Public Speaker, Vince Fontana, agreed that County needs to be transparent and show leadership when public funds involved.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, stated that the letter was agendaized on Board meeting, but Board should have reached out to the Committee to inform of proposed action and request input.

Public Speaker, BJ Burns, stated the item was on the consent calendar and none of the Board members picked it out for discussion which was not right.

Chair, Natalie Sare, states that the County has repeatedly undermined Committee requests for agendaizing items and that is against the bylaws.

Public Speaker, Ron Sturgeon, suggested Committee write another letter to the Board reiterating input request and ask them what is going on there.

Chair, Natalie Sare, requests that Committee agendaize writing a follow-up letter to the Board asking what has transpired with the parcel.

Public Speaker, Lucy White, against California's Fish and Wildlife approach to protecting mountain lion and said meeting on Thursday.

Chair, Natalie Sare, clarifies that Committee can reach out to Lucy for more information.

Public Speaker, Lucy White, continues to discuss California's Fish and Wildlife approach to protecting mountain lion.

Chair, Natalie Sare, interrupts to end comment because out of time.

4. **Committee Member Update(s) and/or Questions** to allow Committee Members to share news and/or concerns for items **not** on the agenda

SPEAKERS

Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, sponsors and golfers for June 17 event.

Committee Member, Koren Widdel, announced field worker training on March 4 and March 5, and pesticide disposal event in March.

Chair, Natalie Sare, asks for update on nats at mushroom farm that came to AAC a few month ago and was requested to come back to AAC to provide the Committee input on the waste disposal and was taken off the agenda. Requests to put back on agenda because

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, responds that nats are an annual occurrence and they have received some increase of complaints. Did investigation and found them to be fungus nats that are considered a nuisance, but not biting or spreading disease. Their Department along with Environmental Health and Planning and Building, are actively reviewing the mushroom farm for compliance.

Chair, Natalie Sare, asks for follow up report.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, responds that a report is not common, but will do it.

Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, asks Mike O'Neill to present the document that he brought to the Committee.

Supervisor Ray Mueller Aide, Mike O'Neill, stated that the document is a monthly newsletter from the Supervisor's office.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, echoed concern about the handling of the mushroom farm application and the prime soil mitigation measure.

Chair, Natalie Sare, agrees and spotlights that respect was brought up at the January retreat and this type of practices are disrespectful.

Chair, Natalie Sare, read from a prepared statement the following: For the past year, the AAC has been prohibited from making an agenda. This matters because the AAC is supposed to prepare the agenda per the bylaws. The agenda instead has been unilaterally prepared by the County. Section 4.6 of the AAC bylaws states, in the first two sentences, '[t]he AAC shall prepare an agenda for every meeting, which shall set forth a brief general description of each item of business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting and the time and location of the meeting. The Chair or Vice-chair of the AAC, in conjunction with persons from other governmental agencies as may be required, shall prepare an agenda for the upcoming meeting.' Items have moved, seconded, and past by the AAC to be agendized, but has been unilaterally removed without our knowledge or input. For this particular meeting, in at least a year, the Chair and Vice Chair were allowed to meet with the Governmental Agency and in conjunction prepare an agenda, the first time in at least a year, in violation of the bylaws. And, we did in a fact, state items that you all, in this Committee, voted to agendize and we put that into the agenda. However, a week later and a few days ago, we received notice that the agenda we created per the bylaws would no longer be the agenda for tonight's meeting and there was nothing we could do about it. Again, additionally, another item was unilaterally put into its place. Also, not in conjunction with the AAC and what we said to be on the agenda per the bylaws. As a matter of fact, against what we had wanted. Tonight the County intends to present some addendums to our bylaws, without our input, they have unilaterally created, basically, putting in place the violations they have been doing for at least a year. It is not okay to violate bylaws and then change them to meet these violations so then to make them okay. The AAC since its inception, in the late 1970's, was founded to preserve agriculture on the San Mateo County coast.

These bylaws allow us to do that, these bylaws are our voice, and so I am asking members of the public and thank you for being here and please continue to come, because it helps us to be your voice and you can help us do we you need us to do.

5. Planning and Building Department Report.

Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, presented the Planning Division's report. Announced SB 707 and that memo from County Counsel was sent to Committee. Announced that next meeting would be at the Half Moon Bay Library.

SPEAKERS

Chair, Natalie Sare, disagreed with the new meeting location and cited the Bylaws only allow the Committee to pick the meeting location.

Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, responds that he was following the direction of the Committee to find new locations.

Chair, Natalie Sare, says the Committee should discuss first and cites the Bylaws again. Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, asks if it is just for March 9.

Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, responds that the room is set to be used one time or indefinitely.

Chair, Natalie Sare, says the Committee should discuss first to adhere to the Bylaws.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, asks whether we should vote on it or agendaize it for next meeting.

Chair, Natalie Sare, says we can vote on it tonight under new business.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, Motioned to vote on moving to the library. Committee Member, Marilyn Johnson, seconded.

Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, questions why they are voting when the Committee can ask it be agendaized through the Chair, or added to the end of tonight's agenda.

County Counsel, Brian Pettit, clarifies that only the items on the agenda for tonight can be discussed and responds to a question regarding items not posted 72 hours in advance.

Chair, Natalie Sare, ask about voting now or put on agenda for next meeting.

County Counsel, Brian Pettit, responds that it is unnecessary to vote on it, Committee can discuss concerns, but otherwise put on the agenda for next meeting. The Brown Act only requires that the new location be identified on the agenda 72 hours prior to meeting.

Chair, Natalie Sare, asks for further discussion to have the meeting at the Library.

Committee Member, Marilyn Johnson, concerned with the Library's hard stop time at 8:15pm.

Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, agrees and adds that tabling items has not been working.

Committee Member, Ryan Casey, wants a hard stop time to keep meetings efficient and for keeping his own level of participation from dwindling. Thinks collaboration between Chair and Staff on agenda items will help keep meetings to two hours.

Committee Member, John Vars, states that the Committee has some responsibility for the County not doing everything the Committee wants in order to keep meetings efficient and encourages collaboration.

Chair, Natalie Sare, states that a recent agenda item that was agreed upon with Staff was not added so not sure she is hopeful that Staff will collaborate with the Committee.

Committee Member, Marilyn Johnson, agrees with Ryan on keeping the agenda lite and going to the HMB Library only if the Chair can create the agenda.

Public Speaker, Ron Sturgeon, suggests this item should be agendaized. Adds that there were no time limits at the old train station at Johnston Ranch, and Members should be willing to go over two hours.

Chair, Natalie Sare, suggests to put the HMB Library move on the agenda for next month.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, agrees to put the HMB Library move on the next agenda before going.

Public Speaker, BJ Burns, concerned that this type of procedural discussion takes away from applicants.

Chair, Natalie Sare, agrees and says that the agenda is being modified to resolve that situation.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, asks a clarifying question about the availability of the library.

Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, answers question.

Supervisor Ray Mueller Aide, Mike O'Neill, adds to the answer.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, states that the AAC should not be a grievance committee and should focus on partnering with the County to get positive outcomes and help get to business items.

Chair, Natalie Sare, states that, per the bylaws, we will discuss Library next meeting as an action item so everyone can have a say about it.

6. **Consideration of Meeting Minutes** for December 8, 2025 (Revised) and January 12, 2026.

SPEAKERS

None

COMMITTEE ACTION:

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou motions to approve December 8, 2025 minutes. Committee Member, Crystal Chaix seconds motion. **Motion passed 6-0, 1 abstain** (Sare).

Committee Member, Ryan Casey motions to approve January 12, 2026 minutes. Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou seconds motion. **Motion passed 5-0, 2 abstain** (Vars & Sare).

Regular Agenda

7. **Continuation – Summary of AAC’s April 2025 Special Workshop**. Presenters: AAC Chair, Natalie Sare, and Workshop Subcommittee.

SPEAKERS

Public Speaker, Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, agrees and appreciates the Committee removing the first part of Item K. For ranchers, favors existing and local tenants primarily for ranchers. Happy to schedule to talk about their ag policy and leasing requests for proposals.

Public Speaker, Karey Burke, advises to do Midpen and POST at separate meetings. Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, agrees to volunteer to reach out to Midpen for some meeting dates.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, offers to help Crystal.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, motions to invite Midpen and POST for separate meetings to discuss their policies around tenant leasing. Committee Member, Crystal Chaix seconds motion. **Motion passed 7-0.**

8. **AAC Procedural Rules Amendments – Introduction and Discussion.** Presenter: Summer Burlison, Senior Planner, County of San Mateo Planning & Building Department.

SPEAKERS

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, stated that his attorney previously advised him that filing 700 Form was not needed because AAC is an advisory committee.

Senior Planner, Summer Burlison, agrees to that AAC does not need to file the 700 Form.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, asks if AAC maximum term limit is 12 years.

County Counsel, Brian Pettit, confirms the limit is 12 years from the County's adopted standing rules.

Chair, Natalie Sare, concerned with section 4.6 modifications and giving up power to create the agenda.

Committee Member, John Vars, responds that the modifications reflect current practice of assisting and approving the agenda, and warns that keeping Bylaws as written could put the whole agenda development on the Chair.

Chair, Natalie Sare, responds that agenda items get agendized which has not happened, and the current Bylaws state in conjunction with Governmental agencies so it reflects what should be happening.

Committee Member, Marilyn Johnson, agrees that the current Bylaws are correct and Planning knows what applications are coming in so they have that role.

Chair, Natalie Sare, adds that a majority of agenda items that the Committee has voted on to agendize were not added to the agenda, and the current Bylaws have AAC not the Chair authority to do the agenda.

County Counsel, Brian Pettit, responds that there is no Planning involvement currently, and advises AAC to come up with language that reflects actual practice. The Chair does not prepare the agenda in practice or in other Boards or Committees.

Committee Member, John Vars, responds that it is important to assign the Chair or Vice Chair to coordinate with Planning Liaison instead of the entire AAC.

Chair, Natalie Sare, agrees but wants to make sure AAC does not lose their voice in agenda creation.

Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, wants to approve only the grammar corrections and suggests the AAC should bring forward modifications if necessary. Makes a motion to keep the Bylaws the way they are with the inception of...

Chair, Natalie Sare, interrupts to second motion.

Supervisor Ray Mueller Aide, Mike O'Neill, interrupts to state that Chair cannot second motion.

County Counsel, Brian Pettit, states that many modifications are just to be in accordance with existing law like the conflict of interest section.

Chair, Natalie Sare, asks for the written laws to review.

County Counsel, Brian Pettit, responds that some changes are not laws that can point to but in the case of conflict of interest section does not apply because AAC was removed as a decision making body, so do not need to comply with Political Reform Act.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, adds that it was changed by Board instead of law.

Public Speaker, Ron Sturgeon, the Bylaws should reflect what is required by the Board of Supervisors, and concerned that the Committee was not involved on the modifications so encourages them to reject them as presented, but work on doing what County Counsel suggests and some of Staff changes. I have some recommendations. I was involved with creating the current Bylaws with the Agricultural Commissioner. We wanted a strong committee as our current chairman. The retreat did not resolve the problems between the Committee and County.

Chair, Natalie Sare, agrees and says that motion is on table.

Senior Planner, Summer Burlison, asks for County Counsel input on whether a vote can happen.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, suggests Committee try to identify the points of contention and review it at the next meeting.

Chair, Natalie Sare, there is a motion pending, but the issue for us is that this was not wanted by us and were told no it had to be on agenda.

Committee Member, Marilyn Johnson, the Bylaw amendments needed to start, maybe, grammatical corrections, outdated information. They started it and now we can talk about it, and send it back.

Chair, Natalie Sare, we need time to look at it, we can discuss it, to Crystal and Coles point we can all work on it, we can make changes, or we can adopt the Bylaws as is like Crystal suggested, with the County's help.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, states reading through the proposed changes and has no major concerns with the modifications proposed, since many are grammatical and making things more concise. Suggests highlighting the particular issues members have and bring them forward instead tossing it all out.

Chair, Natalie Sare, agrees and adds that involvement by AAC is good.

Public Speaker, BJ Burns, concerned that the Chair position could be held by a non-farmer.

Committee Member, Marilyn Johnson, mentions that she is a public member and would be honored to be Chair.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, asks for clarification about Section 2.4 and partial terms.

County Counsel, Brian Pettit, responds and defers to staff for individual members.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, points out issue with Marilyn Johnsons term.

Summer Burlison, Senior Planner, we can take a look at the website with the Boards and Commission office to make sure it is accurate.

Committee Member, Marilyn Johnson, states that she talked with Olivia about this.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, sees a lot of corrections in the Bylaw modifications and urges the Committee to pin point the problems they have with them instead of tossing them all out.

Public Speaker, Vince Fontana, says the County has no business changing the Bylaws and urges Committee to go with Crystals motion to reject all changes.

Chair, Natalie Sare, agrees and adds that they want to change them because they are not following them and they want to change them to make it easier for them.

Summer Burlison, Senior Planner, believes that the majority of changes are to align with the Brown Act, with State laws, and County laws. We did put underneath each section what the reasoning was for the changes. Offers to go through section-by-section next meeting. States that a vote cannot happen tonight. The first meeting is to read and discuss.

Public Speaker, Ron Sturgeon, asks for a grammar edit on the use of the word 'Members' to revert modification back to small 'm', and insults County Counsel.

Summer Burlison, Senior Planner, responds with reason.

County Counsel, Brian Pettit, responds to the Political Reform Act and Form 700 questions, states that the Committee can vote tonight on the modifications, and clarifies that a lot of the changes were proposed by him not staff to align with current law. Urges Committee to continue this to a future date.

Chair, Natalie Sare, asks for copies of laws being used as justification to modify sections.

Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, asks the Chair for any online public comments to wrap up the item because of time constraints on room.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, to reject all modifications to Bylaws. Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, seconds motion. **Motion denied 3-4** (Mazariegos-Anastassiou, Vars, Casey, Johnson dissenting)

COMMITTEE ACTION:

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, motions to agendaize for next meeting to discuss specific Bylaw items that are of concern. Committee Member, Ryan Casey seconds motion. **Motion passed 5-2** (Sare, Chaix dissenting)

9. **January Retreat** – Introduction and Discussion. Presenter: Robby Miller, Planning Liaison, County of San Mateo Planning & Building Department.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, motions to table item to next meeting. Committee Member, Crystal Chaix seconds motion. **Motion passed 7-0**

10. **Adjournment.** Chair Natalie Sare adjourned the meeting at 8:18 p.m.