



County of San Mateo Planning & Building Department Agricultural Advisory Committee

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

Ryan Casey
James Oku
John Vars
Marilyn Johnson

Dr. Igor Lacan
Jess Brown
Koren Widdel

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MINUTES

Monday, June 8, 2026

IN-PERSON WITH REMOTE PARTICIPATION

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-june-8-2026>

Call to Order

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

Member Roll Call

Regular Committee Members Present:

James Oku
Natalie Sare
John Vars
Peter Marchi
Ryan Casey
Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou
Crystal Chaix
Daniel Theobald

Regular Committee Members Not Present:

Marilyn Johnson

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, San Mateo County Planning & Building Department

Public Comment 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:

NONE

Action To Set Agenda & To Approve Consent Agenda Items

1. Consideration of the Minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Committee for July 14, 2025 and May 11, 2026.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald motions to set the agenda and approve the minutes. Committee Member, James Oku seconds motion. **Motion passed 7-0-0-1.**
(Crystal Chaix not present)

Regular Agenda

2. **SMC Compost Program** Presenters: San Mateo Resource Conservation District Doug Millar and Eliza Milio, County of San Mateo Sustainability Department, Jack Steinmann.

SPEAKERS

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, asks about the quality of the compost and whether there is testing.

Presenter Doug Millar, responds.

Committee Member, James Oku, asks if the compost will be free of viruses.

Presenter Doug Millar, responds in the affirmative.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, states that trucking is expensive and asks if that is covered by the program.

Presenters Jack Steinmann and Doug Millar, responds.

Committee Member, James Oku, asks a clarifying question about the costs.

Presenter Doug Millar, responds.

Committee Member, James Oku, asks if the state mandate goal of 75% is being met.

Presenter Jack Steinmann, responds.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, asks what is in the compost.

Presenter Doug Millar, responds.

Public Speaker, Ron Sturgeon, recommends there be before and after pictures in the presentation, and agrees that compost is very beneficial.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, asks how much work is being done for individual farmers versus agencies.

Presenter Eliza Milio, responds.

Presenter Doug Millar, responds.

Committee Member, Ryan Casey, asks if they will still have compost rebates in the Fall.

Presenter Doug Millar, responds.

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, asks about microplastics.

Presenter Doug Millar, responds.

Committee Member, James Oku, asks if a farm using their own compost can get a

subsidy.
Presenter Jack Steinmann, responds.

3. AAC Procedural Rules Amendments – Presenter: Summer Burlison, San Mateo County Planning & Building Department.

SPEAKERS:

Chair, Natalie Sare, asks if Staff is going to read the entire version.
Presenter Summer Burlison, responds that a reading is not necessary and she would answer any questions.
Public Speaker, Ron Sturgeon, requests public comment before a vote.
Chair, Natalie Sare, responds that public comments will come after committee member questions.
Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, asks why we are not reading the entire version or section by section.
County Counsel, Brian Pettit, responds that the committee could go through section by section, but it is not necessary and would take a lot of time.
Committee Member, James Oku, states that the committee went through each section in previous meetings and is OK voting on the entire document.
Chair, Natalie Sare, asks if the committee wants to vote on whether to vote on the sections or entire document.
Committee Member, James Oku, asks to hear public comment first.
Public Speaker, (name not given), advises against reading the whole thing verbatim and offers to read an AI summary.
Chair, Natalie Sare, responds against a summary due to complexity and details.
Public Speaker, Ron Sturgeon, wants Committee to allow non farmers to be Chair/Vice Chair, and concerned that the Chair is not handling the meeting efficiently
Chair, Natalie Sare, disagrees and asks for vote.
Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, asks the Chair to check online public comment and then close public comment, and get any additional comments from committee members.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, motions to approve the bylaw amendments as a whole instead of section by section. Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, seconds motion. **Motion passes, 8-0-0-0.**

Chair, Natalie Sare, motions to approve the bylaw amendments. **Motion passes, 7-1-0-0.** (Marchi)

4. Workplan - Presenters: Debbie Schechter, Schechter Consulting

SPEAKERS:

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, the Committee should review brainstorming topics based on preserving agriculture on the coast.
Planning & Building Assistant Director, Sophie Mintier, reviews brainstorming topics and provides input on how they relate to County goals and objectives.
Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, shared that someone believes the County is the most regulated County, and adds that reviewing policies for overregulation could be worthwhile instead of creating more policies like the proposed hoop house one.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, agrees with Daniel.

Committee Member, James Oku, agrees with Daniel and adds that farmer's do after-the-fact permits as a result of the difficulty of obtaining the permits.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, asks if farm worker housing is a realistic workplan item.

Planning & Building Assistant Director, Sophie Mintier, responds.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, concerned that the Committee will work on topics like Agritourism updates and the County will drop the ball on completing them.

Committee Member, James Oku, agrees and adds that there has been no updates on Agritourism after repeated requests.

Planning Liaison, Robby Miller, responds that an update was provided, he needs to review the documents but believes he has the necessary documents to move the update forward, and adds that making it a Workplan item could help prioritize it for staff.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, suggests reviewing individual policies one at a time.

Planning & Building Assistant Director, Sophie Mintier, states that creating whole new policy is not realistic for a Workplan item and Committee should focus on providing input on a specific policy or regulation. Adds that Williamson Act Audit has not happened for awhile, one is ongoing, and will be brought back to the Committee when the time comes.

Chair, Natalie Sare, thanks Planning Liaison for collaboration.

Committee Member, James Oku, comments that he appreciates when the County came to the Committee for input on LCP and farm labor housing water during the development of policies rather than after they are created.

Chair, Natalie Sare, asks whether it would be helpful to add a Workplan item for addressing past items that have not been completed.

Presenter, Debbie Schechter, responds in the affirmative and suggests identifying what those things are as part of the six brainstorm categories.

San Mateo Resource Conservation District, Eliza Milio, suggest prioritizing actionable items for impact, policy and regulations are harder because of County involvement, Community engagement is more actionable, and adds that she can help the County with policy on the side so she will volunteer for 1, 2 and 6 if selected.

Presenter, Debbie Schechter, announces the Committee selections for each category with the top two primary goals being Policies, Permitting and Regulations and Provide Input on County Policies, and a tie between Community Engagement and Coordination and Market Development and Economics. Asks Committee for feedback on tie.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, states that they fit well together and could be combined.

Committee Member, James Oku, states that Community Engagement is an actionable item that could be completed within a year.

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, appreciates that Community Engagement allows the community to share their issues.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, clarifies that the subcategory to provide irrigation water for farms includes drought conditions.

Planning & Building Assistant Director, Sophie Mintier, responds that this is a very complex issue and would not be appropriate for this advisory committee.

Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, responds that it could be done with RCD support.

San Mateo Resource Conservation District, Eliza Milio, responds that RCD has done a lot of work on the topic and could be shared with the Committee as part of Community Engagement and Coordination.

Presenter, Debbie Schechter, requests that all Committee Members vote for five of their most important subtopics under the three primary goals chosen.

Chair, Natalie Sare, opens public comment. Asks for other member comments since no public comment.

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, comments that farming is broken on the coast and aggressive action is needed to help farmers survive.

Chair, Natalie Sare, comments that we need to take the institutional farming knowledge that exists on the committee, do what is best for all farmers instead of individual needs.

Presenter, Debbie Schechter, asks for subcommittees to meet once prior to next meeting and fill out the Work Plan Template Chart and develop a draft workplan to be voted on next meeting.

Chair, Natalie Sare, comments that the last subcommittee for the Workshop had an attendance problem and asks committee members to voice their concerns now to prevent that again.

Presenter, Debbie Schechter, announces that these are ad hoc subcommittees for the purpose of putting together a workplan, and subcommittees should have equal numbers.

Committee Member, Ryan Casey, comments that meeting outside of this meeting will be difficult and will likely not allow him to attend. Suggests meeting 30 minutes before next meeting.

Chair, Natalie Sare, agrees.

Committee Member, James Oku, asks how long these subcommittees are supposed to be active.

Presenter, Debbie Schechter, responds that it is up to the members and adds that the committee has already come up with many ideas and depends on the activities the subcommittees choose. Asks for members to select which subcommittee they want to be on.

Committee Members (All Present), choose a subcommittee.

Presenter, Debbie Schechter, asks for subcommittee leaders.

Committee Members, select leaders.

Presenter, Debbie Schechter, reiterates that the subcommittee objective is to fill out the Work Plan Template Chart by next meeting, and adds that if developed enough, share at meeting and get a vote. A summary will be provided of the votes tonight and the committee can discuss if they want to keep any items on the backburner.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, asks how long the workplan is supposed to last.

Planning & Building Assistant Director, Sophie Mintier, roughly a year, many workplans have four items and one or two might last longer than a year.

Chair, Natalie Sare, opens public comment, and with no speakers, closes public comment.

5. COMMITTEE MEMBERS UPDATES & QUESTIONS

SPEAKERS:

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, announces a new regional director for UC Extension, Andrew Miller to replace Igor.

Committee Member, James Oku, asks if he will be attending meetings.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, responds that she does not know. Announces that four Costco's received and sold many plants from a nursery in Fresno County that were infested with a sharpshooter pest. A regional effort is underway to get those plants that were sold. Announces that Texas has detected New World Screw Worm, not in California, but to be aware of symptoms and report it immediately 866-922-2473 or call her department.

Committee Member, James Oku, expresses sympathy for the peach growers in central valley that will be taking out hundreds of thousands of trees because of the cannery is closing, and apple growers to the south facing same dilemma because Martinelli is cancelling contracts.

6. PLANNING LIAISON REPORT

SPEAKERS:

Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, asks how Daniel and Cole are able to switch seats when they got sworn into the current seats.

Planning & Building Assistant Director, Sophie Mintier, responds that both members need to be eligible for the other position and they both are they both agreed to the switch, and it has to be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, asks how that impacts terms.

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, responds that there is no impact because they started at the same time.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, adds that their terms are likely up in September 30, 2026.

Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, add that she has not seen a switch like this before or in the bylaws.

Committee Member, Peter Marchi, asks Cole why he considered the switch.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, responds that he was asked and agreed because he does not have an interest in serving a vice chair or chair position.

Committee Member, Peter Marchi, asks Cole why he is not waiting until September.

Chair, Natalie Sare, intervenes to redirect question to Daniel.

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, responds that this is for him to be eligible for the October Chair vote.

7. ADJOURNMENT Chair, Natalie Sare, adjourned the meeting at 8:41 p.m.
