



## County of San Mateo Planning & Building Department Agricultural Advisory Committee

Natalie Sare, Chair  
John Vars, Vice Chair  
Daniel Theobald  
Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou

Crystal Chaix  
James Oku  
Jess Brown  
Jim Howard

Dr. Igor Lacan  
Koren Widdel  
Peter Marchi  
Ryan Casey

County Office Building  
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Redwood City, California 94063  
650/363-1825  
[planning.smcgov.org](https://planning.smcgov.org)

### DRAFT ACTION MINUTES

Monday, December 9, 2024

#### 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-december-9-2024>.

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Natalie Sare called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

2. **Member Roll Call**

Regular Committee Members Present:

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

Nonvoting Committee Members Present:

Koren Widdel, San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner  
Igor Lacan, UC Co-Op Extension Representative

Nonvoting Committee Members Not Present:

Jim Howard, Natural Resource Conservation Staff  
Jess Brown, San Mateo County Farm Bureau Executive Director

Planning Liaison Present:

Olivia Boo, Planning Staff Liaison

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**

None

4. **Consideration of Meeting Minutes** for the November 18, 2024, AAC meeting.

## **SPEAKERS**

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, requested that she would like to see an updated form for item (d) - agritourism event application.

## **COMMITTEE ACTION:**

Committee Member, John Vars, motioned to approve.

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, seconded the motion.

## **Motion approved 6-0.**

Two members abstained - Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou and Committee Member, Ryan Casey.

5. **Officer Elections** for Chair and Vice Chair. *(These positions are required to be filled by farmers.)*

## **SPEAKERS**

## **COMMITTEE ACTION:**

Committee Member, Peter Marchi, nominated Natalie Sare for Chair.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, seconded the motion.

## **Motion approved 8-0.**

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, nominated Peter Marchi for Vice Chair.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, seconded the motion.

## **Motion approved 8-0.**

6. **Committee Nomination** for AAC Secretary.

**Action Request:** That the AAC provide a recommendation or nomination.

## **SPEAKERS**

No nomination proposed.

7. **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 Chair, Natalie Sare, asked if there are any updates on Supervisor Mueller's exploration on money sources and implementation for the Farm Labor Housing forgivable loan program.

Supervisor Aide, Mike O'Neill, responded that there are no updates from the Board of Supervisors for the Farm Labor Housing loan program, as the Supervisors are waiting for updates from the federal government. He will check back in a couple of months.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, inquired whether there is Measure K money available to help with the loan.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, will administer private applicator certificates to allow those using restricted pesticides and training handlers for those with the last name A through H, or those certificates that will be expiring at the end of December 2025. The Agriculture Department will be holding a study session at the Farm Bureau Thursday, December 12, 1 p.m., and Thursday, December 19. Field worker pesticide safety training is scheduled for March 5 in Pescadero and March 6 in Half Moon Bay. Last week a survey was sent out to find out if there is interest in participating in a growers showcase, called "Fresh as it Gets", in San Mateo County to encourage farm-to-table food supply for restaurants in San Mateo County.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, shared that the growers showcase was held in past before at Half Moon Bay Lodge, and awards were given.

Supervisor Aide, Mike O'Neill, inquired whether San Mateo County gives marketing assistance for this event such as table clothes, stand-up screen, set-up help at booths.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, inquired whether there is a list of invited restaurants.

Committee Member, James Oku, asked whether it is possible to include distributors.

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, asked if the Expo Center is providing the space or if San Mateo County is renting the space?

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, commented that San Francisco Peninsula is facilitating this event through their contract.

Committee Member, John Vars, suggested including the Hello Fresh meal kit folks.

Committee Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, mentioned food safety parameters and thresholds.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, mentioned food safety is regulated by the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, announced last Tuesday the Board of Supervisors approved the Williamson Act contract for Arata Ranch, which consists of 151 acres.

8. **Planning and Building Department Director's Report.** (*Planning Liaison*)

**SPEAKERS**

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, asked which AAC application positions are under review to be filled.

Planning Liaison, Olivia Boo, responded there are two positions under review.

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**Regular Agenda**

9. **Owner:** Peninsula Open Space Trust and Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
**Applicant:** Sandy Sommer, c/o Peninsula Open Space Trust  
**File Number:** PLN2023-00297  
**Location:** 4309 Cloverdale Rd., Pescadero  
**Assessor's Parcel No.:** 086-270-010

Consideration of a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) and a Planned Agricultural District Permit, and a Grading Permit, to construct two 1,820 sq. ft. duplex buildings to accommodate a total of four new farm labor housing units, a fire turnaround, a new septic system, and two new 5,000-gallon water tanks on a legal 549-acre property located at 4309 Cloverdale Road in the unincorporated Pescadero area of San Mateo County. A total of 850 cubic yards of grading is proposed, no tree removal and minimal vegetation removal. The project is located in the Cloverdale Road County Scenic Corridor and the CDP is appealable to the California Coastal Commission. Please direct any questions to Project Planner, Olivia Boo at oboo@smcgov.org.

**Action Request:** That the AAC provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission on the subject application.

### **SPEAKERS**

Committee Member, John Vars, announced he has a financial stake in the project and excused himself from comments.

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, asked if there are prime soils on the property and shared that the Committee is planning a meeting to gather ideas regarding how the County can help preserve farming on the south coast.

Committee Member, James Oku, expressed interest in hearing from the applicant what difficulties they experienced in the process, so that the Committee can provide feedback to the Board of Supervisors that the process should not take so long, and asked about the total cost, because the County does not understand the actual cost of this type of project. The Farm Labor Housing loan program is not enough funding to obtain a viable water system and the proper engineering.

Committee Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, commented that it is important to understand how to help farm labor housing projects, including understanding water rights, and how much time is involved.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, commented this project could be used as an example regarding how to be efficient and these projects should be under consideration for a Coastal Development Exemption process.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, commented that development in the rural area involves persistence. These types of projects are difficult because every parcel is different, there are obstacles along with different opportunities. Applicants have to be realistic. The level of infrastructure required to establish dwelling units required a lot of thought and research. Burke asked how large the agriculture well is that is proposed for conversion.

**COMMITTEE ACTION:**

Committee Member, James Oku, motioned to approve the item.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, seconded the motion.

**Motion passed 5-0.**

Committee Member, John Vars, recused, and two members abstained.

**10. Discussion items:**

- a. Pescadero Fire Station Mitigation Measures – Committee Member Chair Natalie Sare – the Committee submitted a letter written by the AAC, addressed to the County’s Planning and Building Department on October 22, 2024.

**SPEAKERS**

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, expressed concern that it is imperative that the AAC continue to be updated on this topic. The Committee’s question in the letter addressed to Planning Department management has not been answered.

Committee Member, John Vars, commented the questions in the Committee’s letter were not answered. The Committee’s role is “advisory” thus, ultimately the County makes the decision.

Committee Member, Peter Marchi, commented the Committee is being ignored on this topic, the Committee hasn’t been part of the discussion.

Committee Member, James Oku, commented the County has made up its mind and is not interested in the Committee’s further input. For future projects, the Committee would like to be more involved.

- b. All Committee Members – Propose to hold AAC monthly meetings, approximately January to June 2025, to invite different categories of farmers to AAC meetings to collect ideas on the following topics:
  1. Drafting steps and paths for the County to help preserve farming on the San Mateo County coast. (This is the final title for the workshop.)

This will include farm labor housing and the following topics:

Farmers of flowers/nursery (includes indoor/outdoor plants, Christmas trees, cut flowers, nursery stock, potted plants)  
Ranchers (livestock)  
Row Crop  
Ornamentals  
Vegetables  
Fruit/nut crops

**SPEAKERS:**

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, commented that as soon as the venue/space is secured for this workshop, emails will need to be sent quickly to give the public two months’ notice.

San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, inquired if the workshop is required to be on Zoom.

Mike O'Neill, commented since it is a public meeting, it is required to be hybrid, he will check with County Attorney's Office.

- c. "Agritourism Event Application" title – discussion to recommend revision to the application title to encourage new applicants.

**SPEAKERS**

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, commented the Planning Department will revise the references to "Agritourism Permit Exemption" as proposed by the AAC. She requested to see updated copy of application from Planning.

- d. Pescadero Fire Station Pipeline

**SPEAKERS**

Committee Vice Chair, Peter Marchi, shared that he had heard from a public member who attended the Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council that the details of condition number 2 had been changed in terms of the what type of land can qualify to comply with the condition. The initial condition required that the land was could not have been farmed in the past. Now, the condition criteria allows the land to have been farmed in the past.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, proposed the Committee draft a letter on this topic, addressed to the County. The purpose of the letter would be an inquiry of the residential community and who could potentially connect into the new water pipeline. He will connect with Peter Marchi and Kerry Burke for their knowledge to draft the letter.

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, asked how many farms are affected.

Committee Member, Peter Marchi, commented that the old high school on North Street is trying to connect to CSA 11.

Public Speaker, Kerry Burke, commented that a Local Coastal Program amendment is required to connect to CSA 11 because the property is zoned PAD (Planned Agricultural Development), one has to receive a special exemption to be part of CSA 11.

Committee Member, James Oku, commented he would appreciate a connection to CSA 11 for a reliable water source.

- 11. **Adjournment.** Chair Natalie Sare adjourned the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

| <b>Roll Sheet –December 9, 2024</b><br>Agricultural Advisory Committee |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |     |          |     |     |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-----|
|                                                                        | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | June | July | Aug | Sep<br>t | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| <b>Voting Members</b>                                                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |     |          |     |     |     |
| James Oku<br>Farmer**                                                  | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   |      | X    | X   | X        |     | X   | X   |
| Natalie Sare<br>Farmer                                                 | X   | X   | X   | X   |     | X   | X    | X    |     | X        | X   | X   | X   |
| John Vars<br>Farmer                                                    | X   |     | X   | X   |     | X   | X    | X    | X   | X        | X   | X   | X   |
| Peter Marchi<br>Farmer                                                 | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X    | X    | X   | X        | X   | X   | X   |
| Ryan Casey<br>Farmer                                                   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   |      | X    | X   |          | X   |     | X   |
| Cole Mazariegos-<br>Anastassiou<br>Farmer                              | X   |     | X   | X   | X   | X   | X    | X    | X   | X        | X   |     | X   |
| Crystal Chaix<br>Farmer                                                |     | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X    | X    | X   | X        |     | X   | X   |
| Daniel Theobald<br>Ag Business                                         | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X    | X    | X   | X        |     | X   | X   |
| **Vacant<br>Public Member                                              |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |     |          |     |     |     |
| **Vacant<br>Public Member                                              |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |     |          |     |     |     |
| **Vacant<br>Conservationist                                            |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |     |          |     |     |     |
|                                                                        |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |     |          |     |     |     |
| Natural Resource<br>Conservation<br>Staff:<br>Jim Howard               |     |     |     |     |     |     |      |      |     |          |     |     |     |
| San Mateo<br>County<br>Agricultural<br>Commissioner:<br>Koren Widdel   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X    | X    | X   | X        | X   | X   | X   |
| Farm Bureau<br>Executive<br>Director: Jess<br>Brown                    |     | X   | X   | X   |     | X   |      | X    | X   | X        |     |     |     |

|                                                                                                                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UC Co-Op<br>Extension<br>Representative:<br>Dr. Igor Lacan                                                                    |   |   |   | X |   | X |   | X |   | X |   |   |   |
| <b>Planning<br/>Liaison</b>                                                                                                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| San Mateo<br>County Planning<br>Liaison:<br>Olivia Boo                                                                        | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| <b>X: Present    Blank Space: Absent or Excused    Grey Color: No meeting    *Special Meeting</b><br><b>**Position Vacant</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |