County of San Mateo Planning & Building Department

Agricultural Advisory Committee

Natalie Sare, Chair
John Vars, Vice Chair
Daniel Theobald
Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou
Crystal Chaix
Dr. Igor Lacan
James Oku
Jess Brown
Jim Howard
Koren Widdel
Peter Marchi
Ryan Casey

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DRAFT MINUTES

Monday, February 12, 2024

IN-PERSON WITH REMOTE PARTICIPATION

A full recording of this meeting can be accessed on the Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting page at https://www.smcgov.org/planning/event/agricultural-advisory-committee-meeting-february-12-2024

AGENDA

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
   Ryan Casey
   Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou
   Crystal Chaix
   Daniel Theobald

   Nonvoting Committee Members Present
   Koren Widdel, San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner
   Jess Brown, San Mateo County Farm Bureau Executive Director
   Igor Lacan, UC Co-Op Extension Representative

   Nonvoting Committee Members Not Present:
   Jim Howard, Natural Resource Conservation Staff

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

SPEAKERS

Committee Member, Daniel Theobald, proposed creating a handbook to help new and existing farmers navigate county regulations, RCD requirements, zoning, and permitting boundaries. The Committee agreed to agendize the item for the next meeting and consider forming a subcommittee to collaborate with the Agricultural Ombudsman. Theobald volunteered to be on handbook subcommittee. Regarding farm labor housing, Theobald commented he has wanted to pursue farm labor housing units for several years now but he hasn't been able to pursue it yet.

San Mateo County Farm Bureau Executive Director, Jess Brown, commented this would be a great project for the RCD Ombudsman.

Agricultural Commissioner, Koren Widdel, commented the handbook could be a task the Ombudsman can help with. Widdel reported Diphacinone pesticide restricted use, this primarily affects pest control companies. There is an upcoming field worker pesticide safety training on March 6, in Pescadero; this training will be in Spanish. The training will also be on March 7, in Half Moon Bay, and will be in both English and Spanish. Agriculture Weights and Measures hired Jonathan Winslow and Katie Parks as biologists. Ag Department is also recruiting for seasonal Pest Detection Specialists. There are seven active quarantines in the state for fruit flies. Riverside is the largest quarantine in California history. Ag Department sent out the 2023 Crop Report survey. This year Agriculture Weights and Measures is doing a student cover art contest, submittals can be from grades 6-12. High Path Avian Influenza is affecting the wild bird population. There is a new grower's guide that covers pesticide use. Farm Labor Housing task force update: 105 farmworker housing units (occupied by 304 workers) have been inspected, the task force is approximately 75% complete, with a final report expected in spring 2024.

Supervisor Aide, Mike O'Neill, commented due to the Brown Act the handbook item cannot be discussed as it is not on the agenda but it can be proposed to be on the March Agenda.

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, commented the handbook would be a great idea to discuss with the Ag Ombudsman.

Committee Member, Crystal Chaix, inquired how many units were checked and how many applicants were on the list.

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, commented there is a letter in the AAC packet regarding how the inspections were taking place. The Ombudsman is reviewing the earlier feedback received on the loan program . She shared concerns regarding the loss of prime coastal farmland without replacement land confirmed. The Committee directed staff to agendize a discussion regarding the replacement land and draft a recommendation letter to the County/Coastal Commission for the next meeting.

Committee Member, James Oku, commented the condition for the replacement land is that it must be prime soil and must not have been farmed before.

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, is familiar with the land listed on MLS, a portion has been farmed.

Member of the Public, BJ Burns, commented the replacement land is required to have water available and not be farmed to be considered as a candidate.

Supervisor Aide, Mike O'Neill, shared the Task Force received feedback and is exploring options and pros and cons for the Farm Labor Housing loan program. The Task Force will also meet with the AAC Committee. The Task Force will explore options for the program that will encourage more farmers to use the program with the plan to return with a new loan program.

Committee Member, Ryan Casey, commented the farm labor housing loan is needed now, the room for improvement is now, not down the road. There is urgency on the farmers' end.

Planning Liaison, Olivia Boo, shared an update from Steve Monowitz, Director of Planning and Building, regarding the Farm Labor Housing Task Force.

Committee Vice Chair, John Vars, shared there are specific income levels to rent an Affordable Housing unit.

Member of the Public, Dante Silvestri, commented if prime soils can be found as replacement it would be difficult to find but would be good overall. The land is required to be within a certain proximity to the fire station.

The AAC Committee requested to have the Pescadero Fire Station mitigation measure condition on next month's agenda.

a. Status of Peninsula Open Space Trust parcels excluded from wildlife conservation easements that are associated with the Lake Lucerne Mutual Water Company.

Committee Member, Peter Marchi, noted an upcoming shareholder meeting on March 5 regarding POST parcel water rights. Shareholders wanted to invite Midpeninsula to attend the Shareholder meeting to be able to answer questions from the Shareholders.

b. Eliza Milio will do a training on the Agriculture Ombudsman program, tentatively scheduled for April 2024.

SPEAKERS

None. This was discussed under Committee Updates.

c. Ag ID training refresher tentatively scheduled for March 2024.

SPEAKERS

None

5. Discussion to Select a Food Hub Liaison at AAC

Discussion regarding appointing an AAC committee member to serve as the main point of contact between the regional Food Hub Feasibility Study (conducted with RCD and TomKat Ranch) and Supervisor Ray Mueller's office.

SPEAKERS

Committee Member, Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, proposed someone from the AAC Committee to be on the Food Hub Liaison. Cole volunteered to be the liaison, if needed.

Committee Member, Ryan Casey, asked for clarification on this topic, why Eliza would not fill this role.

Planning Liaison, Olivia Boo, commented that Eliza requested to add this item to the AAC Committee. Eliza was not able to attend this meeting, and the item was postponed to the next AAC Committee meeting.

6. **Planning and Building Department Director's Report**

SPEAKERS

None

7. **Response Letter** from Supervisor Mueller's Office regarding the AAC's recommendation letter for continued funding for the County's Farm Labor Housing Loan Program.

SPEAKERS

Committee Chair, Natalie Sare, commented that this item was discussed earlier in the meeting under Committee Member Updates, no further comment at this time.

8. **Adjournment**

Chair Natalie Sare adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Voting Members													
James Oku Farmer	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X
Natalie Sare Farmer			X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
John Vars Farmer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
Peter Marchi Farmer		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Ryan Casey Farmer	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou Farmer							X	X	X		X		X
Crystal Chaix Farmer												X	X
Daniel Theobald Ag Business								X	X		X	X	X
**Vacant Public Member													
**Vacant Public Member	X												
**Vacant Conservationist													
Natural Resource Conservation Staff: Jim Howard													
San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner: Koren Widdel	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X
Farm Bureau Executive Director: Jess Brown	X	X	X		X		X	X				X	X
UC Co-Op Extenstion Representative: Dr. Igor Lacan				X				X	X				X
Planning Liaison													
San Mateo County Planning Liaison: Olivia Boo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

X: Present Blank Space: Absent or Excused Grey Color: No meeting *Special Meeting **Position Vacant