

SOLANO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday, October 14, 2020, 3:00 P.M.

Teleconference Meeting

Meeting called to order at 3:06 by Russ Lester

Members present: Ian Anderson, Bruce Brazelton, Barbara Comfort, Craig Leathers, Al Medvitz, Russ Lester, Barbara Comfort, Moira Burke, Jeff Dittmer

Members absent: Lisa Howard, Jennifer King, Mary Helen Seeger

Guests present: Priscilla Yeaney, Assistant Agricultural Commissioner; Chris Rogers, County Administrator's Office; Bill Emlen, Assistant County Administrator; Matt Tuggle, Engineering Manager Solano County; Catherine Cook, representing Supervisor Jim Spering; Allan Calder, Resource Management Planning Manager; Robert Guerrero, Solano Transportation Authority; Brent Rosenwald, Solano Transportation Authority; Captain Steve West, CHP; Ashton Sturr, Office Assistant Ag Dept; Wendy Rash, NRCS; Jason Riley, Engineering Supervisor, Solano Public Works ; Morgan Doran, UCANR

Agenda Approval: The Agenda was approved as presented with no additions or deletions

Meeting Minutes: The minutes from meeting of August 10, 2020 were unanimously approved as prepared.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Update on recent Board of Supervisor's activity

Priscilla Yeaney: The BOS declared a local emergency for the LNU fire and approved the use of county funds to cover the response efforts with the anticipation of state and federal disaster assistance reimbursement. The BOS also adopted an emergency ordinance establishing requirements for the removal of fire damaged debris from private property in a two phase cleanup effort that is underway: Phase 1 – involves household hazardous waste and asbestos removal at no cost to property owners, and Phase 2 – involves fire and ash debris removal at no cost to property owners if they opt into the cleanup program. The BOS also adopted the Solano County 2020/2021 fiscal year budget. Lastly, the BOS announced that the County is challenging the Dept of Water Resources plan to start the single tunnel delta conveyance project without first fully identifying impacts and costs.

Russ Lester: Regarding the cleanup by Pleasants Valley and other spaces affected by the LNU fires, some landowners did not know of the availability of the free cleanup,

and if Resource Mgmt could reach out to those landowners that do not have access to the website/computer, perhaps posting signage, which would raise awareness of these programs

Allan Calder: There are two links posted under Solanocountyrecovers.org and Resource Mgmt's website with helpful info for landowners re cleanup, debris removal. The dept will look into additional signage posting on major streets and highly visible areas in order to promote this cleanup resource.

B. Update on recent Planning Commission activity

Allan Calder: We will be bringing a few things to the Planning Commission mtg on Oct 15 – we will be bringing a revised Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU); we are looking to expedite the ADU process going from an administration permit to a use by right situation, which will result in a reduction in fees accordingly and it is a more expedited process.

C. Committee Openings – no updates

D. COVID-19 Impacts on Solano Small Farms – Committee Member

Russ Lester: Reported that COVID impacts to his business has been very negative, as it also has been for a lot of ag commodities that sell to bulk wholesalers, and to restaurants and institutions. Because of the Mar-Apr shutdowns the walnut industry in general took a big hit in terms of moving product and prices. This hit is not just to organics, but conventionally farmed crops as well; same thing goes for other bulk commodities like almonds, milk, eggs, meat, meat processing etc. Our prices fell by roughly 60-70% within the last six months. Things will change quite dramatically regarding packaging; business will be done differently, bulk bins in stores may be a thing of the past, unless they can be modified to limit product handling.

Craig Leathers: Tomatoes – Having shelf stable products like tomato paste, we have had a huge increase due to COVID. This spring there was not a Campbells product to be seen on shelves. Our growers did well with a fair and reasonable price. We had record sales last quarter.

Al Medvitz: No impacts to his leased vineyard and have been able to sell lambs to Niman Ranch; wool is on hold, not sold yet.

E. Public Works Annual Capital Improvement Plan – Matt Tuggle, Engineering Manager

Reviewed Plan – Link to the summary of the improvement plan was posted

Matt Tuggle: The capital improvement plan is an annual Public Works project – it includes five years of future planned projects. Year one is usually the active year with projects already in progress or very close to being started; and years two and three are

hard planned projects – considering right of way and utilities etc.; years four, five and thereafter are in the plan because we need to start planning -- getting concepts, deciding what projects are feasible, which are too difficult. The plan draws in mixes of ideas and funds and look at what projects need to be done, safety data, areas are of concern. We have our basic maintenance function, looking at roads and treatments; our pavement index numbers are good relative to other agencies. The newer SB1 gas tax funding has allowed us to look at more projects – reconstructs that we had to ignore, roads that were failed, how roads are being used. We are now looking more at how roads are being used for the benefit of all – cyclists and motorists, and if there are projects, we need have a plan of how to fix it. Several lighted signs striping, and safety improvements were put in throughout the county, a few were well received and very successful. Large culvert replacements, intersection improvements, road reconstruction and paving and overlay projects are all scheduled for FY20-21.

Barbara Comfort: Thanked the dept for the installation of the new stop signs on Thurber bridge; but the bad news is that there is damage to the bridge that looks terrible – any plans to repair bridge and when?

Matt Tuggle: The bridge is scheduled for repair; it is in the plan.

Ian Anderson: Southside of McCormack Rd has a lot of down fencing, is there any protocol for the responsibility and removal of the fencing?

Matt Tuggle: Projects for fencing is very commonly built into the right of way; the dept will usually pick up the fencing.

Al Medvitz: Issue of street corner lighting and communication to nearby landowners – a couple of years ago a very bright light was put into an intersection in the area in which I live, with no consultation with the landowners. If a right of way is established and if there are some inconsistencies. Is it not appropriate for the County to contact the landowners to fix it? It took a long time to resolve this issue. PG&E finally (after 3 years) put in a more appropriate, low intensity, approved light.

Matt Tuggle: The dept usually installs a semi-cut off light, and if there is a complaint, then we can convert the light to a full cut off; but we must work through the timing with PG&E.

Russ Lester/Barbara Comfort: Regarding the study of bicycle activity and the impact on various roads, it has been noticed that some bicyclist do not observe the laws.

Matt Tuggle: The county is going to use a consultant to do traffic counts, that will begin soon; during the pandemic more people are out riding bikes; there is also starting to be more traffic, but not fully back to normal. Those areas that are more dangerous for bikes, puts everyone in a tough space. The question is do we have a common cause of accidents and is it related to the road? We have accident data from CHP, this info goes into an accident map to study for improvements. Additional shouldering was put on roads, and the data has been positive in showing a decrease of about half for accident rates and the severity thereof. Aside from maintenance of

roads, safety is still the primary criteria. On the bike count issue, STA has some devices that can count bike and pedestrian activity; we will see if we can utilize this. We are going to be doing traffic related data collection in the next few months and in addition, some bike counts to see if things are changing. If anyone has any project related concepts or ideas, please send an email to Matt within the next week.

Brent Rosenwald (STA): Stated that they would be happy to lend Public Works their bike counters in order to get better data on what is happening on the rural roads.

Capt. Steve West CHP: Bicyclists as well as motorists not following the rules of the road – running stop signs, exhibiting road rage, not sharing the roads etc. Gave a two-year snapshot picture of bicycle accidents on county roads – 2020 bike collisions equaled four, and another four bike collisions in 2019; however, there were far more motorist accidents. It is important to educate both bicyclists and ag users.

Russ Lester: Ongoing discussions need to be had in addition to education and outreach on both sides – motorists and bicyclists; perhaps widening the roads in certain places is also in order.

Al Medvitz: State Hwy 113 is another big road issue – would like to contact Assemblyman Frazier's office to talk about any legislative agenda for improving that road and other state roads in the County.

Matt Tuggle: Stated plan in 2021 or 2022, a basic maintenance project with SB1 and the revenues they were looking at, they upsized Hwy 113 for full improvement. All good news, but it will have to wait – the plan is for either 2025 or 2026 for a full highway improvement.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

A. LESA – no update

B. Agricultural Updates – Priscilla Yeane

- LNU fires – during the immediate response to the fire, the Ag Dept issued Ag verification passes to ranchers and farmers in order to access evacuation areas to tend to their crops and livestock. Special thanks to Morgan for assisting the County Emergency Operations Center with post fire livestock carcass surveys and removal. Thanks to Sergeant Curry and his deputies for leading efforts in helping to remove dead animals. Fortunately, our State Vet with CA Dep of Food and Ag had already issued a temp quarantine notice that allowed the hauler to take the animals to the Hay Rd landfill. The week following the LNU fire the County created a local assistance center to help fire victims access disaster relief in one centralized location. The Ag Dept co-staffed an info table at the Center with the NRCS to help connect landowners with Farm Services Agency and NRCS assistance programs. Special thanks to Wendy for teaming up with us in this effort. We are also compiling a post-fire ag damage assessment; Morgan has

calculated forage and fencing losses exceeding \$3.8 million dollars, over 1200 beehives were destroyed, and we are still tallying up small orchard and vineyard losses. Preliminary losses to grape growers from wineries rejecting their grapes due to smoke taint currently stand at 1k tons of grapes which equals to about 5% of last year's harvest and is a loss of approx. one million dollars to growers.

- COVID PPE/Safety Trainings: The Ag Dept has N95 masks, disposable masks, cloth face coverings, sanitizer, and nitrile exam gloves available for local growers and processors. The State did issue a recall on the Advoque brand N95 masks. If you received this brand of masks from us, please do not use them for pesticide use or wildfire smoke protection. You may return the N95s to us and we will gladly replace them. We also have a standing offer by Ag staff to do onsite 20-30 minute COVID trainings for growers and agricultural workers. Please contact our dept if you are interested.
- Industrial Hemp – the County will be presenting a proposed industrial hemp ordinance to the BOS on Oct 27. The Ordinance, as proposed, requires a Hemp permit issued by Resource Mgmt including a public hearing process; it restricts eligible growing areas to South of I-80; East of Hwy 113, and North of Hwy 12; requires a 2500 ft buffer from off-site residences, and a security plan that must be approved by the Sheriff
- Wildlife service update: USDA Wildlife Srvcs and the CDFA are working together on a joint project bringing federal and state wildlife mgmt. programs into NEPA and CEQA compliant. The initial public comment spoken period is open through Nov 10. More info can be found at <https://californiawdm.org/>. It will likely be about two or more years to complete this project, depending on if there are any legal changes.

C. GSA Report

Russ Lester: Stated that he did not attend the meeting last week. The plan is posted at solanogsp.com. The plan is still being developed. There will be public outreach info coming soon.

D. State Water Resilience Portfolio – no update

E. Ag Futures Study for Solano County working group

Morgan: Dan Sumner, Director of UC Davis' Ag Issues Center was contacted, and the question was posed as to whether he would be interested in doing an update to the study they published in 2007. Sumner is interested in doing the updated study, and perhaps we could invite him to the next AAC mtg to have a conversation.

F. Flannery Associates Land Acquisitions

Al Medvitz: A real estate agent contacted us and offered to purchase our ranch with a conservation easement, we rejected. We would like to talk with Flannery to get a better idea of what their ultimate goals are.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE

- A. Public Comments – None
- B. Announcements – None
- C. Correspondence – None

Next Meeting Date - A poll will be taken regarding a date for the next meeting

ADJOURN MEETING – 5:02 P.M.