



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

August 23, 2017

Joan Hartmann, Chair
Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Barbara
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Rancho La Laguna Project, Appeal No. 17-APL-00000-00004, Hearing Date
August 29, 2017

Dear Chair Hartmann and Honorable Members of the Board:

On August 2, 2017 the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) received a presentation regarding the Rancho La Laguna Project. After considerable discussion, the AAC voted in favor of supporting the Rancho La Laguna Project. Moreover, the ACC recommends that the Board of Supervisors grant the applicant's appeal of the County Planning Commission's 3-2 vote to deny the project, for the reasons outlined below.

As a general comment, the AAC can see no policy basis for denying this appeal or for refusing to approve the project. The project appears to comply with all applicable ordinances and General Plan policies. Additionally, the EIR concluded that the project would have no Class I impacts and that all project impacts can be mitigated. The EIR includes a long list of mitigation measures that are incorporated into the project conditions.

With respect to the agricultural viability, which is our primary area of focus and potential concern, we are not aware of any County policy, ordinance, or regulation calling for denial of a subdivision of agricultural land if the resulting parcels are agriculturally viable. We support the way the applicant proposes to configure the parcels. All would be substantially productive on their own, and, attractive to a rancher or farmer to lease.

The County of Santa Barbara's staff conducted a test of the proposed parcels' viability and concluded, based upon the County's Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual's test of agricultural viability, that the parcels, individually, would be agriculturally viable. The EIR conducted the same test, using the same Manual, and reached the same conclusion. A respected agricultural consultant, Orrin Sage, concurred.

The County's own Agricultural Preserve Advisory Committee has concluded that the project meets all State requirements for a subdivision and that all parcels all would be eligible for a Williamson Act contract. The applicants have committed to submit applications for Williamson Act contracts for five

of the parcels along with the final map. None of the land currently is under Williamson Act contract so having a substantial amount of agricultural acreage placed under contract is a benefit for the County.

The smaller parcels are primarily high value row crops and therefore Williamson Act contracts may not provide a substantial benefit. Smaller parcels, assuming that they are agriculturally viable, can have a special and meaningful place in agriculture because they provide opportunities for people currently in farming and ranching as well as those just getting their start to lease them at an affordable rate. For these reasons, we are not concerned that those smaller parcels are not proposed for Williamson Act contracts.

In conclusion, this Committee believes that the project complies with all the policies that address agricultural issues and recommend that you uphold the applicants' appeal.

Thank you for your consideration,



Paul Van Leer, Chair

Committee Members

Bradley Miles
Ron Caird
Sharyne Merritt
AJ Cisney
Randy Sharer
Wilja Happe
Claire Wineman
Paul Van Leer, Chair
June Van Wingerden
Brook Williams
Andy Mills, Vice Chair
Jason Sharrett

Representing

1st District Supervisor, Das Williams
2nd District Supervisor, Janet Wolf
3rd District Supervisor, Joan Hartmann
4th District Supervisor, Peter Adam
5th District Supervisor, Steve Lavagnino
California Women for Agriculture
Grower-Shipper Association of SB and SLO Counties
Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau
Santa Barbara Flower & Nursery Growers' Association
Santa Barbara Vintners
Santa Barbara County Cattlemen's Assn.
California Strawberry Commission