



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 11, 2018

Mr. Das Williams, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, 4th Floor
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, California 93101

Subject: FY 2018 – 2019 Budget; P&D Long Range Planning Department Work Plan.

Dear Chairman Williams and Members of the Board of Supervisors,

As your Board appointees on policies, ordinances, projects and programs that have broad implications on the food production, environmental well-being, ecosystem sustainability and economic vitality of county wide agriculture, we, the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) respectfully submit these comments to you on the Proposed FY 2018 – 2019 Budget as it pertains to the Long Range Planning Department Work Plan.

While we recognize and fully appreciate the priorities and planning mandates that have been detailed in the current Work Plan approved by you on April 3, 2018, we hope that you will appreciate our goal to advance land use and environmental policies that contribute to the sustainability of our industry. Accordingly, we respectfully request that you add the following items to that Plan and provide the necessary funding to accomplish this work.

1. Update of the Environmental Thresholds for Agriculture.

Examination of the Environmental Thresholds for Agriculture are long overdue. Farmers and ranchers must be nimble and responsive to changing technology, market demands, climate conditions and economic constraints in order to not only remain competitive in the national market, but also in the global market. Supporting local agriculturalists positively impacts our local economy and our local food supply and helps to protect and maintain agriculture in our community. Antiquated Thresholds that do not provide for new crops, technologies or compatible uses could unintentionally stifle the industry it was designed to protect. In the interest of making sure that we keep our ranches and farms viable, we ask you to include an update to the Thresholds in the Work Plan and Budget.

2. Update of the Uniform Rules for Williamson Act Contracts to Accommodate the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU).

Ranching and farming families have been asking for years for an additional dwelling that would provide for intergenerational housing so that the younger generation can live on the land and help operate the family operation alongside the older generation. Currently, particularly in the rural areas where the large parcels are located, the younger generation lives in town and has to commute out to the ranch or farm.

This places a burden on the older generation and is not an efficient or satisfactory arrangement for effective management. The ADU is the best hope we have had in many years to correct this situation and to help maximize the viability of our family operations. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these operations are under Williamson Act contracts and only one home is allowed, so we would not be able to qualify for the ADU. In addition, it is worth noting that any time spent on allowing the ADU on Williamson Act contracted land should be considered an investment that will return dividends in the form of property tax revenues derived from the assessments on the dwelling. For these reasons, we urge you to add an update to the Uniform Rules to accommodate the Accessory Dwelling Unit to the Work Plan and FY 2018-2019 Budget.

In addition, we would like to comment that it is our understanding that work on streamlining the permit process for farmworker housing and the necessary ordinance amendments for the Agriculture Tiered Permitting Project, is already underway, and provided for in the previous Budget. We encourage this work to continue as a critical top priority for the agricultural industry. If sufficient funds are not available for this, we urge you to add this item to the Budget and the Work Plan for the Long Range Planning Division.

We thank you for this opportunity to weigh in for the agricultural community on the FY 2018-2019 Budget.

Sincerely,



Paul Van Leer, Chair

Committee Members

Bradley Miles
Ron Caird
Sharyne Merritt
AJ Cisney
Randy Sharer
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Claire Wineman
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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