



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

March 27th, 2019

County of Santa Barbara
Board of Supervisors
105 East Anapamu St, Fourth Floor
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Proposed Fee Schedule, Environmental Health Services

Dear Chair Lavagnino and Board of Supervisors:

We appreciate your efforts preparing for the upcoming budget meetings. We would like to provide feedback from the Agricultural Advisory Committee on the proposed fee increases of the Environmental Health Services.

The proposed fee increases raise concern that the continual addition of fees, taxes and regulatory burden imposed to the farming and business communities will further strain attempts to maintain reasonable business profit, and force more companies out of business. The agricultural community is one of the most regulated and taxed industries. Farmers already pay property taxes, income taxes, sales taxes, social security, labor taxes, permit fees and more – in addition to a host of regulatory costs from a variety of stakeholders. We understand that the Board of Supervisors set a goal of 100% cost recovery for services, and therefore placed the burden on departments such as EHS to self-fund their administration via service fees. We understand the value of service fees as a means to charge users of the service and not create a public tax burden, but it is also creating a “death by 1,000 cuts” environment since these regulatory services are not optional. Overburden of cost for compliance, when it creates a hardship, may push a struggling firm away from maintaining the regulatory requirements.

Also, an endless increase in the fee schedule does little to incentivize a department to practice efficiency and eliminate waste. In fact, it provides the opposite; this fee increase is at the cost of the business community who already struggle to compete in this global marketplace (where less tax burdened areas enjoy a cost advantage).

Our recommendation is to ask the department to demonstrate fiscal efficiency and productivity before accepting a new fee schedule. As policy stewards, the Board of Supervisors would set a precedent that departments can't just take the easy route to ask for an increase in fees. Rather, the department should demonstrate their efforts to

bring efficiency and productivity to their processes first, not unlike the efforts the business must make to pay for all these tax burdens.

We respectfully request that the fee increase be put on hold until the department can show the increases as the "last option" Furthermore, we recommend obtaining more data on the impact of the proposed increase in fees on the community members impacted. Since many of the fees are hourly rates, it is not clear the risk the service payers will have on "blank check" processes.

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
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Representing

1st District Supervisor, Das Williams
2nd District Supervisor, Gregg Hart
3rd District Supervisor, Joan Hartmann
4th District Supervisor, Peter Adam
5th District Supervisor, Steve Lavagnino, Chair
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