



SAN BENITO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tim Foley Jim West Eric Brunnemann Damon Felice Jessica French Robert Gatto Vicki Montoya Joan Moore Jason Noble Antonio Ortega George Rajkovich David Roemer Jan Saxton Franz Schneider Tom Tobias

County Administration Building – Board of Supervisor Chambers, 481 Fourth Street, Hollister, California

MINUTES JUNE 3, 2010

PRESENT: Foley, West, French, Gatto, Moore, Noble, Roemer, Saxton, Schneider, Tobias, Felice (arrived at 6:18 p.m.)

ABSENT: Brunnemann, Montoya, Ortega, Rajkovich

STAFF: Assistant Director of Planning (ADoP) Byron Turner, Associate (AP) Planner Michael Kelly, Deputy County Counsel (DCC) Shirley Murphy

The regular meeting commenced at 6:02 p.m.

6:00 PM ~ CALL TO ORDER

Chair Foley noted the presence of Supervisor Margie Barrios. Also present at the meeting were Dan Amsden and Jessica Law of the General Plan Update (GPU) consultant Mintier Harnish.

No members of the public spoke or requested to speak during general public comment time.

AGENDA

1. Approving the minutes of April 29, 2010.

Mr. Tobias made a motion to approve the minutes of April 29, 2010, Vice Chair West seconded, and the motion passed 10–0.

2. Discussion with Supervisors Margie Barrios and Anthony Botelho.

Supervisor Margie Barrios spoke on the Board's ad hoc GPU subcommittee and on the purpose of the subcommittee's visit, to see that what goes into the General Plan is the desire of the community. Supervisor Anthony Botelho arrived at the meeting at this time, 6:06 p.m. Supervisor Barrios expressed interest in consideration of potential commercial districts such as 156–25 and 156–San Felipe and their incorporation into the GPU. Supervisor Botelho said he had heard positive things about the GPU and GPAC and spoke on a need to keep project costs in line.

Supervisor Botelho asked whether the Committee had worked on an Economic Element for the GPU; Chair Foley noted GPAC subcommittees to review existing Elements and that GPAC hadn't yet reviewed an Economic Element, and Mr. Schneider noted that the Committee hadn't reviewed it yet because it didn't exist yet. Chair Foley asked the policy-review subcommittee members for their comments. Mr. Schneider described the review process for the Land Use Element and for the Open Space and Conservation Element, and Mr. West stated that the subcommittees facilitated discussion well.

Supervisor Botelho mentioned ideas that Leadership San Benito had raised for the wine trail and expressed interest in seeing ideas like these presented to the Committee. He asked the Committee whether they had anything the Supervisors needed to hear from them. Chair Foley said the Committee felt energized and noted the consultants' participation in the conversation (as demonstrated by their presence at the table across from the Committee members). He said that the consultants explained how they could help the General Plan get passed through State government, and he mentioned Hugh Bikle's presentation on transferable development credits.

Chair Foley asked Dan Amsden about the GPU project schedule. Amsden replied that the schedule has been condensed but is achievable. Supervisor Barrios said that she liked what she was hearing and praised the Committee for its review. Mr. Schneider asked about water-availability constraints; Supervisor Botelho spoke on State laws about water. Mr. Gatto, speaking on Clear Creek roads and the Bureau of Land Management and also on New Idria and

other mine sites, asked whether these issues would be swept under the doormat or addressed in a responsible manner with the federal government to abate toxic matter and scrap machinery. *Mr. Felice arrived at this time, 6:18 p.m.* Supervisor Barrios said that how the issue of the roads and the federal government has affected the County should be considered and that we must be diligent and in discussion with BLM. Supervisor Botelho spoke on the issue of access and private property pockets and said he has urged BLM to consider public recreation. He adding that asbestos in the Clear Creek area is natural and will not be cleaned up and that BLM should disclose to the public the asbestos issue but still allow access. He also mentioned San Justo Reservoir and the need to convey through the General Plan a message of how important recreation is to the community. Supervisor Barrios said the Board has recommended BLM open Clear Creek as it was before, and she noted that federal action will likely be challenged by private citizens. Mr. Gatto said that the Open Space and Conservation Element subcommittee had good discussions on related issues. The Supervisors thanked the Committee. Chair Foley noted the presence of Jerry Muenzer.

3. Review and comments on the Draft Background Report.

Dan Amsden from Mintier Harnish gave a presentation with PowerPoint slides. He discussed the Background Report sections being prepared by a subconsultant and the objectives for this evening's meeting.

Mr. Gatto asked about any changes to the project schedule. Amsden referred to the project schedule the Committee had received and said it was the same as that in the consultant's revised contract. He said the schedule was more for the use of the consultant than the Committee. Mr. Gatto requested feedback in case the Committee was falling behind schedule in its activities. Jessica Law referred to the possible future agenda items found in the agenda packet.

Chair Foley asked the Committee members for questions. Mr. Schneider complimented the consultant responses to Committee questions. Amsden referred to the Background Report chapter on noise. Ms. Moore asked a question on sound test locations; Ms. Saxton and Mr. Roemer explained equivalent sound levels and averages. Mr. Roemer asked whether the consultant had all sound-station levels and whether any from Caltrans were used. Amsden explained data sources, and Mr. Roemer requested further information on problem spots that have been sources of complaints in San Juan Bautista. Mr. Gatto asked for mention of the County fairgrounds; Mr. Noble said a lawsuit had settled issues of noise generation at the fairgrounds. Mr. Roemer also suggested the airport plan as a source. Mr. Tobias referred to the future possibility of transit service on the railroad into Hollister and its noise potential. Mr. West stated the line needs rebuilding, and Law noted this was a good example for the issues and opportunities stage. Ms. Saxton spoke positively on transit and its relationship to Downtown Hollister. Mr. Schneider spoke on the rehabilitation cost; while highway construction might cost more, the rail cost is still high, he said. Mr. West spoke of rail-spur access for industrial development (such as tilt-up buildings). Mr. Noble asked whether the possibility of high-speed rail had been considered; Amsden said it could be considered in the environmental impact report (EIR). Mr. Roemer said this was more of a circulation issue than a noise issue. Mr. Gatto stated that light rail might be good for connection to high-speed rail. Chair Foley wondered whether the Hollister Airport could be used for jets. Amsden said this may be in the opportunities and constraints stage and would be analyzed by the EIR. Mr. Noble noted that the airport is in the City of Hollister but the flight paths are in the County.

Amsden remarked on demographic and economic trends and asked the Committee to comment as local experts on issues in these areas. Mr. Schneider spoke on population and said that the County had once simultaneously seen California's biggest percentage growth and smallest absolute growth. He added that unemployment figures should be updated, since figures now are much higher. Amsden said these would be updated based on comments. Mr. Tobias and Mr. Noble noted the need to differentiate San Benito County from Santa Clara and Monterey Counties. Mr. Roemer suggested noting what percentage of the four-county group San Benito County represents. Mr. Tobias said that the GPU is being done for the County and not the region. Chair Foley said that proximity to bigger, wealthier counties is a factor that should be addressed. Mr. Schneider remarked that the County has been addressing the jobs-housing balance for decades and asked whether any realistic way existed to do that. Amsden said the issues-and-opportunities report would look at this and that the economic consultant has looked at the four-county region to see what San Benito County could attract.

Ms. Saxton noted the competition the County faces with neighboring counties. Mr. Gatto suggested wine trails as a good opportunity, one that requires greater promotion than the local wine industry receives now; he also suggested a convention center. Chair Foley suggested the need for accommodations like motel space, and Mr. Gatto agreed and also suggested a visitors bureau to promote the County. Chair Foley suggested hearing from Nancy Martin of the Economic Development Corporation of San Benito County and referred to EDC's action on the airport and infrastructure. Mr. West mentioned a wine trail grant. Mr. Schneider remarked about tarantulas on Cienega Road as a unique attraction. Santa Ana Valley was mentioned. Mr. Gatto said that tours take place in which people are bussed into a location; he suggested that the County attract this kind of tour and give visitors motorcycles to ride through the area, with Hollister as a starting point. Chair Foley suggested bicycle tourism, and Mr. Gatto further mentioned a triathlon and the opening of San Justo.

Amsden asked about other issues and constraints. Ms. Saxton identified water as a huge issue. Mr. Tobias remarked on vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) and concentrating growth near roadways; mentioning State mandates on carbon dioxide emissions, he noted that the County would experience housing and business growth while agriculture would likely remain level. Ms. Saxton mentioned public transit. Amsden remarked on Assembly Bill 32, aggressive

action by the State, other bills regarding jobs–housing balance and public transit. Chair Foley remarked on commercial corridors, and Mr. Roemer suggested discussions of economics and transportation touch on the commercial corridors matter. Ms. Saxton suggested the use of electric vehicles with solar chargers as one way to control emissions. Mr. Roemer said that much thought had been put into emissions during the AMBAG Blueprint process and greenhouse-gas inventory.

Law asked about schools and colleges, and Chair Foley spoke about land chosen near Ridgemark for Gavilan College and a high school, adding that questions exist about whether that's an appropriate location for growth, while Gavilan feels a full campus is desired by the community. Mr. Schneider said that San Benito High School has owned that property near Ridgemark for a long time, but the community had been against high school construction there a long time ago. Mr. Noble said the Saint Benedict site was considered for a Catholic high school. Mr. Gatto remarked on struggling attendance at Christopher High School in Gilroy. Mr. Tobias said that the current Gavilan location is not great. Mr. Gatto said that Gavilan students could shop in town, and Ms. Saxton added this would especially be true if the campus were *in* town. Mr. Schneider noted that Gavilan College is an independent body not under the County's jurisdiction and doesn't need County approval. Chair Foley suggested that Staff bring interactive maps to the meeting. Amsden mentioned a planning exercise from Merced County that identified constraints but found many constraints existed near cities.

4. Report from the Open Space and Conservation Element Policy Review Subcommittee.

Mr. Schneider remarked on impressions of the Open Space and Conservation Element and asked for discussion on bulleted items. Ms. Saxton expressed that she was impressed by the results of the Element's review. Mr. West said about recreation that he noted overlap with the Parks and Recreation Commission and its master plan, and he suggested the plan as a reference. Ms. Saxton said the Parks and Recreation Master Plan should reference the General Plan, and Amsden agreed that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan implements the General Plan. Mr. Schneider spoke on the Element's Policy 18 and on concern about access to parks by something other than roads (catapult? said Ms. Saxton). Mr. Schneider also referred to Policy 23's Action 1—"stabilize values"—and asked whether this was meant to keep farmland prices low. Ms. Saxton and Mr. West mentioned transferable development credits (TDCs). Mr. Gatto said he was against County involvement in property values and Action 1 was not a good statement for the General Plan; he favored a rewording suggesting farmland should be made affordable for those who wish to farm. Mr. Noble said the action implies manipulation. Ms. Saxton noted that the goal is protecting prime land. Mr. Noble said the Williamson Act is important here but teetering because of a lack of State funding; he added that recent landbuyers will have trouble, being not subject to Proposition 13 savings. Mr. Schneider suggested dropping Goal 6's Objective 3 and Policy 23's Action 1.

Mr. Schneider continued by speaking on Policy 28 ("viable sizes for agriculture"), and he asked about whether Measure G in 2004 was about this policy's issue. He said five-acre zoning wouldn't change and contradicts this. Richard Saxe of Aromas, under public comment, said the County has a permit point system, this General Plan policy disincentivizes farmland development, and five-acre development unravels farmland preservation. Ms. Moore noted Mark Tognazzini's suggestion at the April 29 meeting that development be allowed on small parcels, and she wondered whether small parcels could be split while large parcels could be preserved. Mr. Tobias said splitting small parcels wouldn't work because septic systems and water wells would interfere. Mr. Schneider noted the one-acre minimum lot size for septic systems, and Mr. Tobias responded that in some places that doesn't work. Chair Foley suggested the scenario of five-acre parcels near sewer systems, and Mr. Noble spoke on the complicated process of connecting to sewer systems and how few people want that difficulty. ADoP Turner explained that the one-acre rule is true, but those properties are generally on City water, not wells; furthermore, he said the State is considering increasing the minimum lot size for parcels with septic systems.

ADoP Turner added that Mark Tognazzini's earlier suggestion was about cutting losses and not calling small parcels productive agriculture. Mr. Gatto said the subcommittee wasn't sure of what to do with Policy 28 and also referred to the City of San Juan Bautista's sphere-of-influence expansion and its effect on agriculture. Mr. Noble referred to the Montebello Estates cluster development as a good example of agricultural preservation. Chair Foley said a property's orchards can contribute to group grape growth. Mr. Tobias said five-acre lots have been profitable as farmland in the past but not now. Law noted that zones must follow the General Plan Land Use Element's designations and that current zoning could change in the future. Mr. Schneider said odds are slim that downzoning could happen in San Benito County. Law and Amsden agreed that this was a politically charged issue. Amsden said parcel size is an important component of agricultural preservation but other ways exist to deal with it, like regulations, urban growth boundaries, the Williamson Act (if backed by the State), and protection of certain areas. Chair Foley asked for elaboration on the latter idea, and Amsden spoke about agricultural mitigation areas in which development must compensate for loss of land by preserving other agricultural land (like TDC, Foley added), which could be done with purchases of development rights. Mr. Felice said he saw no reference to Prime Farmland in the General Plan and said some farmland is not necessarily Prime.

Mr. Schneider brought up Policy 45, on private recreation facilities. Discussion took place on defining private recreation and on related issues, like liability and the policy's vagueness. After the discussion, the policy was given to the consultant for review.

5. Clarification of Guiding Principles.

Amsden introduced the item. Mr. Tobias referred to a handout of suggested principles language. Chair Foley asked whether Tres Pinos would be considered a compact village with regard to the principles, and Mr. Tobias said he would say yes. Mr. Noble said that compactness requires wastewater treatment and not septic systems, as well as enough units to amortize the treatment's costs. Mr. Tobias visualized dense development linked by light rail with sufficient economies of scale to make this idea doable. Discussion took place on compactness and clustering. Ms. Saxton suggested referring to "condensed," not "compact," development in the second principle. Mr. Gatto wondered about the outcome of favoring "compact" development and suggested instead using the expression "compact, rural." Amsden remarked that opinion in very different places like Sacramento and Alpine County was that the locale had a "small town feel"; while many ways exist to quantify an urban condition, many would simply say Hollister is rural. Further discussion took place on the meaning of compactness and the impression of density. Ms. Saxton suggested that, while modern is okay, the County should not be appearing to urbanize. Mr. Tobias suggested that cluster villages should be located north of Hollister. Ms. Saxton said the reference to "agribusiness concepts" in the twelfth principle should be changed to suggest the County is moving away from monocultural agribusiness. Amsden suggested "productive and sustainable agricultural concepts" as a replacement. Mr. Tobias suggested a reference to both conventional and organic agriculture. Richard Saxe, under public comment, referred to the ideas he raised at the April 29 GPAC meeting; Amsden said a response had been given to those comments. Amsden also suggested the expression "protecting productive agricultural lands and industries" for the eighth principle. Discussion took place on the future of agriculture in the County. Mr. Roemer said that a biological industry could be compact physically yet be very productive for the local economy, but he said the eighth principle limits that and should not. Mr. Tobias recommended against setting too many boundaries because, he said, leapfrog growth would happen otherwise. Ms. Saxton said that boundaries can be moved. Mr. Schneider said the western boundary of Salinas is well defined with a road, and growth moved northeastward instead.

6. Review of bylaws on Committee votes.

Brief discussion took place on this item. No action was taken. Following this, Amsden gave the Committee information on steps that would follow this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m. to the regular meeting of July 8, 2010.

Minutes prepared by Michael Kelly, Associate Planner. Attest: Byron Turner, Assistant Director of Planning.