

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS - LAND USE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2022**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 6

**SUBJECT: ADOPT RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATION FOR THE
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION LANDS PROGRAM
PLANNING GRANT PROMOTING AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

Declining agricultural trends in San Diego County, if not carefully addressed, will continue to negatively impact our local farming communities, our rural economies, and the larger San Diego region as a whole. Not only is agriculture a major economic driver for the region, but it is also at the cornerstone of modern civilization, having ushered us into a world where food supplies and other farmed goods necessary for our survival are more plentiful and widely available. However, with ever-shifting political priorities, local impacts from climate change, and a host of other challenges, farmers in our region are increasingly at risk of going out of business. For example, the Fallbrook region, known as the “avocado capital of the world,” has experienced a loss of nearly 20% of its avocado groves in the past few years, suggesting that growing avocados is becoming economically infeasible for many of our local farmers.

Conventional wisdom is that rising costs of water, compounding governmental regulations, and urban interface issues including competition for housing and other non-agricultural land uses are leading to more urban landscapes within the rural communities, causing lands previously used for agricultural purposes to be developed for other commercial or residential uses. The root cause is likely a combination of all these factors and possibly others. In order to deliver meaningful and impactful solutions for our struggling farming communities, particularly small farms, it is critical to identify the true underlying causes specific to the San Diego region. Working to support a prosperous and resilient agricultural industry in the region will require technologies and practices that build on agro-ecological knowledge, that enable farmers to more easily navigate the rules and regulations, and help small farms counter environmental degradation and adapt to climate change in ways that maintain sustainable agricultural growth without exhausting resources such as money, seeds, and livestock.

In this spirit, my office has been working with the San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and the County’s Department of Planning & Development Services (PDS) to partner together on a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) Planning Grant application. PDS oversees various programs to support agriculture and further sustainability, such as the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements program and the Climate Action Plan. Additional agency partners such as the County’s Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures and the University of California Cooperative Extension will also be engaged to provide technical support and input on this grant.

If successful, up to \$450,000 in grant funds would be made available to LAFCO and PDS to jointly analyze the present and emerging market conditions in our local agriculture industry and identify best practices for local governments to better support the economic sustainability of farming in the region.

The proposed planning grant intends to generate reliable and timely market information and best practice data to support and sustain agriculture in San Diego County, focusing on aiding small farms that otherwise have limited capacity to perform this type of analysis or access resources. The best practices information will help to identify incentives, technical support, regulatory streamlining, and other mechanisms that may be employed by local governments or other partners to help increase the economic sustainability of small farms in the region. Mechanisms to be considered for farmers in San Diego County will be driven by best practice research and stakeholder input. These may include, but are not limited to, carbon sequestration projects, technical or other support identifying viable crop types for the future, and/or incentives to increase the environmental sustainability of agriculture with a net financial benefit.

Today's action is a request for the Board of Supervisors (Board) to adopt a resolution authorizing PDS to apply for and accept grant funds for the Round 8 SALC Planning Grant. It will also authorize the Director, Department of Planning & Development Services, to conduct all negotiations and to execute and submit all documents that may be necessary to apply for and accept these grant funds. If grant funds are awarded, PDS will return to the Board to request appropriations as needed.

RECOMMENDATION(S)
SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND

1. Find that the proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines.
2. Adopt a Resolution entitled: RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO AUTHORIZING DIRECTOR, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, TO APPLY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION LANDS PROGRAM PLANNING GRANT (Attachment A)
3. Authorize the Director, Planning & Development Services, or their designee, as agent of the County of San Diego to conduct all negotiations and submit all documents necessary to apply for and accept grant funds, if awarded, including but not limited to, applications, grant agreements, payment requests, and if funds are awarded, to execute the grant agreements, including any extensions or amendments thereof that do not materially impact or alter the grant programs or funding levels pertaining to the ROUND 8 CALIFORNIA SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL LANDS CONSERVATION PROGRAM.
4. Authorize the Director, Planning & Development Services, or their designee, as agent of the County of San Diego to enter into an agreement with LAFCO to define implementing duties and responsibilities should the grant proposal receive approval.
5. If funds are ultimately awarded, direct the Director, Planning & Development Services, or their designee, to provide to the Board of Supervisors in as timely a manner possible a report that will present the results of the grant analysis, including key issues and challenges realized by small farms in the region, present and emerging market conditions in our local agriculture industry, and best practices on how to address the key issues contributing to declining agricultural trends in San Diego County.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Funding made available through the SALC Planning Grant would support more economically sustainable agriculture in San Diego County, with an emphasis on supporting our small farms. Market and best practices information will aid current and prospective farmers and local governments in making informed decisions in the shared interest of sustainable and prosperous agriculture. It is anticipated that the requested action and future implementation of the SALC Planning Grant will have a positive impact on all residents and visitors by protecting and promoting sustainable agricultural lands, helping to foster a healthy natural environment for the region. The market study will produce data that may be used to create a more resilient agricultural industry and contribute to the region's ongoing food security, along with identifying opportunities and resources for current and future farmers.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's proposed action. If approved, the Department of Planning & Development Services (PDS) will submit grant applications to the California Department of Conservation for Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC), for a total of \$450,000 for the continued support of small farms.

The Board approved a waiver of Board Policy B-29 to issue an exception for approval of non-reimbursed costs for LUEG grants on June 24, 2020 (12), therefore a waiver is not requested as part of this action. If a grant is awarded, any unrecovered cost per Board Policy B-29 would be funded by existing General Purpose Revenue in Planning & Development Services and San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) funding as determined by the nature of the project(s) or program(s).

The SALC grant is competitive; therefore, it is unknown if grant funding will be awarded or the final amount of the award. The SALC grant program requires an in-kind funding match. If awarded, in-kind matching funds of \$50,000 will be provided in Fiscal Year 2022-23 by PDS staff hours (\$25,000) funded by existing General Purpose Revenue and San Diego County LAFCO (\$25,000) funded by San Diego County LAFCO. If approved and grant funds are awarded, PDS will return to the Board to request appropriation of funds as necessary.

There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Vargas, seconded by Supervisor Fletcher, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended, on Consent, adopting Resolution No. 22-124, entitled: RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO AUTHORIZING DIRECTOR, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, TO APPLY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION LANDS PROGRAM PLANNING GRANT.

AYES: Vargas, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Fletcher, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter