

Santa Paula Unified School District Farm Advisory Committee

January 17, 2019, 5:00PM

SPUSD Board Room

Meeting Notes

1. Present: Alex Flores, Andrew Arroyo, Anna Arroyo, Erin Valenzuela, Gordon Kimball, Ed Cora, Christine Schieferle, George Williams, Laurie Arnold, Sheri Staszewski; Principal Elizabeth Garcia (arrived 5:50)
2. Naming, ribbon cutting updates – Mr. Cora
Naming: recommendations have been sent to the board, and this is an agenda item at next week's board meeting January 23. Confidential at this time. Ribbon Cutting/Opening Ceremony to be scheduled on a Saturday, with the science building at Isbell Middle School 9 am, followed by the farm @ 11 or 11:30 am. Some discussion of food. Date to be determined.
3. Ventura College – Ms. Schieferle
Ms. Schieferle and Ms. Arnold recently met with the new Ventura College Ag teacher, Dorothy Farias, and discussed collaboration with the VC Ag program. Dr. Farias shared about courses offered and being developed, in particular in their Ag Business program. Discussed possibility of dual enrollment and partnership. 100 trees being planted on the one acre VC farm. Information shared about teacher and her background as a teacher and with FFA, the fall 2019 Associate Degree to be offered in Ag Business and Plant Science, and the Ambassador Program.
4. Farm Management Company – Ms. Schieferle
The goal is secure a contract with a farm management company in support of both management of the farm along with internship opportunities for students. District leadership has contacted multiple local companies, as a result of feedback from the multiple companies, Mission proposed a plan to remove/replace some of the existing trees. Proposed lemons, too cold for avocados. As part of the research at this time, district is waiting to hear from Limoneira, who initially declined because they do not do land management, to see if they might want to consider a similar model. We are continuing with current land management for one year.

Ms. Schieferle opened a discussion of use and vision of the farm property, so we may ensure the best contract and farm management arrangement. Discussion included the following ideas. Opportunities for students at the farm and how to harvest produce.

Opportunities for internship and work-based learning. A consideration is zoning, as we cannot hold regular class trips to the farm. We need industry partners to help us with managing the farm. We are in the business of education and need experts to operate the orchards. We need farm management to do the pruning, irrigation, check for pests, fundamentals. The vision is to take what is happening in the classroom and take the experience outside. Current internships are with Fruit Growers Lab, Laird's Butcher Shop, feed store, Ag Museum, American Bloom, Red Hot Foods; at this time we do not have internships with Limoneira, Calava, Mission, the bigger companies, and have in the past. Limoneira and Calavo provide support in other ways, i.e. field trips, purchasing stock at the fair, sponsorship for awards, etc. Discussion of time and planning needed to bring students to the farm, as has been experienced with field trips. Discussion of existing space for students' SAE projects, to plant. Discussed desire for space for hoop house, garden boxes, succulent garden, rabbit pens.

5. Project Update – *Note: Mr. Henning was called away and did not attend the meeting.* Per prior communication, all is moving forward if not yet completed with regards to pens, water lines, drains, fences, gates. As needed, Mr. Henning and Mr. Flores will meet to discuss finer details with regard to construction, pens, water lines, drains, fence, gates.
6. Move out/move in – Mr. Flores
Mr. Flores shared some vandalism and problems continue at the old farm; he is ready to move all. Mr. Flores needs a 40' container, he has obtained a quote, and needs to coordinate with Mr. Henning. Someone needs to talk with owner to close out. Animals begin to come in March so we should have the farm ready for animals by then.
7. Next meeting: Ribbon Cutting details. Possibly better when animals are there. Continue discussion of vision of the farm.
8. Next Meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 21, 2019; we will meet at the farm at 5 pm, access on Maple Street.