



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY FARM BUREAU

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November 11, 2021

San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors
1055 Monterey Street Suite D430
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408
By email to: ad_Board_clerk@co.slo.ca.us

Re: Comment for November 16, 2021 Board of Supervisors Meeting on Agenda Item 37

San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau offers comments on Agenda Item 37 “Request to 1) receive and file a report on Department of Planning and Building Activities and provide staff direction as necessary on the Department Tiered Priority Projects; and 2) receive and file the Annual General Plan Progress Report.”

Understanding that County staff have a limited amount of resources to work on every identified issue, we ask you to prioritize work on the “Rural camping ‘Hip Camp’ Ordinance” as described in the staff report. This work could dovetail efficiently with work on the “No Camping on Public Lands Ordinance.” **Farm Bureau is requesting that you set this type of ordinance as a Tier 1 priority** during your November 16 planning meeting and give direction to staff to bring back a draft ordinance in coming months.

We have heard substantial feedback from Farm Bureau members and other residents dealing with unacceptable circumstances of disruptive and inappropriate camping activity in their local communities across SLO County. We believe it is important to put clear rules in place that give the County the tools it needs to stop bad actors while creating a new opportunity for farmers, ranchers and rural property owners to create new private land camping businesses. Right now, property owners who want to start a Hipcamp-type business face unclear rules and a cumbersome permitting process. We can and should do better for our community.

As you know, bringing alternative revenue streams like tourism to our local agriculture community is critically important to keep farmers and ranchers in business and able to pass their land down to the next generation. As it stands today, we are denying our agriculture community the opportunity to bring in supplemental income to offset their ever-increasing input costs. We are also not capturing Transient Occupancy Taxes these farm businesses could be collecting for the County. This money could be directly applied to hire more Code Enforcement staff to enforce camping regulations.

Farm Bureau is mindful of potential conflicts camping can have if not regulated properly. Today, our absence of rules is creating problems across the county. This camping ordinance can establish rules and procedures to mitigate potential food safety risks from activity near produce fields, and our regional agricultural community would benefit greatly from a simple, cost effective, and accessible pathway to permitting for incidental and private land camping.

Agritourism is a huge opportunity for our farm and ranching families who need to adapt to new opportunities to stay economically viable, and incidental camping is a big part of making agritourism work. By prioritizing policies to make private-land camping more accessible for rural landowners, you can help protect two of our signature industries – agriculture and tourism. If we work together, we can find a balanced policy regarding private-land camping, and preserve what makes this county so special to residents and visitors alike.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if I can answer any questions.

Brent Burchett, Executive Director
San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau