



Mendocino County Farm Bureau

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Affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation

January 25, 2021

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1010
Ukiah, CA 95482

RE: 6A. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the Composition of the Mendocino County Planning Commission

Dear Chair Gjerde and Board Members,

The Mendocino County Farm Bureau (MCFB) is a non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary membership, advocacy group whose purpose is to protect and promote agricultural interests throughout the county and to find solutions to the problems facing agricultural businesses and the rural community. MCFB would like to submit comments on agenda items 6A for the January 26, 2021 Board of Supervisors meeting.

MCFB opposes the recommended action to remove the two at large seats from the Mendocino County Planning Commission. MCFB also disagrees with several points in the agenda summary including the rationale that removing the two at large seats will provide a more “workable quorum” and that the at large seats are “industry based”.

Per county code section 2.48.010 below, the two at large seats do not require that the nominees be connected to industry, but instead “possess a demonstrated knowledge” of either agriculture or forestry. These two seats bring perspective in the consideration of proposed planning projects so that resource lands are not adversely impacted by urban sprawl, subdivision, etc. This is more important than ever, given the fact that most county elected officials and nominees are further disconnected from having knowledge of the intricacies of land use policy connected to agricultural and forest-based lands.

Sec. 2.48.010 - Establishment and Appointment of Planning Commissioners.

There is hereby created a Planning Commission for the County of Mendocino. Said Commission shall consist of seven (7) members. One (1) member shall be appointed from each supervisorial district. Two (2) additional members shall be appointed from the County at large, one (1) member shall possess a demonstrated knowledge of agriculture and the other member shall possess a demonstrated knowledge of forestry. All members shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors upon nomination by any member of the Board of Supervisors. Each member representing a supervisorial district shall serve a term coextensive with the term served by the Supervisor from that district. If a vacancy occurs during a Supervisor's term, a vacancy will be deemed to have occurred in the office of the Planning Commissioner from that Supervisor's

district. Planning Commissioners appointed at large shall serve staggered terms. One (1) shall be appointed for an initial term of two (2) years and the other shall be appointed for an initial term of four (4) years. Thereafter, the at-large Commissioners shall serve four (4) year terms. Commissioners serve at the will and pleasure of the Board of Supervisors and may be removed at any time by a four-fifths (4/5) vote of the Board of Supervisors. The members of the Commission shall receive such compensation and expense reimbursement as authorized by law and as established by the Board of Supervisors.

(Ord. No. 300, Sec. 1, adopted 1945; Ord. No. 447, adopted 1963; Ord. No. 3816, adopted 1992.)

Another advantage of the two at large seats is that their appointments are approved by all five supervisors. This means that these two seats, are not beholden to the primary interests of a single district. The two at large seats, out of a Commission of seven, do not have the ability to control the positions of the body as illuded to in the agenda summary. Plus, the Board of Supervisors has the existing authority to override determinations made by the Commission as has been demonstrated in several recent board decisions.

Since Mendocino County continues to amass land use policy changes and projects, having a seven person Planning Commission is not a detriment. The agenda summary states, “a quorum of 3 would be sufficient and a majority of two could move decisions.” How is it a beneficial idea to have two individuals given the jurisdiction to approve or deny land use policy decisions or specific projects? The answer is simple. Having two individuals approving or denying land use policy for an entire county is not beneficial.

Instead of focusing on removing two important seats on the Commission, the Board should focus on ensuring that all Commissioners are qualified and take their positions seriously. This means being prepared for meetings, being in attendance and having a willingness to serve on other committees or land use related boards as needed.

This action item has been proposed in the past and was rejected. Per county code section 2.48.010, the removal of Commissioners requires a 4/5 vote of the Board of Supervisors. MCFB requests that the Board members have a thorough conversation regarding this proposal and vote against the proposed action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Hollister". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

George Hollister
President