

# Supervisors to consider moratorium on B-and-Bs, event centers

By **Anne Ternus-Bellamy** From page A1 | February 24, 2016

Yolo County supervisors appear likely to issue a moratorium on new event centers and bed-and-breakfast establishments in unincorporated areas of the county in a bid to prevent ag land from being taken out of production in the name of agritourism.

Supervisors directed staff on Tuesday to return to the board with language for an ordinance temporarily halting approval of such businesses while the board studies their impact on local agricultural land and activities.

The move comes in the wake of concerns that outside interests are purchasing or planning to purchase agricultural land in rural areas of the county in order to convert them to businesses like event centers and bed-and-breakfasts.

And while such businesses have long fallen under the category of “agritourism” — commercial ventures that support the agricultural industry — some local farmers are not happy with how they are operating.

Winters resident and farmer Bruce Rominger told supervisors Tuesday that agritourism was intended to help existing professional farmers and ranchers — those that derive their primary income from producing food — to supplement their agricultural income.

“This is a legitimate use,” Rominger said.

“Unfortunately, the concept of agritourism has evolved into an opportunity for non-agricultural businesses to develop our farm and ranch lands.

“(They) are masquerading as farmers and ranchers under the guise of agritourism, so they will be allowed to operate hospitality businesses and other non-ag ventures,” Rominger said.

“These developers create many negative impacts for farmers and ranchers and other rural residents. We are very concerned they will ultimately displace the farmers and ranchers who are producing food and fiber for us and for future generations.”

Rominger and others urged supervisors on Tuesday to issue a moratorium on event centers and bed and breakfasts to allow time “to create more effective county regulations that will ultimately preserve farmland for farming.”

According to county planner Eric Parfrey, there are currently two active proposals for event centers and/or bed-and-breakfasts that would be affected by the moratorium — one north of Winters and another south of Esparto.

“I’m interested in hitting pause in some fashion,” Supervisor Don Saylor of Davis said. “There are some issues I’m hearing and seeing that I’d like to have us look more deeply at.”

Saylor said he considered event centers and similar agritourism businesses ways to help current farmers continue farming by ensuring adequate income.

“(But) this is about people purchasing property solely for the purpose of changing ag to something else,” he said.

“There are always unintended consequences,” agreed Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis.

Provenza suggested the board conduct a future workshop on the matter.

Supervisor Duane Chamberlain, meanwhile, who represents the largely rural 5th District where many of the affected farmers live, said “a lot of these things I’m hearing about ... have nothing to do with farming.”

He urged colleagues to ensure that farmland is not taken out of production in order to facilitate non-ag enterprises.

The supervisors comments came during a public hearing Tuesday on updates to the county zoning code. Contained in those updates were proposed changes related to bed and breakfast establishments — primarily a recommendation by staff to keep the bedroom limit to 10 and to include a new definition for cottages that double as bed and breakfasts.

Those zoning code changes were pulled from consideration pending future discussion by the board on a moratorium and agritourism in general.

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