



Board of Directors Meeting

DRAFT

Friday, June 15, 2018

10am – 3pm

MEETING MINUTES

I. Convene Meeting, Introductory Remarks

Chairman Vito Chiesa called the second quarter 2018 meeting of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley (Partnership) to order at 10:05am at the Tulare County Ag Commissioner's Building in Tulare and initiated introductions around the table.

Board members present were James Aleru, Vito Chiesa, Frank Gallegos, Andrew Genasci, Carole Goldsmith, Genoveva Islas, Ellen Junn, Luisa Medina, Patricia Poire, Charles Riojas, Max Rodriguez, Luis Santana, and Cherylee Wegman.

Board Deputies present were Sharri Bender Ehlert, Sonya Logman, Rachael O'Brien and Jim Suennen.

Advisory Board member Robert Tse attended.

II. Recognition of Sponsors and Dignitaries

Chair Chiesa recognized and thanked the sponsors who made the meeting possible by providing the venue and the funds for catering and A/V services. He thanked Eric Coyne of Tulare County Economic Development, Film & Tourism, and Mayor Carlton Jones with the City of Tulare. The Board also thanked Ashu Jain from ENGIE Services, U.S. for hosting a pre-Board meeting dinner.

Steve Worthley, Chairman, Tulare County Board of Supervisors welcomed the Board to Tulare County, which he described as the heart of agricultural production. Tulare County is the size of the state of Connecticut and includes national forests and Sequoia National Park. Mt. Whitney is shared equally with Inyo County. Supervisor Worthley updated the Board on current financial projects and challenges in Tulare County, including a recent agreement entered into with ENGIE for doing a major solar project for Tulare County facilities with an anticipated savings of at least \$25 million, but probably closer to \$40 or \$50 million over the next twenty-five years.

Supervisor Worthley said that Tulare County has fifty-two miles of the 99 running through it and called attention to the ongoing improvements made possible by the gas sales tax. Being the most dangerous highway in the nation, he said, the improvements are necessary not only for the movement of goods and services and people, but also for public safety.

III. Public and Board Comments

Chair Chiesa invited comments from the Board and public, recognizing Sonya Logman, Deputy Secretary of Business and Consumer Relations and the California Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency. Ms. Logman gave the Board an update on the state budget that has yet to be finalized and signed by the Governor. Her agency will likely receive \$500 million to support homeless emergency aid block grant funding. It is a \$500 million in one-time fund for emergency aid for local governments to respond to homelessness. Ms. Logman said that the goal of the agency is to make the application process for local governments as easy as possible.

Rachael O'Brien, Deputy Secretary for Legislative Affairs for California Department of Food and Agriculture, discussed the \$500 allocation that passed through from the Department of Food and Agriculture for the budget just yesterday, and is heading for the Governor to sign off on. Chair Chiesa explained that this is onetime bridge funding for the Partnership for strategic planning and administration. Chairman Chiesa added that it is imperative that there is a sustainable funding plan worked out to keep the Partnership moving forward. Secretary Ross was instrumental in this as were Secretary Dooley, Larry Salinas and Dr. Joaquin Arambula. All Valley elected officials had signed on and were supportive. Luisa Medina spoke out to recognize the efforts of Ashley Swearengin who was extremely helpful in strategizing with Ms. Medina, Bryn Forhan and Ismael Herrera to draft the documents needed to push the funding request forward.

There were no public comments.

IV. Consent Calendar

Luisa Medina moved to accept the consent calendar as published. Andrew Genasci seconded, and the motion was approved.

V. Legislative Update

A brief legislative update was provided by Matt Rogers, representing US Senator Kamala Harris. Mr. Rogers discussed the Farm Bill being critical to the San Joaquin Valley and the preservation of SNAP funding at its current levels in the Farm Bill, as so many families in the San Joaquin Valley rely on it. Senator Harris is working with Republicans and Democrats to prevent any Farm Bill from leaving the Senate floor without maintaining the SNAP funding. The Senator is also concerned with what is happening on the southern border and the disturbing pictures seen of children being separated from their families. The Senator has sent a request to those in charge and to those monitoring the situation there, demanding answers to where those children are, how they're being treated and the conditions that they are in. Mr. Rogers welcomed people to call one of his offices if they are concerned about any immigration cases or any inhumane treatment of any human being. He said that they have all five offices on alert to make sure that the constitution is being followed, and that people are being treated how we have always treated people in America.

Shannon Major, representing California State Senator Tom Beryhill, told the Board that Senator Berryhill continues to monitor the challenges faced with Temperance Flat. The Senator's legislative packet is traditionally small, but there is a bill on foster youth that they are fairly confident will pass. It is a foster youth college tuition waiver. It allows Community College, CSU and UC systems, to waive tuition and fees for foster youth who are under the age of 26 and who have been in foster care for at least 12 months after the age of 10. They did have legislation that would have repealed the fire tax fee that many of the folks in their district have encountered for years. The bill died in committee and they are asking for it to be repealed and for the state to implement a system where people could get a refund. Ms. Major also discussed that for Senator Dave Cogdill, they are dedicating a portion of highway in Mono County in his name.

Wes Anderson, representing State Senator Andy Vidak, discussed three bills: Senate Bill 495, introduced by Senator Vidak, is a bill regarding Allensworth safe drinking water, which gives the community of Allensworth a temporary exemption to the Endangered Species Act so that they will have the ability to build a new, much-needed water well. Senate Bill 1137 would require the California Department of Veterans Affairs and the California Department of Consumers Affairs to increase awareness and notification for veterans regarding professional licensing benefits that are already available to them. Senate Bill 1382 is a gun storage bill authorizing individuals to store their gun in a locked box in their vehicle that does not contain a trunk.

Alex Tavlian, representing US Congressman David Valadao, discussed three issues with which Congressman Valadao is currently concerned. First, the Farm Bill and its failed vote, which he said is intertwined with Immigration. Second, the USDA just approved the federal milk marketing order for the State of California, which is a big boost for dairy farmers in the San Joaquin Valley. California provides 18% of the dairy supply in the United States. Mr. Tavlian also spoke on the immigration issue, saying that Congressman Valadao and Congressman Denham have been pushing hard on a discharge petition that would create a Queen of the Hill situation on Immigration Reform. Their office is working heavily with ICE to ensure that operations are being conducted appropriately. They have also been very focused on appropriations. The government is currently funded through the end of September so they are working on the funding beyond that.

Shelly Abajian representing U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein, also presented an update for the board. According to Ms. Abajian, the Senator is focusing on homelessness right now and is doing a lot of research on how to work with the state or on their own to address this issue. She is also working on the water issue, looking for a long-term fix.

Luisa Medina asked for an elaboration on Senator Feinstein's focus on homelessness. Ms. Abajian answered that staff has been going to areas of homelessness, such as an area in San Diego that has a school of 300 transient students, and other facilities with which to model. There is a facility in Fresno, too, where they are trying to bring in the homeless. They have observed that those that can adapt to living inside can also take advantage of mental health services available to them. They are looking into ways of transitioning the people out of homelessness by looking at successful models and finding a way to apply it and determine funding.

Ms. Medina added that in the San Joaquin Valley, the ability to find safe and affordable housing for homeless individuals has become increasingly difficult. For lower income families, women and children, the problem has become more urgent. Government has been disinvesting in housing programs. Max Rodriguez further discussed the homelessness problem from his perspective in Madera. Genoveva Islas said that we need to find a way to engage the individuals who are currently without homes, to better understand the problem and find solutions. Chairman Chiesa and Luisa Medina suggested homelessness as a topic for a future meeting.

VI. Partnership Priority #7: Health

Topic: Valley Fever

Jim Suennen from the California Health and Human Services Agency, introduced Dr. Karen Haught from Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency who presented a report on Valley Fever. Board Member Frank Gallegos was on hand to discuss Valley Fever from the patient perspective, having been diagnosed with the illness last year.

Dr. Haught explained that the medical term for Valley Fever is Coccidioidomycosis. It is a fungus that has different forms and lives in the soil. As the soil dries out, the fungus creates spores. When the spores become airborne and inhaled, they infect the lungs. The fungus is present in the soil in southwest United States, but has also recently been found in Washington State.

Most people infected with Valley Fever won't have symptoms or won't notice the mild symptoms. Five to ten per cent will have more serious illness, and in one per cent of the patients, Valley Fever will spread beyond the lungs. Because the spores are inhaled by the lungs, the illness usually starts as a lung infection or pneumonia.

The doctor said that diagnosis has been an enigma. Many people say that they have had to wait several weeks or longer to get diagnosed. Part of that is that the signs and symptoms are not specific to Valley Fever. On an x-ray, it cannot always be characteristic of the disease. A blood test is ordered that looks for the body's antibody response to the infection and that takes several weeks to show up. Early detection is difficult.

Frank Gallegos spoke about his personal experience with the infection. He was an exception to the rule in that he does not work in agriculture nor construction. He lives in North Fresno, which is all developed land. At the time he thought he had the flu, but the persistent cough and fatigue continued. His doctor went the extra step, did a chest x-ray, and saw a spot on his lung. He was fortunate that his doctor put him on the medicine right away, which had good results. He worked with specialists and bloodwork was a defining factor. He said that you have to not be afraid to speak up and ask for help.

The board members discussed Valley Fever further. Ellen Junn reported that her father contracted Valley Fever when he lived in Anaheim Hills in an area with very high winds ten years ago and had his left lung removed. She said it's more commonly found in the elderly with other immune system issues, and that probably made him more susceptible to the fungus.

Genoveva Islas asked about interventions to look at and brought up the issue of a high number of people who are uninsured and in need of a safety net. Dr. Haught responded that the state is making plans about a broader awareness campaign. Sometimes new doctors come into the community and they are not yet familiar with problems we have with Valley Fever. A few years ago, Fluconazole became a generic and it's now much cheaper, though it is a long-term medication and that can pose a problem.

Dr. Haught's PowerPoint presentation can be found on the Partnership website at www.sjvpartnership.org or by clicking [here](#).

VII. Partnership Priority #1: Higher Education

Topic: Upward Mobility Pathways

Carole Goldsmith explained that the California community college system is open access, serving everyone. Many of the students and families coming in are in need of additional support. Being unequipped to provide the needed support, the community colleges have collaborated with Reading and Beyond and the California Bridge Academies to provide services.

Pete Weber, Director of Fresno Bridge Academy, made a presentation with Luis Santana, Executive Director of Reading and Beyond, regarding Upward Mobility Pathways. This is a pilot program to address the issues of low enrollment and completion rates by low-income people in community colleges in the San Joaquin Valley.

Mr. Weber said that we are not educating our workforce in the state of California to keep up with our economic needs, and cited the Public Policy Institute of California report that estimates that by 2030 we are going to be about 24 million workers short of need in terms of higher or secondary education. That divides up to about 1.1 million B.S. degrees short of requirement and another 1.3 million workers short of the post-secondary education needed.

The second problem to be addressed is a huge population in poverty, and particularly people who are SNAP beneficiaries. We are in the 54th year of trying to end poverty and we've not done very well. It was 1964 when then President Lyndon B. Johnson launched the war on poverty. We haven't cured it and prevented it, but we have been able to make poverty a little more comfortable for people. There are 92 anti-poverty programs in the United States and have spent \$22 trillion through 2014 and we don't have as much to show for it as we should.

There are roughly 41 billion people across the county on SNAP benefits for food assistance. The number doubled during the great recession. In the eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley, the numbers for CalFresh beneficiaries are starting to decline, although we're nowhere near where they were before the time of the recession. We have a disproportionate percent of the population on CalFresh benefits, and Mr. Weber said that we want to try to do something about that. Many of these people are elderly or disabled and have young, dependent children and they need to stay at home or are caring for disabled people. We're not looking to train them and put them into jobs, but there is a significant proportion that are people who can and want to work, but may need help getting from here to there.

Funding for the program is in part coming from a grant from the Chancellor's office. Some of the services that are going to be provided to the community colleges from the Strong Workforce program will help fund the delivery of services off campus.

Click [here](#) to see the Upward Mobility Pathways PowerPoint presentation from Pete Weber and Luis Santana.

VIII. Lunch

IX. Partnership Priority #7: Health Topic: California FreshWorks Fund

Kiel Lopez-Schmidt, Central Valley Regional Manager of Northern California Community Loan Fund (NCCLF), gave a program overview of California FreshWorks. Kiel described the program's goals, key issues, resources and projected outcomes.

The FreshWorks program was started during the recession by the California Endowment in order to get healthy food financing into the communities that needed it most. To date, it has put \$70 million of investment into communities across California in financing fresh food businesses. The program has recently been retooled to put a higher emphasis on equity to have the resources more flexible to tackle the issues. There are now easier access points to get businesses through the startup phase and into launch and making an impact in the community.

See the California FreshWorks PowerPoint presentation from Kiel Lopez-Schmidt [here](#).

X. Topic: Opportunity Zones

A quick overview of Opportunity Zones (OZs) was provided by Rachael O'Brien, representing the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The federal Investing in Opportunities Act, which was passed last year as part of the new federal tax bill, created tax incentives for investment in designated census tracts. Sid Voorakkara of GO-Biz is expected to discuss this new investment tool further in September at the next quarterly Board meeting.

Ms. O'Brien encouraged people to go back to their organizations and communities and start to have conversations to help identify projects that fall within these census tracts. Identify projects that are shovel ready that need that infusion of private investment to get it off the ground. Pass them through to the interagency workgroup as they pitch these to potential investors. It would be a great start.

Pete Weber added that at the meeting, the City of Fresno presented three different opportunities. One was a mixed-use housing project, another one was an industrial project, and another one was a tech project. There are few limitations on what they can invest in, but it must be private sector.

See the one-sheet on Opportunity Zones on the Partnership website at www.sjvpartnership.org. For more information. See the Economic Innovation website [here](#).

XI. Partnership Priority #1: Water Supply and Quality
Topic: Local Water Board Election Roundtables - Update

Adriana Renteria, Regional Water Management Coordinator from the Community Water Center spoke to the Board about the role of local water Boards and the election process as an opportunity to strengthen local democracy and increase access to safe drinking water. Ms. Renteria's report on Local Water Board Governance and Community Representation can be found [here](#). Mindy Romero from the UC Davis Center of Regional Change added her presentation on the Latino electorate. Her PowerPoint can be found [here](#).

In April, the Partnership co-sponsored two informational workshops on local water board elections with the Community Water Center.

XII. Partnership Priority #1: Water Supply and Quality
Topic: California Water Institute – Water and Sustainability Initiative

Sarge Green from Fresno State's California Water Institute introduced Thomas Esqueda, Associate Vice President for Water and Sustainability for Fresno State. Sarge explained that Mr. Esqueda's position at Fresno State was created in response to the university's effort to elevate Fresno State's water programs by bringing somebody in that could provide overall guidance and/or visibility to the organization, and expand the scope of our efforts because the community demanded that we do so. Agriculture and water are both very important issues in the San Joaquin Valley and we need to have a face to it.

Mr. Esqueda said that he first gave his report to the President's Commission on the Future of Agriculture at Fresno State, where over 150 industry leaders, faculty, staff and administrators assembled for the presentation of the commission's recommendations on the Fresno State campus in 2014. The PowerPoint presentation on the California Water Institute's Water and Sustainability Initiative [here](#).

Sarge added that for the next Partnership meeting, topics that we need to continue to discuss are a very important report coming out by the PPIC's Water Policy Center, of which Sarge has been a part of, talking about the future of the water in the San Joaquin Valley. Sarge would like to have Ellen Hanak come out in September to present. The other topic is the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, with someone to talk about where we are on the groundwater sustainability plans, as that is the hot topic in most of the water boardrooms.

Supervisor Steve Worthley discussed the topic of watershed management to generate more water into the valley floor. The Supervisor believes that we need to put the pressure on to move forward with watershed management. To deal with the new brush growing that present an even higher fire hazard.

Sarge responded that most of the area is owned by the federal government, which gives us an opportunity to get the federal bureau of land management and national parks all together on the same page with watershed management for the future. Sarge has been proposing a conference of the four public universities to talk about the very issues of watershed management and all the other issues as a team for the whole valley.

Patty Poire discussed the domino effect on unemployment that is being experienced in Kern County when land is fallowed, and the decrease in land value that effects the economics of the county due to lower property taxes. In Kern County, they were able to convince the Board of Supervisors to coordinate having the ability to have two zonings on agricultural land; one for farming, and one for something else for a Plan B, so that if a farmer needs to fallow his land, the land value can be retained and there could be job opportunities. She is working to find a way to streamline CEQA mitigations.

XII. Public and Board Comments

Chairman Chiesa invited comments from the Board and public and announced the success of a Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) grant of \$500.5 million for the San Joaquin Amtrak and ACE system. Chair Chiesa asked the board to help support the Morning Express. He is also going to be appointing a committee to talk about the new paradigm in funding to come up with ideas and a sustainability model.

There were no public comments.

XVII. Adjournment

Chairman Chiesa thanked all Board members and meeting hosts for their time and attendance. In the absence of any further public or Board comments, the meeting was adjourned at 2:33pm.