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August 2, 2004

Eric Caruthers
Citizens' Advisory Com. of Santa Clara Cty. Open Space Authority
1527 Hicks
San Jose, CA 95125

Dear Mr. Caruthers:

California FarmLink is a non-profit organization working through very practical means to facilitate the transition of land to beginning farmers and protect farmland. Since 1999 we have worked with grass roots agricultural organizations, conservation groups and governmental agencies at the local, state and federal levels towards this goal.

We have a database of approximately 200 aspiring farmers that have skills in agricultural production and are seeking ways to obtain land for agricultural use. Approximately 80% of our existing database of aspiring farmers are individuals committed to sustainable agricultural practices including organic production, and habitat protection. I believe many of these would be interested in an opportunity to farm in Santa Clara County Open Space Authority lands.

We have approximately 70 farmers on our database that have indicated an interest in farming in the central coast which includes Santa Clara County. The vast majority of these aspiring farmers are interested in operating farmers on 5-25 acres. For a vegetable or herb grower with strong skills for intensive crop production coupled with direct marketing to urban consumers significant revenue can be realized. Some would say a farm of 3-5 acres is not viable, however we work with farmers utilizing the strategic approach outlined above in this paragraph who are grossing in the range of \$15,000-\$30,000 an acres. They work hard for results that a commodity crop grower could never meet. We should mention that a crucial aspect of this kind of intensive small operation is to have affordable housing on or very near the farm production site. Housing may mean a mobile home or something else that is very basic. However, if the only housing within 1/4 hours drive is priced for workers receiving high tech salaries the small farmers may not have a viable situation.

California FarmLink has a track record of working with both the agricultural community and public sector and private non-profits seeking to conserve farmland for productive use. Crowds calling on you to save the land represent an opportunity for FarmLink to forward

our mission of matching beginning farmers with long-term farming opportunities. Specific tasks that we would be able to assist with include:

- **Task 1:** Assist with selection of best qualified farmer leasees based on project goals and practical issues related to agricultural production and successful farm businesses.
- **Task 2:** Publicize the availability of the land and benefits of the project to at least 300 farmers and the public at large.
- **Task 3:** Identify all equipment and shared facilities necessary for farmers to run a productive and efficient agricultural operation on the land.
- **Task 4:** Assist with preliminary business planning and preparation to apply for financing for the farmers involved in the project.
- **Task 5:** Facilitate development of a legally recognized cooperative agreement or memorandum of understanding addressing shared usage of irrigation and buildings.

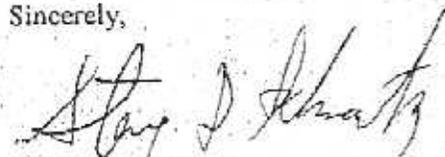
We have current funding committed from the US Department of Agriculture and private foundation sources to assist with this work at a basic level. For a longer-term comprehensive project we would be available to contract with the City or appropriate partnering organizations for a contract that could range between \$2,000-10,000.

We have worked closely with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to help them get excellent candidates for long-term leases on farmland near urban areas. We have also worked with the Center for Urban Agriculture at Fairview Gardens (near Santa Barbara), an inter-nationally recognized project that demonstrates that a viable farm business and educational center can thrive in the midst of dense residential development.

Finally, I want to point out what may be painfully obvious, if the District continues to allow agriculture related uses of the property over a transition period of approximately 5 years, the option of switching to other uses remains open. However, a decision to allow sale of the property to a residential or commercial developer would be irreversible. I would like to see the District take a course of action that allows for future uses of the property emphasizing viable options related to agriculture to remain. These options include small scale commercial farms that would serve the local markets.

If we can provide further detail or if you would simply like to discuss the issue please don't hesitate to contact Reggie Knox at (831) 425-0303 or Steve Schwartz at (707) 829-1691.

Sincerely,



Steve Schwartz
Executive Director