



# MEMORANDUM

## RMA - PLANNING DEPARTMENT

County of Monterey

**Date:** January 26, 2009

**To:** Planning Commission

**From:** Carl P. Holm, AICP, Assistant Director of Planning  
Bob Schubert, AICP, Senior Planner

**Subject:** **PLN9805016/MOHSIN-SAMOSKE – AAC SUMMARY**  
**January 28 Agenda Item 5**

Neighbors have asserted that their agricultural operations will be impacted by the propose project. This subject project was reviewed at the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting on December 4, 2008 and continued to January 22, 2008 following a scheduled site visit on December 11, 2008 to evaluate conditions of the area. Staff requested that the AAC consider the following agriculturally-related matters:

1. Agricultural Viability Report: Does the Agricultural viability report for the project adequately address the loss of agricultural lands?

***AAC SUMMARY:** The AAC noted that the report concluded that the viability for the project was an “8” for the lower (Samoske) property and a “6” for the Mohsin property, and that this is based on science by a reputable consultant. These rating are out of a possible 30 with higher numbers being better suited for farming. Having also visited the site, the AAC acknowledged that the lands could be used for grapes and grazing, but not for row crops. The AAC voted 9-0 finding that the Ag viability report is adequate.*

2. Agricultural Conversion: Does the Ag Advisory Committee (AAC) support conversion of the lower 72 acres of agricultural land to allow 14 residential parcels with the upper 194 remaining permanent grazing including placing an agricultural conservation easement over 150+ acres of the upper portion?

***AAC SUMMARY:** Public testimony raised issue for potential impact on nearby Williamson Act lands (map attached) and growth pressure in general to continue conversion of Ag lands in this area. As noted above, the AAC found that the lands are suitable for grapes and grazing. However, the proposed project is designed with 5-acre lots that could allow limited agriculturally-related uses such as limited equestrian/livestock or small vineyards. This is consistent with the existing 5-acre lots abutting the 55-acre portion of the Mohsin property. In addition, approximately 200 acres would remain PG with  $\frac{3}{4}$  (150 acres) of that land being placed in a permanent agricultural conservation easement. The AAC voted 8-1 to support the proposed conversion as designed.*

3. Agricultural Buffers. Are the proposed agricultural buffers adequate given site/area conditions:
  - A. Samoske Property: 75-foot agricultural buffer is proposed for the lower portion of the subdivision. The conditions of approval require an agricultural buffer Mitigation Plan which shows planting new trees within the 75-buffer. The Committee should discuss whether it would be helpful to further enhance the buffer with either a four foot high solid fence or provide new shrubs (in addition to the proposed trees).
  - B. Mohsin Property: 100-foot agricultural buffer is proposed for the upper portion of the subdivision

***AAC SUMMARY:** The AAC had a great amount of discussion on this matter. Generally, the AAC was starting from a point that we need to honor the 200 foot standard, and some felt that should not be varied. However, the majority of the group recognized that different conditions warrant reducing the required set back. An initial vote on the set back question in total rendered a 7-2 vote to deny the proposed Ag Buffer Plan. Following that vote, staff requested that the AAC separate the two components:*

*Mohsin: To the north, there is a ravine that provides a natural buffer from Riehl property (PG/40). Where this land abuts existing residential 5-acre properties, no buffer would be required. Vineyards are located south of the site (Knott property), and a 100-foot buffer is more than adequate. On a 7-2 vote, the AAC found that based on the topography, climate (e.g. prevailing wind), and surrounding conditions, the proposed 100 foot buffers were adequate. The AAC further recommended that building envelopes be situated toward the north (e.g. toward the existing 5-acre parcels) to effectively create a larger buffer from the vineyards to the south.*

*Samoske: The AAC raised concern on this set back matter due to active major Ag operations located to the north (Pedrazzi property). On a 7-2 vote, the AAC recommended denial of the proposed 75-foot buffers/mitigation. The applicant posed a question as to what the Committee may accept. One question to increase the buffers to 100 feet (including same mitigation), received the same vote to recommend denial. Upon further discussion, they felt that a full 200 feet was required from the Pedrazzi property due to the active cattle operation there. Less concern was stated for the vineyard located south of the property, but no consensus was established before the AAC adjourned. Some informal discussions took place between the applicant and a couple AAC members following conclusion of the meeting.*

Attachment:  
Map showing Williamson Act contracted lands

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# WILLIAMSON ACT PROPERTIES

