PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF OCTOBER 1, 2026

The San Joaquin County Planning Commission met in regular session on October 1, 2026 at 6 p.m., in the San Joaquin County Administration Building, 44 N. San Joaquin St., #640 (Board of Supervisors Chambers), Stockton, California.

The meeting was called to order by Donald Ruhstaller, Chair.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was given.

Roll Call:

(present)

Commissioners
Donald Ruhstaller, Chair
Chris Meehleis, Vice-Chair
Gloryanna Rhodes
Lawrence Wight
Jass Sangha

County Staff
Kirin Virk, County Counsel

Shayan Rehman, Department of Public Works

Steven Shih, Environmental Health Department
Scott Sangalang, Environmental Health Department

Community Development Department Staff
Jennifer Jolley, Director
Corinne King, Deputy Director of Planning
Megan Aguirre, Principal Planner
Stephanie Stowers, Principal Planner
Jessica Leal, Associate Planner
Jacob Pahule, Associate Planner
Henna Khan, Assistant Planner
Vicenta Gallegos, Administrative Assistant I
Gerardo Altamirano, Office Assistant Specialist
Sean Cardenas, Office Assistant Specialist

(absent)

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

1. Minutes from 08/20/2026.

   MOTION:

   It was moved, seconded (Meehleis / Sangha), and passed by a vote (5-0) to:

   1. Approve and accept the minutes.

   VOTE:

   AYES: Jass Sangha, Chris Meehleis, Gloryanna Rhodes, Lawrence Wight, Donald Ruhstaller

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS OF INTEREST TO THE PUBLIC THAT ARE NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA:

Mr. Jose Chavez of Tracy stated that he was speaking on his own behalf and not as a representative of the City of Tracy. He shared that he had been appointed to the Tracy Planning Commission in April 2026 and had lived in Tracy his entire life as a fourth-generation resident. Mr. Chavez said he had gained valuable insight into development and public service through his work at both the city and county levels, including recent appointments to the Agriculture Advisory Board and the Children's Services Coordinating Commission. He expressed appreciation for the Planning Commissioners' volunteer service to the community and stated that he enjoyed observing their meetings. Mr. Chavez concluded by thanking the Commission and noting that he looked forward to attending future meetings.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. **DEVELOPMENT TITLE TEXT AMENDMENT NO. PA-2600302 OF SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY (C/O SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT)** This project is a Development Title Text Amendment to update tables and text within Series 200, 400, 500, 600, 800, and 900 regarding:

    - Pre-application review for General Plan amendments and Zone Reclassifications
    - Ancillary storage for the Trucks Services - Parking use type
    - Water, wastewater, and storm drainage service for areas outside of urban communities
    - Farm Employee Housing consistency with the underlying General Plan designation
    - Utility-scale Solar Energy System Requirements
    - Various other typos, errors, and omissions.

    The project site is Countywide (Supervisorial District: Countywide)

    Environmental Determination: This project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3). A Notice of Exemption will be filed if the project is approved.

    ***NON-CONTESTED AGENDA ITEM ***

    MOTION:

    It was moved, seconded (Meehleis / Rhodes), and passed by a vote (5-0) to:

    1. Approve action Item Nos. 1, 2 and 3 on the non-contested agenda.

    VOTE:

    AYES: Gloryanna Rhodes, Chris Meehleis, Lawrence Wight, Jass Sangha, Donald Ruhstaller

2. **CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. PA-2500204 OF SPENKER RANCH, INC. (C/O MICHAEL W. SMITH)** for the expansion of an existing large winery. The project will take place in two phases over five years. Phase One includes the permitting of the following existing structures: five 256-square-foot shade structures, a 324-square-foot shade structure, a 2,240-sqaure-foot shade structure comprised of 2 shipping containers and a connecting roof cover to be utilized as a maintenance building and storage, a 2,800-square-foot shade structure, an 8,000-square-foot winery storage building. Phase Two includes the construction of the following: an 8,000-square-foot wine processing building, a 9,600-square-foot shade structure with solar array, and a 320-square-foot shipping container to be utilized as a commercial kitchen. This project was previously approved for 12 marketing events for a maximum of 250 people under Use Permit PA-0200114. No changes are proposed to the previously approved events. The winery is accessed from West Turner Road and is served by on-site well and septic systems, and natural storm drainage. The project site is on the northwest corner of West Turner Road and North Davis Road, Lodi (Supervisorial District: 4)

   Environmental Determination: A Mitigated Negative Declaration for this project has been prepared and is proposed for adoption.

   ***NON-CONTESTED AGENDA ITEM ***

   MOTION:

   It was moved, seconded (Meehleis / Rhodes), and passed by a vote (5-0) to:

   1. Approve action Item Nos. 1, 2 and 3 on the non-contested agenda.

   VOTE:

   AYES: Gloryanna Rhodes, Chris Meehleis, Lawrence Wight, Jass Sangha, Donald Ruhstaller

3. **VARIANCE NO. PA-2600102 AND MINOR SUBDIVISION NO. PA-2600101 OF CHELSEA CHANDLER (C/O DILLON AND MURPHY)** This project is comprised of two components: Variance No. PA-2600102 requests to reduce the minimum required parcel size in the AG-40 (General Agriculture, 40-acre minimum) zone from 40 acres to 18 acres and 25 acres in order to facilitate a Minor Subdivision. Minor Subdivision No. PA-2600101 proposes subdividing an existing 43-acre parcel into two parcels. Parcel 1 to contain 25 acres. Parcel 2 to contain 18 acres. Parcel 1 will utilize existing direct access to the south of East Clarksdale Road. Parcel 2 will utilize existing direct access to the north of East Clarksdale Road. Both parcels will utilize existing separate private well systems for water service, private septic systems for wastewater, and private stormwater drainage. The project site is on the north and south sides of E. Clarksdale Rd., approximately 1,350' east of N. State Route 99 E. Frontage Rd., Acampo (Supervisorial District: 4)

   Environmental Determination: This project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3). A Notice of Exemption will be filed if the project is approved.

   ***NON-CONTESTED AGENDA ITEM ***

   MOTION:

   It was moved, seconded (Meehleis / Rhodes), and passed by a vote (5-0) to:

   1. Approve action Item Nos. 1, 2 and 3 on the non-contested agenda.

   VOTE:

   AYES: Gloryanna Rhodes, Chris Meehleis, Lawrence Wight, Jass Sangha, Donald Ruhstaller

4. **CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. PA-2500218 OF LOUIS & JEANETTE BARBAGELATA TR (C/O RPCA SOLAR 11, LLC)** to construct a 15.2-acre ground-mounted photovoltaic energy facility. The project will generate up to 3 megawatts of solar energy utilizing photovoltaic solar modules, inverters, and appurtenant electrical equipment. The modules will be mounted on a steel racking system employing single-axis tracker technology that efficiently tracks the sun's movement throughout the day and maximizes the efficiency of solar collection. The rows of modules will be anchored in the ground using driven piers, and the overall height of the array is not expected to exceed 15 feet above the existing ground surface at maximum tilt. The Project will interconnect to the existing PG&E electrical distribution system adjacent to the site along East Comstock Road. The project will be accessed from East Comstock Road and will be served by on-site well and septic systems, and natural stormwater drainage. However, the project is not expected to require the use of water or wastewater disposal. The project site is on the northeast corner of East Comstock Road and North Duncan Road, Linden (Supervisorial District: 4)

   Environmental Determination: A Mitigated Negative Declaration for this project has been prepared and is proposed for adoption.

   JESSICA LEAL, ASSOCIATE PLANNER, introduced the staff report into the record.

   PUBLIC HEARING OPENED:

   Commissioner Meehleis asked staff to clarify what was meant by "screening."

   Principal Planner Stephanie Stowers responded that the applicant had proposed the use of a slatted or "slotted" fencing material, which would be combined with landscaping to provide visual screening.

   Commissioner Ruhstaller asked whether the slatted fencing was intended primarily for aesthetics and to prevent visibility into the solar installation.

   Principal Planner Stowers confirmed that the fencing was mostly for aesthetic purposes and intended to maintain the neighborhood's character.

   Commissioner Meehleis asked about the height of the proposed fencing.

   Principal Planner Stowers stated that the fence would be approximately 6 to 7 feet tall.

   Commissioner Ruhstaller then questioned how such fencing would meaningfully screen solar panels that ranged from 9 to 15 feet in height, depending on their orientation, and suggested that the applicant may need to explain how the proposed screening would be effective.

   PROPONENTS:

   Ryan Nyberg, Senior Permitting Manager with Renewable Properties, presented the Duncan Road Solar Project on behalf of RPCA Solar 11 LLC. He thanked staff for their work on the project and outlined his presentation, including background on Renewable Properties, an overview of the company's site-selection process, the local policy framework supporting solar development, and project-specific details.

   Mr. Nyberg stated that Renewable Properties is a national developer and owner-operator of community-scale solar, energy storage, and EV-charging projects, with a development pipeline exceeding 1.9 gigawatts across 15 states. He noted that the company has multiple California projects under construction and in operation. He explained that the Duncan Road Solar Project was identified following a detailed siting process that considered market conditions, local policies, grid proximity, distribution-level interconnection capacity, and the willingness of a landowner whose orchard had aged out and opted to lease the land for solar use.

Mr. Nyberg described the County's Development Title and General Plan policies supporting renewable energy and said these frameworks clearly signal that solar facilities are encouraged land uses. He explained that the project site is located at the northeast corner of East Comstock Road and Duncan Road in Linden and would occupy approximately 15 acres of a 20-acre parcel. The facility would have a generating capacity of 3 megawatts, sufficient to power roughly 750 homes annually. He stated the project does not include battery storage and consists of solar panels averaging less than 9 feet in height, with some areas ranging from 9 to 15 feet in height, depending on terrain. The perimeter would feature a 6-foot chain-link fence with an additional foot of wire.

Mr. Nyberg reported that the project qualified for PG&E's Renewable Energy Market Adjusting Tariff (ReMAT)-style Remap Program, enabling interconnection directly to the distribution grid and contributing local power and voltage support. The site, he said, is currently a fallow field, and converting it with solar would provide a less water-intensive, less labor-intensive use while allowing the landowner to retain ownership. He highlighted that the project requires minimal grading, uses essentially no groundwater once operational, and must be decommissioned and restored under county regulations at the end of its useful life.

Mr. Nyberg stated that environmental review under CEQA found no significant unavoidable impacts. He emphasized that the project would strengthen local grid reliability, help meet County renewable energy goals, create an additional income stream for the landowner, and potentially come online as early as October 2027. He concluded by requesting the Commission's approval and offered to answer questions along with the project team.

Commissioner Rhodes asked the applicant to clarify the project's statement that there would be no water impacts, noting that she was trying to visualize the surrounding land and whether areas outside the solar facility would require watering for dust control.

Mr. Nyberg explained that while the solar project footprint covers approximately 15 acres, the landowner retains about 4 acres outside the fenced project boundary. He said any dust-control or watering needs on those 4 acres would be the landowner's responsibility. He further noted that the project is conditioned to install pollinator habitat within the fenced area, which consists of native, drought-tolerant plantings that would stabilize soil, reduce erosion, and minimize dust within the solar facility.

Commissioner Rhodes thanked him for the clarification.

Commissioner Sangha asked the applicant to clarify the purpose of the 6 to 7 foot fence given that the solar panels ranged from 9 to 15 feet in height.

Mr. Nyberg explained that although the fence would not fully screen the panels, it served aesthetic and security purposes and would function similarly to fencing around residential properties, where rooflines are still visible above the fence. He reiterated that most panels would be approximately 9 feet tall on average due to the generally flat site.

Commissioner Sangha then asked whether the applicant had conducted outreach to neighboring property owners who opposed the project.

Mr. Nyberg responded that the project team had spoken directly with one adjacent neighbor and had also engaged in discussions with the San Joaquin Farm Bureau.

Commissioner Wight asked about the life expectancy of the solar panels.

Mr. Nyberg responded that panels are designed for an overall project life of approximately 35 years, though individual panels may be replaced mid-project as more efficient models become available. He

stated that panels typically last 15 to 20 years before being recycled and repowered.

Commissioner Wight then asked how panels are handled at the end of their life cycle, and Mr. Nyberg confirmed that the panels would be recycled upon decommissioning.

Commissioner Ruhstaller referenced an opposition letter expressing concern that construction traffic associated with the solar project would make travel in the area difficult. He asked the applicant to describe the duration and intensity of construction activity, including land preparation, equipment deliveries, and panel installation.

Mr. Nyberg responded that overall construction was expected to take approximately 6 to 9 months, with major equipment deliveries occurring over a concentrated period of about 50 days. He noted that, starting early next year, construction would be completed by October.

Commissioner Ruhstaller asked how construction traffic would affect nearby residents, given the smaller rural roads in Linden.

Mr. Nyberg stated that equipment deliveries would not occur continuously and that the applicant was willing to coordinate with neighbors and keep them informed of schedules to minimize disruption. He characterized the traffic impacts as limited in duration, affecting residents for 1 to 2 weeks of equipment deliveries rather than throughout the entire construction window.

Commissioner Meehleis asked the applicant to clarify the type of fencing proposed around the solar facility, noting the 6-foot chain-link fence with slats and a wire strand along the top.

Mr. Nyberg explained that the wire at the top would be a straight wire used to prevent bird entanglement, not razor wire.

Commissioner Meehleis then asked whether landscaping, such as oleanders or other plants, would be installed outside the fence.

Mr. Nyberg stated that the County's development title requires a 10-foot-wide landscape buffer between the fence and the right-of-way or adjacent properties and confirmed that the project would comply with that requirement.

Commissioner Meehleis asked whether the landscaping would consist of more than weeds and whether it could include shrubs or trees such as oleanders to better screen the facility.

Mr. Nyberg responded that the landscaping would be subject to the County's development code and would be installed in accordance with its standards.

Commissioner Ruhstaller asked staff what types of landscaping were typically installed around solar facilities.

Deputy Director of Planning Corinne King responded that Condition j.2 required a 10-foot-wide landscaping buffer between the facility fencing and adjacent rights-of-way or neighboring agricultural and residential uses. She explained that, in agricultural zones, the development code does not specify the exact types of plants, only that landscaping must be provided.

Commissioner Rhodes asked whether the 10 feet referred to height or width.

Deputy Director King clarified it referred to width measured from the property line inward.

Commissioner Rhodes expressed concern that nearby residents valued the rural landscape and

opposed the visual impact of the solar installation. She suggested that taller plantings or trees might better address those concerns and encouraged the applicant to consult with neighbors regarding screening options.

Commissioner Ruhstaller noted that the site had consisted of bare ground for several years and commented that no prior requests had been made to screen the existing conditions.

Jeanette Barbagelata, project property owner, spoke in support of the project. She stated that her 20-acre Hartley walnut orchard had aged out; although still capable of producing a crop, continued farming was no longer economically viable due to low prices and shifting market demand toward Chandler walnuts. After removing the orchard in July 2023, she was considering other replanting options when Renewable Properties approached her with a proposal to lease the land for solar use. She explained that the solar project offered a temporary, non-water-intensive use of the land, would eliminate the need for groundwater pumping and nitrogen fertilizer, and would provide stable income while allowing the property to remain in her family. She stated that the land could be returned to farming after the project's life cycle and urged the Commission to approve the solar project, stating that it would support a healthier and more prosperous future for San Joaquin County.

OPPONENTS

None.

REBUTTAL:

None.

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED.

MOTION:

It was moved, seconded (Rhodes / Wight) and passed by a vote (5-0) to:

1. Adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration;

2. Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program;

3. Adopt the Findings for Conditional Use Permit;

4. Approve Conditional Use Permit No. PA-2500218 subject to the recommended Conditions of Approval.

VOTE:

AYES: Chris Meehleis, Lawrence Wight, Jass Sangha, Gloryanna Rhodes, Donald Ruhstaller

Commissioner Rhodes stated that she would like the developer to reach out to nearby residents. She noted that the opposition expressed to the project focused primarily on concerns about maintaining greenery and minimizing traffic, and she believed that direct communication with neighbors could help address those issues. Commissioner Rhodes emphasized that such outreach could lead to reasonable solutions and improve community acceptance of the project.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Planning Commissioner's Comments:

None.

Director's Report:

Director Jolley provided several updates on upcoming Board of Supervisors items and departmental initiatives. She reported that on September 15th the Board held a hearing on the appeal of a religious assembly project on South Nancy Emelia Court in Tracy. The Board denied the appeal and upheld the Planning Commission's approval of the project on a 3–2 vote.

Director Jolley noted that the Community Development Department had a full agenda for the Board's next meeting, including a proclamation recognizing Code Enforcement Appreciation Week. She highlighted recent improvements within the Code Enforcement Division. She also summarized additional appeals scheduled for Board consideration: the appeal of the French Camp commercial kitchen project, the cleanup of a General Plan amendment recently reviewed by the Commission, and the applicant's appeal of the denial of Mr. Towers' request to build three residences near a quarry.

Director Jolley informed the Commission that staff would be presenting a public hearing item proposing an uncodified urgency interim ordinance establishing a temporary moratorium on new data center entitlements within the unincorporated County. She explained that the 45-day moratorium, with an anticipated extension request, would allow staff time to conduct outreach and develop policy recommendations.

She also reported that the Board had requested a discussion on agricultural uses within the agricultural zones to determine whether updates to policies or ordinances might be appropriate, noting recent appeals originating from agriculturally-zoned areas. Director Jolley stated this discussion would occur at the upcoming Board meeting.

Finally, Director Jolley announced that the department had begun early steps toward a mid-cycle General Plan update and would be engaging a consultant. She noted that community meetings and Planning Commission involvement would occur as the process moved forward.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 P.M.

Donald Ruhstaller, Chair *** Jennifer Jolley, Secretary