

## Allen Gammon Elected Chair New Leadership — Same Vision



**Few Americans can watch hungry children and do nothing. And so it was, now more than 40 years ago, when my wife to be and I sat together on the sea-wall along Roxas Boulevard in Manila.**

We often enjoyed eating a takeout chicken dinner overlooking Manila Bay. Invariably, ragged bands of hungry children would approach us to beg for food. These hungry kids would eagerly and quickly pick apart the morsels of chicken and leftovers we offered.

Later that year in 1967, I traveled to India thinking that my months of study in the Philippines and travel through war torn Vietnam had adequately prepared me for the worst scenes the third world would offer. But in India, I found myself stepping over hungry, dying and dead people in the poorest areas. The faces of hungry children, wasted bodies and starved skeletons became unforgettable memories. And they remain important reminders about the importance of food for health and survival.

The variety and relatively low cost of food here in the central valley of California is a benefit we often take for granted. Few of us stop to consider how things could change if we do not protect and preserve the farms and rich soils around us that produce these foods. Now, rising costs of food coupled with millions of jobless and homeless Americans, has made food an important hurdle for survival in our own country.

Almost any sighted traveler who drives through our central California valley towns, Modesto, Riverbank, Turlock, Ceres and Patterson, quickly realizes that poorly planned growth has already sacrificed too many acres of prime farmland and orchards leaving behind parking lots and sprawl.

Finally, some are beginning to appreciate the importance of our agricultural industry. Many realize that this green industry has remained robust even during this relentless economic recession. Agricultural production has continued here even as job losses in other sectors mount with foreclosed homes and vacant commercial properties replacing prosperity.

When I was invited to join the Farmland Working Group several years ago, I was impressed by the aims and accomplishments of this group. But it is clear that much work remains to educate decision makers and voters about the importance of the unique resources that remain. We must proactively protect and preserve our prime farmland because only this finite resource can mitigate increased food prices and reduce increasing food shortages locally, nationally and internationally.

Wholesome, abundant and affordable food is essential for the health and security of our country and its peoples. Farmland Working Group is dedicated to promote the preservation of our best farmland for this reason.

I am honored to serve as the newly elected Chair of this small but important non-profit. I look forward to working with our impressive Board of Directors as we continue together, a "Working Group" to keep our farms growing, our children well fed and our country safe from hunger.

*J. Allen Gammon, MD MPH*

# Answers about Farmland Protection Issues from Candidates for Mayor of Modesto.



## **Candidate *Brad Hawn***

### **Will you support a farmland protection mitigation policy for the City of Modesto?**

When I was considering running for council 8 years ago one of my main reasons was to figure out a way to protect our greatest natural resource in the valley....our farmland. In these dire economic times we are

seeing first hand the positive influence of our Ag economy. How do growing cities that are in competition for land work with not against the farming community to come up with a solution that will meet the needs of all? There is a disconnect between the two positions. Left alone, we may see a repeat of what happened in LA where in the 50's it was said that we have plenty of farmland....someone was very wrong. If we work together we can come up with a solution. About 4 years ago I began to meet with FWG, developers, and the Farm Bureau to discuss how we might come together on this issue.

### **Will you support urban growth boundaries for the City of Modesto?**

The result of those meetings is a consensus that Modesto should go to the citizens with Urban Growth Limits (note that it is imperative that the UGL are voted on by the people so that the next batch of politicians can't undo the UGL without a vote of the people). There is still work to be done on the UGL concept because each bordering agency must agree to adopt the UGL as it affects their general Plan. So far our discussions have been as follows: Northern boundary lines being Kiernan Avenue on the north, Dale Road on the west, and McHenry on the east ...on the west our current General Plan line...on the South Ceres as it exists and the Tuolumne River..... and no boundary on the east to allow Modesto to grow to the lesser soils.

### **Will you support other forms of so-called Smart Growth Principles?**

Modesto will embrace Smart Growth tools to make our city even more responsible to infill, grow up not out and to cluster services so we don't need to drive to every service. These principles will need to be embraced as a county and valley because it will be collaborations that get us to the ultimate goal of sustainability. Modesto will need to be the leader in this effort because it is the largest city and will be able to meet higher densities as we see downtown housing and higher densities that come with a more urban environment.

I believe we have started a great movement to work these issues out. I commit to continue what has been worked on for the last few years to set in place a sustainable future for Modesto.

## **Candidate *Garrad Marsh***

### **Will you support a farmland protection mitigation policy for the City of Modesto?**

Absolutely. I believe all annexations to the city should require at least 1 for 1 of equal quality land to be mitigated. As a note, when Tivoli area was annexed to Modesto, the council tried to drop the Farmland Mitigation requirement included in the CEQA document. It was only after my objection that the council agreed to hold the question in abeyance until the city formed a policy on mitigation.

The current mayor and the Economic Development Committee have delayed even discussing the issue. By the vote taken at the time of annexation, Tivoli projects are not allowed until a mitigation policy is set.

### **Will you support urban growth boundaries for the City of Modesto?**

Again, absolutely. I believe that this tool can only enhance my goal of growing our city up rather than out. While citizens regularly vote for protection of farmland and agriculture, they often simultaneously vote into office those who are not willing to follow that line. Others would argue that ballot box planning is not good. I would argue it is the only way to balance the power of the special interest dollars with the desire of the people for a better quality of life. Again, the Economic Development Committee has dragged its feet on bringing this to the ballot. I felt they should have had plenty of time to be properly vetted and put on this year's ballot.

### **Will you support other forms of so-called Smart Growth Principles?**

Another answer of absolutely. I have been an advocate of formed-based codes to enhance the ability of projects in our city center to advance. I believe all of our land should be used efficiently. But most importantly, I think that we need to change our fee structure to form zones of fees. We currently charge city center housing for new roads. This is the majority of the fees incurred. It makes it difficult to make projects downtown "pencil out." Our city and county fee structures and other development policies actually penalize development in the city center while rewarding development on the periphery. This should be reversed. I will work to make the changes necessary.

**No response was received from candidates  
Bill Zoslocki and Armando Arreola.**





## WE ARE WATCHING...

### Central Valley

Regional groups are collaborating and soon will ask City Councils in the Central Valley to commit to Smart Growth Principles and other features needed under SB375 law. The law requires local Councils of Government, such as StanCOG, to establish a Sustainable Community Strategy that will direct development and other government practices for local communities in order to receive transportation funding from the state.

### Stanislaus County

Highway 132 is nearing a milestone and few people know it. A team of local people, including Denny Jackman, have been participating for years in updates of this highway's plans. Initial engineering plans have been reviewed by the team and it is likely that "some dirt will be turned" next year or 2013.

The first phase of the Hwy 132 expansion is between Fwy 99 and Dakota Avenue. Most of the land has been owned by the state for many years and the agland that parallels Kansas Avenue has been used for row crops and almonds. Money is the limiting factor and a single bridge with lanes in both directions is to span Fwy 99 and connect with the Needham Bridge. More links between Fwy 99 and Hwy 132 west will take place as funding becomes apparent.

A complete interchange, just south of the Kansas Avenue overpass, is expected to link multiple lanes. Fifth and Sixth Streets are planned to extend north and replace the existing Fwy 99 Central Modesto on

and off-ramps and join with Fwy 99 near the existing southbound Kansas Avenue off-ramp used today.

Beyond Dakota Avenue, along the future extension of the Hwy 132 Phase I, is a recently protected Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) on about 150 acres. The family of William Ulm has contracted with Central Valley Farmland Trust to become the second ACE in the area and helps to keep over 300 acres of prime farmland in farming. The area is about 3 miles from the Modesto City limits.

### LAFCO (Local Area Formation Commission)

Recently, Riverbank Mayor Virginia Madueno gave an update to LAFCO Commissioners on the Mayors Group and its recommendations on urban development in Stanislaus County. Mayors from each of the cities and a member of the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors have been holding meetings for over seven years in an effort to produce a county-wide plan for urban development. Mayor Madueno reported that the mayors have not yet finished the process. A county-wide map has been prepared, however, Madueno did not present it as it hasn't been seen by all city councils in the county. She told the commissioners to expect a complete report at the September LAFCO meeting.

LAFCO staff is proceeding with a farmland protection mitigation policy intended to be completed by year's end. Earlier this year the Mayors Group asked the Commis-

sion to delay implementation of the mitigation policy until the Mayors could present their urban development plans.

### City of Modesto

In September 2010, Farmland Working Group presented a legal framework for the Modesto City Council to develop and adopt its own urban growth boundaries for submission to a public vote. The presentation was made to the council's Economic Development Committee which voted unanimously to advance the recommendations to the full Council. In November 2010, the committee members changed and, thus far, new Committee Chair Muratore has ignored the recommendation. For nearly a year the Council has not addressed the issue and once again "kicked the can down the road."

### Elections this November

In Modesto, five Council seats are up for election in 2011. In addition to election of the Mayor and three council positions, a fourth council position is open due to a vacancy created when Councilwoman Kristen Olsen went to the State Assembly.

In Ceres, two Council seats are open.

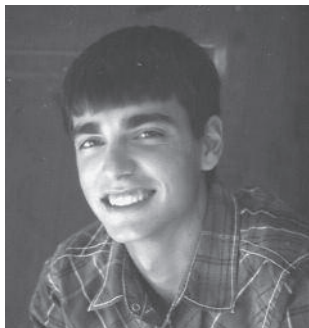
It is critical that citizens vote for candidates that will support smart planning principles and urban growth boundaries. City Councils have the authority to take action to prevent sprawl over our best farmlands. You have the authority to choose Council members who will prevent the loss of our best soils!

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Farmland Working Group Awards Four Scholarships to High School Seniors — Three written and one visual essay answer the question:

**“How would you advise community leaders with regard to growth and farmland protection?”**

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First in a series featuring 2011 winning essays.

*Once it is urbanized, productive agricultural land is permanently lost.*  
— Judge Herbert Levy

The struggle between the building industry and the protections of our farmland has been ongoing since the population boom after World War II. I would, however, advise our community leaders to protect our productive farmland from any type of urbanization.

Our county is one of the few in the country that produces food for not only our region, but the

entire nation while also exporting internationally. Since fertile farmland is so limited, it has to be left alone to produce food. Urbanization can be directed to non-productive farmland.

The farmland mitigation program is a city/county document that provides for the long-term protection of farmland and needs to be supported by community leaders. After all, agriculture is the leading industry in our county.

Therefore, farmland protection not only needs to be “supported” by our community leaders, but raised to a level of permanent protection.

by John Cardoza,  
Hughson High School



## Urban Limits Protect Our Best Farmlands



## Message from Denny Jackman, Past Chair

This is a very big year in Modesto politics. We vote for a new Mayor and four Council positions. At least two of these winners will be party to any majority vote by the Council over the next two years.

Isn't it time that your representatives do something to prevent Modesto from sprawling over our best farmland? Isn't it time for the Modesto City Council to send to the public a plan, an urban growth plan that prevents the loss of our best soils and directs development? For decades, citizens have voted against measures that sprawl the city. This is not a problem of elected leaders not knowing what the public wants, it is a crisis of leadership!

To date, each time a solution is presented, no council member has been willing to say, "Let's do it." The latest tactic or excuse or

reason is that growth is a "regional problem" and needs a regional solution. The city of Riverbank feared a "sprawling Modesto" so it claimed it needed to sprawl its General Plan border to McHenry Avenue.

Currently, the action-can is being kicked down the road as we wait for the so-called "Mayors Plan." The Mayors of the cities expect the public to believe they will have a plan ready by the end of September. City Council members, county-wide, don't have information or direction from the Mayors Group and also wait for "the plan."

Each city has equal land-use authority and no city is willing to relinquish that authority to another. Why should it? They don't need to! All they need is the will to do what the public has expected of them for years: Protect our best soils and send us the plan so we can approve it with **our vote!**

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## Follow-up to our Winter 2009 FWG Newsletter front page article *Rethinking the North County Corridor*

*Status of the project from Laurie Barton, Deputy Director of Engineering and Operations, Stanislaus County.*

Environmental technical studies for the North County Corridor have begun to address biological and cultural resources, and will continue through the spring of 2013. A meeting with the resource agencies (EPA, Fish and Wildlife, Fish and Game, etc.) will be scheduled in mid-September as part of the process.

Engineering progress includes drafting alignments and interchange/intersection locations for the purposes of defining the environmental study limits. These alignments and locations may change as studies are progressing to address impacts.

**A Community Focus Group Meeting will be scheduled in September and the next NCC Board Meeting is scheduled for September 13, 2011 in Stanislaus County Board Chambers at Tenth St. Place.**

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P. O. Box 948 Turlock, CA 95381 (209) 343-4174



***We need your support — Become a member today!***  
***Farmland Protection and Smart Growth Advocacy is OUR MISSION!***

Our vision for the future is one of healthy communities living in harmony with the landscape and each other. Our vision recognizes that growth and change are coming, but that we have the power as communities to shape that change for the better.

We see a future where the community is intentional with its growth, seeking to place new development and new people where it makes sense. We see communities growing up, not out. Planned developments grow in sensible clusters, with access to open space nearby. Houses grow away from prime agricultural lands that sustain our communities and into areas more suitable for development.

*An excerpt from — the Great Valley Center's Collaboration Process*