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MEMORANDUM

To: Michael Codron, City of San Luis Obispo Community Development Director
Brian Leveille, City of San Luis Obispo Senior Planner, CHC Liaison

cc: Jacob Grossman, Coastal Community Builders
Rachel Kovesdi, Kovesdi Consulting
Randall W. Russom, RRM Design Group
Scott A. Martin, RRM Design Group
Leonard (Lenny) J. Grant, RRM Design

From: Paula Juelke Carr, SWCA Environmental Consultants
Leroy Laurie, SWCA Environmental Consultants

Date: March 11, 2021

Re: **Post-Fire Approach to Meeting Mitigation Measures Specified in the Approved EIR for the San Luis Ranch Project, San Luis Obispo County, California / SWCA Project No. 45969**

SUMMARY

The February 8–9, 2019, fire at San Luis Ranch severely damaged the former 16th District Agricultural Association’s racetrack grandstand, a rare architectural type and a significant historical resource both locally and statewide. As planning for the Agricultural Heritage Center continues in the aftermath of the fire, Coastal Community Builders (CCB) has continued to work with Kovesdi Consulting, RRM Design, and SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) to develop a post-fire approach to meeting the mitigation measures specified in the certified Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the San Luis Ranch project.

This memorandum, along with the accompanying March 9, 2021, Overall Site Plan and Illustrative Architectural Site Plan (Appendix A), presents the results of our team effort, including the initial treatment plans for the relocated residence, hay barn, and surviving wall of the racetrack viewing stand within and adjacent to the Agricultural Heritage Center site.

BACKGROUND

On the night of February 8–9, 2019, a human-caused fire destroyed most of the historic 16th District Agricultural Association’s racetrack viewing stand; only the lower portion of the north wall survived the blaze. (The San Luis Obispo City Fire Marshall Roger Maggio stated that a warming fire started by a person was the most likely cause of the blaze [KSBY interview 9/9/2019]). The surviving wall was successfully braced and relocated to its current (temporary) location, waiting final disposition as part of the San Luis Ranch Agricultural Heritage Center. Also awaiting final disposition—as part of the same mitigation package required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by the City of San Luis Obispo—are the temporarily relocated Wood residence and hay barn. The other, non-historic

buildings formerly located on the San Luis Ranch property have been demolished, as previously scheduled under the approved mitigation plan. Long sections of original redwood siding taken from the viewing stand in c1900 and used by the Wood family to build a secondary residence were salvaged when that ineligible residence was demolished. Following the fire, hand-wrought iron nails and short sections of burned siding revealing saw cuts were also salvaged for use in the planned interpretive exhibits.

RRM Design Group, retained by CCB recently prepared a proposed site plan for the San Luis Ranch Agricultural Heritage Center site, which will include uses allowed by the Specific Plan, including approximately 2,500 square feet for the historic components, as well as 10,000 square feet of general retail space, 5,000 square feet of food service, and 13,000 square feet of market and agricultural processing space (see Appendix A).

EIR MITIGATION MEASURES

As specified in the City of San Luis Obispo's 2016 *Draft San Luis Ranch Project EIR* and 2017 *Final San Luis Ranch Project EIR*, Section 4.5 Cultural Resources, pp. 4.5-22 and 4.5-23, "The following mitigation measures would reduce project impacts on historical resources to the maximum extent practicable":

- CR-1(a) **Historical Structure Relocation and Reconstruction Plan.** In order to implement Specific Plan Policy 2.5, a relocation and reconstruction plan for the former spectator's barn/viewing stand and main residence shall be developed by a qualified historic architect. The plans shall include a structural/architectural report documenting existing integrity and conditions and include detailed treatment methods and measures to ensure that historic integrity is retained and that all identified character defining features will be preserved.
- CR-1(b) **Archival Documentation of Historic Buildings.** The applicant shall provide archival documentation of the San Luis Ranch Complex in as-built and as-found condition in the form of a Historic American Building Survey (HABS) Level II documentation. The documentation shall comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Architectural and Engineering Documentation (NPS 1990), and shall include large-format photographic recordation, detailed historic narrative report, and compilation of historic research. The documentation shall be completed by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for History and/or Architectural History (NPS 1983). The original archival-quality documentation shall be offered as donated material to the History Center of San Luis Obispo County. Archival copies of the documentation shall also be submitted to the San Luis Obispo County Library.
- CR-1(c) **Informational Display of Historic Resources.** A retrospective interpretive display detailing the history of the San Luis Ranch Complex and the project site, its significance, and its important details and features should be developed by the applicant. The information should be incorporated into a publicly accessed building on the project site, such as the proposed Agricultural Heritage Facilities and Learning Center, or a publicly-accessed outdoor location. The display shall include images and details of the HABS documentation described in Mitigation Measure CR-1(b) and any collected research pertaining to the historic property. The content shall be prepared by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards in Architectural History and/or History (NPS 1983).

2018 Findings

In late 2017, CCB retained SWCA to carry out Mitigation Measures CR-1(b) and CR-1(c). In the course of carrying out measure CR-1(b), SWCA identified additional information that altered the previous eligibility findings that had been developed in connection with the EIR. The “spectator’s barn/viewing shed,” used since c1900 as a storage barn, was found to have significant historical links to the beginnings of the San Luis Obispo County Mid-State Fair; was also found to be the earliest surviving building constructed with funding from the State of California’s 16th District Agricultural Association; and was identified as a rare building type—a late 19th-century grandstand associated with a horseracing track.

The viewing stand (grandstand) was constructed in 1887 and remained in use for the annual 16th District Agricultural Fair until 1900 when the new property owner, William Wood, plowed up the race track to plant barley and moved the grandstand on log rollers to the west side of the parcel, where the Wood residence and hay barn were also located.

The new information required a change in scope and mitigation strategy: although the Wood residence and barn were seen to be historically related, the grandstand had an entirely different historical context and much greater significance than the other resources. SWCA’s 2018 Mitigation Report had the following recommendations:

Revised Findings of Significance

In the 2017 Environmental Impact Report prepared for the San Luis Ranch project, the 1887 Race Track Grandstand was previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, at the local level of significance, as a contributing resource (modified barn) associated with the ranch complex on site.

This present architectural evaluation finds that the 1887 Race Track Grandstand extant on the San Luis Ranch property is a significant historic property eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, at the state and local levels, for its association with the 16th District Agricultural Association and for its role in the development of San Luis Obispo’s county fair. It is also eligible for listing under Criterion C, at the state and local levels, as a rare surviving example of a scarce resource type – a nineteenth century race track grandstand. The revised finding and the revised period of significance are intended to supersede the finding and period of significance stated in the 2017 Environmental Impact Report.

As a result of this revised finding of significance and the revised period of significance, the treatment plan for the grandstand will be modified to better demonstrate its connection to its racetrack origins and to its revised period of significance, 1887-1900, when it was an important, prominent, and architecturally distinctive element of the racetrack grounds, designed to cater to the spectators who came to view the “speed programme” elements of the fair.

After William Otterbein Wood acquired the racetrack property in 1900, he plowed up the race course, moved the grandstand to its present location, removed several lengths of the redwood drop-siding from the front of the building, and converted it to a barn. He re-used the wood siding to clad a house he built (Residence #2) shortly thereafter. Residence #2 is slated for demolition as part of the proposed redevelopment project; the original drop-siding from the grandstand will be carefully removed and used for restoration of the grandstand building. Elements associated with the grandstand’s use as

a barn will be removed, as they obscure the significance of the building as a racetrack grandstand.

There are several positive results that stem from the revised finding of significance:

- *The grandstand will be more properly understood for its important connections to the 16th District Agricultural Association and the development of the San Luis Obispo County Fair;*
- *A rare building type will be freed from later, inconsistent additions and will be partially restored using its own reclaimed original materials;*
- *The grandstand will be relocated to a place more consistent with its original location (with a similar viewshed, which it currently lacks); and*
- *The grandstand gains the potential for re-use as a viewing stand.*

This report also recommends contacting the California Mid-State Fair Heritage Foundation, whose mission statement is: To preserve and enrich the heritage of the 16th District Agricultural Association (<http://www.thecmsfheritagefoundation.org/>).

Mitigation Work Completed in 2018

Before the fire occurred, SWCA provided advice on coordinating the sequence of vegetation removal, demolition of ineligible resources, and architectural salvage to assure that both “as-found” and “as-built” photographs could be taken and that the original lumber from the secondary residence was reserved for later use on the grandstand. Meetings were held to discuss preliminary conceptual designs for the Agricultural Heritage Center. Removal of the non-historic additions to the grandstand was still pending when the fire occurred.

POST-FIRE APPROACH

Following the fire, SWCA was called on to help assess the extent of the damage to the grandstand, and to confer about the temporary relocation of the surviving wall. The residence, hay barn, and surviving grandstand wall have all been successfully moved to their temporary locations. The following steps will now be taken to meet the mitigation measures specified in the 2017 EIR.

CR-1(a) Historical Structure Relocation and Reconstruction Plan.

Residence. SWCA will assist CCB in developing a detailed treatment plan for the lower (main) floor of the Wood residence that meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of the existing building for new uses. The existing character-defining interior woodwork, masonry fireplace, and architectural features on the ground floor will be retained as essential elements of the original design, materials, and workmanship of the residence; the ground floor will also be rehabilitated to include office, classroom, retail and/or other uses allowed by the Specific Plan, as well as restrooms. The second floor (which will not be open to the general public or used for interpretive exhibits) will be repurposed for uses allowed by the Specific Plan. The exterior of the residence will be repaired and refurbished, and the brick chimney will be re-built (re-using as many of the salvaged original bricks as possible) according to Secretary of the Interior Standards (SOIS).

Hay Barn. SWCA will continue to assist CCB in developing a treatment plan for the Wood barn that meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of the

existing structure for new uses. It is understood that the barn will require structural bracing to meet current code requirements. A raised foundation will also be required; visually unobtrusive board-formed concrete is proposed for those portions of the foundation that can be seen by the public. Character-defining features such as original board siding, the overhead hayfork and track will be retained and secured in place. The haymow doors will be secured in an open position (with a recessed window) to allow natural light to fall across the voluminous interior of the barn. This interior space can be used for Specific Plan approved uses.

As depicted on the Illustrative Architectural Site Plan, the contextual relationship between the Wood residence and the Wood hay barn will be recognized through design features of the Agricultural Heritage Site and through interpretive exhibits. One side of the barn may be connected to a new building, using approved SOIS for differentiation of structures (for example, connected by a recessed corridor or vestibule, as shown on the site plan).

Surviving Racetrack Grandstand Wall. The original 16th District Agricultural Association racetrack grandstand was almost entirely destroyed in the February 2019 fire. The surviving wall, however, has considerable character and is still able to convey a strong sense of its significance and original purpose. Unfortunately, the siding salvaged from Residence #2 is not sufficient to reconstruct the grandstand using original materials. The fire damage so visible on the surviving wall suggests that the most meaningful way to interpret it is to stabilize it in its current condition and display it--at close range and in a more protected setting--so that the general public can see it and have a personal reaction to what has been lost. The SOIS Treatment Approach for the surviving wall is therefore proposed as Preservation, rather than Reconstruction. As shown on the Illustrative Architectural Site Plan, the stabilized grandstand wall will be displayed in association with two other planned features: a flight of steps (also useful for informal seating and viewing) leading from the Marketplace terrace to the community garden plots below; and a "racetrack oval" around the circumference of the garden plots.

CR-1(b) **Archival Documentation of Historic Buildings.** As-found photographs were taken of all three of the historic buildings, as well as of the non-historic buildings slated for demolition. As-built photographs were also taken of the Wood residence and Wood barn. The fire in February 2019 forestalled as-built photographs of the grandstand, which were planned to be taken after the additions built by Wood, when he converted the grandstand to a barn, had been removed.

The applicant shall provide archival documentation of the San Luis Ranch Complex in as-built and as-found condition in the form of large-format black and white photos that meet professional standards for archival photographic recordation. SWCA will produce four sets (including one mounted set) of selected photographic prints taken by SWCA in 2018 and 2019 for distribution to the History Center of San Luis Obispo County, the City of San Luis Obispo Community Development Department, Cal Poly Special Collections (Mid-State Fair Collection), and CCB.

In 2018, a detailed historic narrative report was completed by SWCA's Senior architectural historian, who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for both History and Architectural History (NPS 1983). Copies of the report shall be provided to the Central Coast Information Center, the History Center of San Luis Obispo County, the City of San Luis Obispo Community Development

Department, Cal Poly Special Collections (Mid-State Fair Collection), and CCB. The report will also be available to the public in a redacted version suitable for a general audience.

In February 2021, a panoramic photograph was identified as a c1890–1895 view of the racetrack grounds, including the grandstand, racetrack, judges' viewing stand, elevated water tank, stables, and landscape (*San Luis Obispo Tribune Souvenir Railroad Edition*, May 5, 1894, republished in 1994 by the Cal Poly Library Associates) (Figure 1).

CR-1(c) **Informational Display of Historic Resources.** SWCA will assist CCB in creating interpretive exhibits focusing on the history of the ranch property and on the historically significant link of the location to the 16th District Agricultural Association. These exhibits will include: (1) the historic buildings themselves; (2) preservation and installation of the surviving grandstand wall, with associated interpretive exhibits (including reproduction of the c1890–1895 panorama) and associated artifacts recovered from the fire rubble; (3) wall-mounted interpretive displays on the ground floor of the Wood residence; (4) wall-mounted interpretive exhibits either in the rehabilitated hay barn or in the connecting vestibule; and (5) printed copies of an original 1893 racetrack program available to the public. Exhibit content shall be prepared by SWCA's senior architectural historian, who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for both History and Architectural History (NPS 1983).

More fully developed treatment plans, along with proposed text and illustrations for interpretive exhibits, will be submitted as part of the building permit submittals.

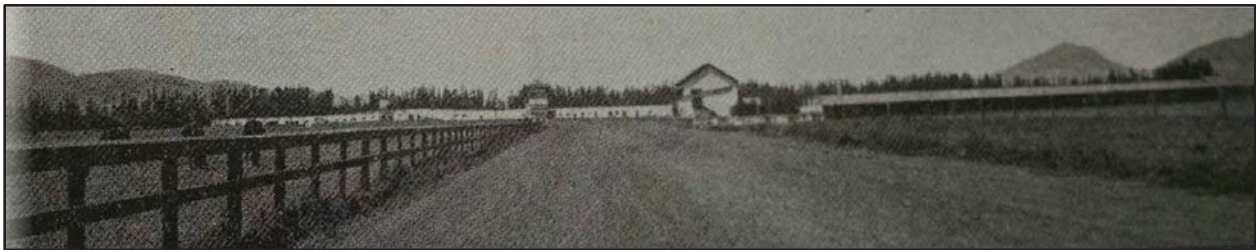


Figure 1. Racetrack grounds as completed (*San Luis Obispo Tribune Souvenir Railroad Edition*, May 5, 1894, page 95).

APPENDIX A

Site Plans

ADDITIONAL OPEN SPACE

ADDITIONAL 30 ACRES OF PRESERVED AGRICULTURAL OPEN SPACE HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN PROVIDED THROUGH AN OPEN SPACE EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF THE CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO RECORDED ON 11-29-2018, DOCUMENT 2018049254 AND DESCRIBED AS

EXHIBIT "B-1"

LEGAL DESCRIPTION
AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION EASEMENT AREA
THAT REAL PROPERTY IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF THE COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA BEING THE NORTHEASTERLY 50.00 ACRES OF THE PROPERTY DESCRIBED IN THE DEED TO GARY ISAACMAN RECORDED JANUARY 18, 2006, AS DOCUMENT NUMBER 2006-005672 IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY RECORDER OF SAID COUNTY, THE NORTHEASTERLY LINE OF SAID 50.00 ACRES TO BE THE SOUTHWESTERLY LINE OF THE PROPERTY DESCRIBED IN THE DEED TO THE COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO RECORDED APRIL 19, 1979, IN VOLUME 2147, AT PAGE 788, OF OFFICIAL RECORDS OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA AND THE SOUTHWESTERLY LINE OF SAID 50.00 ACRES TO BE PARALLEL WITH SAID NORTHEASTERLY LINE.

REFER TO PAGE 32

ADDITIONAL
AG BUILDINGS



