Dear San Benito County 4-H Community,

It has come to my attention that there is a lot of grumbling, fingerprinting and ill-will circulating in our program relative to the work of the 4-H sustainability committee. As such, I want to clear the air about mis-conceptions and remind everyone of the code of conduct that applies to all members and adults in the program.

The sustainability committee was appointed by Council President Mike Mansmith to seek input and develop a 4-H Council spending plan in order to manage the Georgia Wapple Fraiser Trust for future generations. In working with our fiscal managers at Northern Trust it was determined that we needed to reduce our annual spending by $20,000 to meet our sustainability goals. The committee - made up by a representative from every 4-H club and chaired by 4-H Council Treasurer Rachel Taylor have been working to modify the budget and come up with livable options. The committee has kept the Council informed of their progress via Council meetings, the electronic Updates and by seeking input from all throughout the process.

While not in attendance at the April Council meeting, I have come to learn that several concerns were raised about the proposed budget and that disparaging, hurtful and inappropriate remarks have continued to be made about the process, individuals and families in our program via social media and other contexts. This is not how we do business, and I expect this to stop. 4-H prides itself on creating a safe environment for productive discourse and this behavior is quite contrary to this belief.

As you all prepare to attend the sustainability committee meeting Monday May 8 (7PM at the Vets Building) and to vote on the 2017-2018 Council budget at the May 22nd 4-H Council meeting, I urge everyone to be mindful of the code of conduct, to treat everyone with respect and to work towards a manageable solution for all.

Additionally, I’d like to say a few words about the 4-H Farm, as I believe this is a major point of concern for many of you. The farm property is owned by the University of California and managed by the San Benito County 4-H Program. When the property was donated to UC, there was no agreement or stipulation that the 4-H Council would fund the development and management of this property. However, as this is such an important asset to our program, the Council has chosen to direct funds towards its management and development. If the Council chooses to no longer direct funds to the farm, the farm and its activities would fall under the direction and leadership of the UC County Director (me) and the 4-H program staff (Julie) and would work to fundraise and support the farm independently of the Council. The farm will not close or go away unless the 4-H community determines they are no longer interested in managing the property, upon which it would go back to UC.

Lastly, the 2017-2018 4-H Council budget will be voted on using the ballot voting system identified in the 4-H Council bylaws (each club will elect one adult and minimum of two Senior members (additional members can vote if your club has membership over 30 members)) to vote on the budget. Please remember that these representatives are identified by each club to cast a vote for their club, or to vote for the wishes of their club, not their individual wishes. Therefore, please take the time now to have this conversation with your club members so they represent your club appropriately on this very important Council action.

I trust this helps clarify questions and confusion circulating about the budget process as well as sets the stage for behavior and expectations moving forward. I would like to publically acknowledge and thank the Sustainability Committee for their hard work and willingness to address this challenging task which will ensure the future of the San Benito County 4-H program.

Sincerely,

Lynn Schmitt-McQuitty

County Director

Youth Development Advisor