

SKAGIT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD (AAB)

Minutes from the 7/23/03 AAB Meeting

Member(s) in attendance:

Randy Good
Oscar Lagerlund
Murray Benjamin
Dave Boon
Lyle Wesen
Rose Merritt
Roger Knutzen
Mike Hulbert
Larry Jensen

Member(s) not in attendance:

Bob Hughes
Beth Vander Veen
Bob Finkbohner

Others in attendance

Ken Dahlstedt
Dyvon Havens
Gary Christensen
Tom Karsh
Bob Rose

1. Call to order and introductions:

Dave Boon, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6 pm and welcomed everyone to the monthly Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting.

2. Murray Benjamin asked staff to make sure that if the AAB was going to meet at a time or place different from the norm (i.e., 3Rd Wednesday of each month, 6-8 pm, in Hearing Room B) that notice of such a change be especially (boldly) noted on the mailed-out agenda.

3. Minutes Approved:

It was moved by Oscar Lagerlund and seconded by Rose Merritt to approve the June 18, 2003 minutes as mailed. Motion unanimously approved.

4. Action Item(s):

- a. Randy Good passed out a letter (a legal opinion) from the Pacific Legal Foundation dated July 15, 2003 to the Skagit County Board of Commissioners regarding conversion of railroad corridors to public recreational trails. After a brief discussion Chairman Dave Boon directed staff to place this matter on next month's agenda for discussion and possible action.
- b. Murray Benjamin passed out a sample statement (dated 7/21/03) that could be used by Skagit County agricultural producers to petition the County and State to declare a draught emergency. Murray has been discussing the situation with County Commissioner Don Munks. Dyvon Havens presented a historical weather (precipitation and temperature) picture for the Mount Vernon area that showed the area is experiencing drought like conditions. No

action taken by AAB other than to agree to take the matter up again next month if conditions have not improved.

- c. Larry Jensen raised continued concerns over the County's permitting of the Cascade Ag pickle processing plant as a heads up for the possible need for future regulatory reform. No action was taken by the AAB at this time.
- d. Chairman Dave Boon read a letter to the AAB dated 7/23/03 from Ken Dahlsted, Chairman of the Skagit County Board of Commissioners (BCC). The letter confirmed that it was the expectation of the BCC that the AAB would become the lead spokes-group for agricultural issues facing Skagit County. A discussion followed with Commissioner Dahlstedt confirming that the BCC would turn first to the AAB for recommendations on emerging agricultural issues. Chairman Boon thanked Commissioner Dahlstedt for the direction and requested that the BCC keep the AAB informed as to what it (BCC) believes are "emerging" issues.
- e. Brief discussion followed concerning the role of the AAB. It was confirmed (w/o vote) that the AAB would focus on plans, policies, and programs with provision being made to address imminent problems/issues as necessary. Murray Benjamin moved to rescind the motion of Roger Knutzen (tabled at the 6-18 meeting) to endorse the "Agriculture - Speak With One Voice" recommendations presented by Steve Sakuma. Instead the AAB would work closely with the various agriculture commodity groups to make sure that their views and issues were addressed and considered before the AAB makes any recommendations to the BCC. Motion unanimously approved.
- f. Gary Christensen, Assistant Director of the Skagit County Planning and Permit Center presented the following:
 - Update on the Urban Growth Area expansion petitions before the City of Burlington. City will not take any action at this time. Bob Rose noted that there are similar petitions before the City of Mount Vernon, some of which will be forwarded to the County for consideration.
 - Update on the Skagit County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. This is a plan that is approved by the County and Cities and updated every five years. Included in the plan is list of projects and that "list" can get updated annually if necessary. There are agricultural related projects currently on the project list. Projects that are on the "list" become eligible for federal/state grants should funds become available.
 - Gary handed out agriculture related policies and regulations found in the Skagit County Comprehensive plan and Unified Development Code (extra copies are available for those members not in attendance).
 - Gary responded to a concern raised by Roger Knutzen over the impact that hillside development has on downhill drainage districts. Gary explained the environmental review process that goes into project review

and how this concern is being addressed in the current Bayview Subarea Plan.

- Gary handed out a two page summary of what a few other counties are doing for agriculture preservation. AAB support staff was requested to conduct a survey with more detailed review of other county programs and report back to the AAB in the near future.
 - Gary advised the AAB that Skagit County is gearing up to examine the purchase and transfer of development rights programs as one tool to preserve Ag land. A group of locally interested persons recently met with Mark Solito, from King County, to hear how that County's TDR program works.
- g. Dyvon Havens, WSU Extension Agent, handed out the following (extra copies are available):
- "Skagit River Tidings" the 2003 newsletter of Skagit Watershed Council that included the Sixth Annual Report
 - "2000 Skagit County Stats" from WSU Cooperative Extension
 - "Upcoming Agricultural Events Relevant to Western Washington Agricultural Community 2003" (this can also be viewed on the Web at www.skagitcounty.net/wsu)
- h. The remaining time was spent with AAB members submitting their proposals for issues that the AAB should take up as part of a strategic plan. Staff will compile the issues and send out with the minutes for continued discussion at next month's meeting (see attached).

5. Meeting was adjourned by Chairman Boon.

Respectfully submitted: Tom Karsh, Interim Recording Secretary