

**Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)**  
**Minutes – February 18, 2004**

Members in attendance:

Larry Jensen  
Rose Merritt  
Bob Hughes  
Bob Finkbohner  
Mike Hulbert  
Dave Boon  
Randy Good  
Lyle Wesen  
Murray Benjamin  
Oscar Lagerlund

Members not in attendance:

Beth Vander Veen  
Roger Knutzen

Others in attendance

Dyvon Havens  
Gary Christensen  
Allison Deets  
Tom Karsh  
Bob Rose  
Carly Ruacho

1. Call to order & introductions:

Dave Boon, Chair, called the meeting to order shortly after 6pm and welcomed members and guests to the February meeting. Dave Boon reported that Beth Vander Veen has elected to resign her position on the Agricultural Advisory Board, effective immediately, as she is unable to make the meetings.

2. Minutes:

Dave Boon called for a motion to review and approve the minutes and agenda. Randy Good recommended the approval of minutes as submitted. Mike Hulbert seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Discussion Items:

a. Ag Leaders meeting report – Dave Boon

Dave Boon deferred to Bob Rose, Executive Director for the Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland, who reported that Shannon Hitchcock, from the “Heart of Washington” an initiative of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, made a presentation at the February Ag Leaders breakfast. Ms. Hitchcock provided information about her program, which focuses on education and outreach to consumers about selecting and buying food products, and promotes ag products from the “Heart of Washington.” Ms. Hitchcock is excited about featuring Skagit County in her outreach over the next year as a center for ag production.

b. Upcoming Ag Summit – Mike Hulbert

Mike Hulbert went over the agenda for the upcoming Ag Summit, noting changes recommended at the previous meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Board, and reported that Senator Mary Margaret Haugen will be giving opening comments. He also reminded members that they need to RSVP by the 12<sup>th</sup> of March if they plan on attending the Ag Summit on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mike Hulbert reported that he is putting together a drawing for ag products and is looking for contributions. As part of his role as Chair of the Ag Summit Steering Committee, Mike split up the list of legislators to be called among members of the AAB, who will be making calls to follow up on the initial invitation for the event.

c. Strategic Plan

Chair Dave Boon reported that strategic plan facilitator Kay Haaland was unable to attend the meeting due to illness, but Dyvon Havens would present Kay's written comments.

1. On Page 1 of the draft strategic plan, Kay noted an overlap with the by-laws by the ground rules adopted at the strategic planning retreat, and recommended a committee address these overlaps. Lyle Wesen and Oscar Lagerlund volunteered to take a look at the by-laws and ground rules before the next meeting.
2. On Page 2, Kay had a question about Objective #1 under "Pro-Active Land Use Planning is Supportive of Ag" and whether the AAB intended to say "can/cannot." Board member Murray Benjamin said that given the context of the phrase, the AAB had considered "can/cannot" to be accurate. The remainder of the AAB agreed to leave the objective as written.
3. On Page 2, under "Pro-Active Land Use Planning is Supportive of Ag," Kay requested the AAB identify a date by which "Action steps in 2004" must be completed. By consensus, the Board agreed that the action identified should be completed by 2005.
4. On Page 2, under "Outcomes Expected," under "Pro-Active Land Use Planning is Supportive of Ag," Kay asked that a specific timeframe be identified. Gary expressed some concern about whether it would be possible to identify a specific timeframe, given the varying timelines in the permitting processes. He will coordinate with planning to see if it is possible to shorten the average timeline, and will try to fill in the blanks on this category as well as identify the normal timeline for most permits. Gary did report that Planning is required to take action within certain periods of time.
5. On Page 2, under "Pro-Active Land Use Planning is Supportive of Ag," the AAB elected to delete Kay's written question from "Inter-related Aspects of Strategy."
6. On Page 2, under "Pro-Active Land Use Planning is Supportive of Ag," Objective #2, "Establish an Ag Industrial Park," Mike Hulbert reported that he has spoken with Don Wick, Director of the Economic Development Authority of Skagit County, to explore whether this or other counties have conducted a feasibility study. Don Wick reported that Skagit County has not done a feasibility study for an Ag Industrial Park, and neither have other counties he has contacted.
7. On Page 2, under "Pro-Active Land Use Planning is Supportive of Ag," Objective 2, for "Action Steps in 2004," Allison Deets proposed tabling further discussion of this objective until such time as she and Mike Hulbert have met with Don Wick. Dave Boon agreed, and this Objective will be revisited at a later date.
8. On Page 3, under "Pro-Active Land Use Planning is Supportive of Ag," Objective 2, for "Inter-related Aspects of Strategy," Dyvon Havens and Mike Hulbert, who drafted the original objective, are going to get together to further discuss its elements.
9. On Page 3, under "Pro-Active Land Use Planning is Supportive of Ag," Objective 3, "Define and protect agricultural lands with long-term viability," Gary Christensen reported that the Planning Department is in Phase II of the comprehensive plan update. He also stated that the realistic start time for the "Action Steps" identified under this objective would be July 1<sup>st</sup>, and suggested

10. On Page 4, under “The Drainage System Infrastructure Works Effectively,” Objective 2, Kay wanted to know if the AAB intended the following description of strategy: “Form taxation district(s) based on the outflows from each district or development.” The AAB agreed that the description was correct as written.
11. On Page 4, under “The Drainage System Infrastructure Works Effectively,” Objective 2, Kay requested clarification on who the lead would be for establishing an upland urban drainage taxation system. After discussion with Planning Department representative Gary Christensen, the AAB identified Public Works as the probably lead on the drainage taxation planning.
12. On Page 4, under “The Drainage System Infrastructure Works Effectively,” Objective 2, AAB member Randy Good offered to explore the Inter-related Aspects of the Strategy, to determine whether taxing districts already exist because of drainage utility.

Chair Dave Boon proposed postponing the rest of the discussion on the strategic plan in order to leave enough time for a discussion of lot aggregation and the critical areas ordinance. Further discussion was delayed until Kay Haaland is available to visit another meeting.

#### d. Lot Aggregation – Gary Christensen

Assistant Planning Director Gary Christensen continued the discussion on the lot aggregation issue and proposed lot certification ordinance. He brought Carly Ruacho, from the Planning Department, along to assist with some of the technical details of the ordinance because she has the most familiarity with the proposed ordinance.

Gary reported that the proposed ordinance is now “on the street” and that a public hearing will be held before the Board of County Commissioners on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March. He identified the goals of the new ordinance as follows:

- to bring Skagit County into compliance with the Growth Management Act;
- to clarify and simplify the lot certification for landowners;
- to create some parity, since ownership of contiguous parcels does not determine development potential in the proposed ordinance;
- to find a way in which, under certain circumstances, substandard lots can be developed.

Gary suggested that the key points to look at for the AAB could be found in the summary memo, and reiterated that this ordinance is certainly an improvement over aggregation because it looks at the merits of the property rather than at ownership. Carly Ruacho provided technical information on the specifics of the proposed lot certification ordinance. Tom Karsh, Natural Resource Policy Advisor to the Board of County Commissioners, recommended that the AAB submit comments on the proposed lot certification ordinance.

#### e. Critical Areas Ordinance

Tom Karsh, Natural Resource Policy Advisor, presented a response letter from the County to a letter from landowners expressing concern over enforcement issues related to the Critical Areas Ordinance. After some discussion, Tom suggested that the AAB propose a stay on the implementation of the CAO and related investigation of any complaints until the current court appeal is resolved. AAB member Larry Jensen moved that the AAB recommend a stay of implementation and on investigation in accordance with Tom Karsh's recommendation. Bob Hughes seconded the motion.

Murray Benjamin expressed concern about the result of implementing a stay on the current ordinance, asking what would be the regulatory mechanism in place of the CAO. Tom Karsh said the courts would decide what regulatory ordinance would substitute for the CAO until the appeal is resolved. After some discussion, Lyle Wesen moved that the previous motion be amended to read that the AAB would support a stay as long as it doesn't further adversely impact agricultural production or landowners. The motion was seconded by Bob Hughes. A vote was taken, passing 8-2, with Randy Good and Murray Benjamin voting nay.

Murray Benjamin moved that the recommendation for a stay be tabled until the AAB receives an opinion as to what the substitute for the Critical Areas Ordinance would be; Randy Good seconded the motion. The motion to table was defeated, 8-2, with Randy and Murray voting in favor of tabling the recommendation.

The original recommendation for a stay on the implementation of the CAO and related investigation of any complaints, with the amendment that the recommendation was contingent upon the impact of such a stay, was brought back for a vote. Chair Dave Boon called for a vote, and the motion was approved, 8-2, with Randy Good and Murray Benjamin dissenting.

e. Miscellaneous

Lyle Wesen reported that farmers continue to represent agriculture in working with the tribal communities. He further reported that Steve Sakuma is working hard to develop a relationship with the Upper Skagit tribe, while Curtis Johnson and Mike Shelby are trying to coordinate a meeting between the tribes and the ag community

**Adjourn regular session.**