

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Minutes – March 17, 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:

Roger Knutzen

Others in attendance

Kay Haaland
Bob Rose
Dyvon Havens
Gary Christensen
Allison Deets

1. Call to order & introductions:

Dave Boon, Chair, called the meeting to order shortly after 6pm and welcomed members and guests to the March meeting.

2. Minutes:

Dave Boon called for a motion to review and approve the minutes and agenda. Bob Finkbohner offered a correction to February's minutes, noting that he was absent from the meeting on February 18th. Bob Finkbohner recommended the approval of minutes as amended. Lyle Wesen seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Discussion Items:

a. Ag Leaders meeting report – Dave Boon

Dave Boon reported on the Ag Leaders breakfast meeting. A teacher from Skagit Valley Community College who specializes in English as a Second Language (ESL) gave a presentation on the work SVC is doing to provide education in ESL to farm workers in Skagit County.

b. Upcoming Ag Summit – Mike Hulbert

Mike Hulbert reminded members that the Washington Ag Summit, hosted by the Ag Advisory Board, is coming up on the 23rd. Preparations are nearly complete, with donations of products and money from many local businesses and farmers. Staff reported that over \$1800 in financial contributions had come in, and eleven local organizations and businesses had donated items for the drawing, to be held throughout the event.

c. CAO enforcement issues

Lyle Wesen, Randy Good, and Bob Rose met with attorneys today to discuss the feasibility of placing a stay on the current Critical Areas Ordinance until better science is available to identify enforcement needs. Lyle Wesen reported that attorneys for the County say that it will not be possible to put a stay on the CAO; the County would be forced to put something similar in its place to serve as an interim ordinance. Bob Rose noted that ultimately, the interim might be worse for agriculture than the current ordinance, and the enforcement issues about which ag is concerned would still be in effect. Randy Good will continue to follow this issue.

d. Strategic Plan – Kay Haaland

Kay Haaland, facilitator for the AAB strategic planning retreat in January, returned to get feedback on her report and answer some questions regarding intent in certain sections. She also recommended that when the final report is completed, Dave Boon, Oscar Lagerlund, and staff report to the Board of County Commissioners on the strategic planning process and its results.

Oscar Lagerlund and Lyle Wesen worked together to revisit the current operating procedures for the Ag Advisory Board and compare them to the “ground rules” established at the strategic planning retreat. They came up with several proposed amendments to the current operating procedures:

- On page 1, amend 4.A to allow for two-year terms for officers, and eliminate specific language related to term limits.
- On page 2, section 6.A, increase the number of members required for quorum to nine. Any decisions made with the current quorum of seven are open to question; having a quorum of nine makes any opinion by the AAB a stronger mandate from the ag community.
- On page 2, section 6.C and 6.D, amend the sections as follows:
 - 6.C. A roll of members present shall be recorded and any absences noted. All members shall be apprised of their attendance record annually by staff.
 - 6.D. Participation and attendance are expected. Unexcused absences may result in a request to the Board of County Commissioners, by consensus of the Agricultural Advisory Board, that a member be replaced.
- On page 2, section 7.A, raise the number required for quorum to make it consistent with section 6.A.
- On page 3, section 8.A, amend the section as follows, to allow for “summer” hours and scheduling ease:
 - Regular meetings of the Board shall be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:00 pm from November through March, and at 7:00 pm from April through October.
- On page 3, section 8.C, amend language regarding meetings to allow for closed sessions as follows:
 - Regular meetings of the Board shall be open to the public. Special meetings of the Board may be open to the public.
- On page 3, section 8.D, allow meeting locations to be adjusted by staff, rather than by Board action alone.
- On page 3, section 9.B, replace “Consent Agenda” with “Approval of minutes and meeting agenda” to more accurately reflect meeting processes.

After some discussion, the amendment regarding changing the meeting day from the third to the fourth Wednesday was rejected; meetings will remain on the current schedule. Additionally, the amendment regarding closing special meetings was rejected. The language regarding regular and special sessions of the Agricultural Advisory Board will remain as originally written. Lyle Wesen moved, and Larry Jensen seconded, the approval of the

proposed operating procedures as amended and revised by the Agricultural Advisory Board. Motion carried.

Dyvon Havens and Mike Hulbert reported on their research into an Agricultural Industrial Park. They have spoken with Don Wick, who is not aware of any other counties with Agricultural Industrial Parks or similar projects underway. Mike Hulbert also spoke with David Hedlin, who informed him that the Cenex wanted to build an ag park at the port. Mike Hulbert raised the idea of having a “virtual” Agricultural Industrial Park: putting economic development money into entrepreneurs already in business rather than building an industrial park in the hopes that processors will move to Skagit County. Bob Finkbohner recommended that a top-to-bottom evaluation of ag in Skagit County be performed in order to identify the need, if any, for an Agricultural Industrial Park. The Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland have already conducted a similar study, and Dyvon Havens and Mike Hulbert will follow up with the Skagitonians as well as Don Wick.

e. Lot Certification Public Hearing – Dave Boon

Dave Boon represented the Agricultural Advisory Board at the Lot Certification Hearing on March 8th. He reported that the comments were consistent throughout the evening, and in agreement with the position of the Agricultural Advisory Board that a 40-acre minimum for residential development in the agricultural zone should be adhered to, regardless of ownership. Bob Rose noted that Commissioner Anderson closed the evening with the comment that there is a strong mandate for the development of a Transfer of Development Rights program, based on comments heard over the course of the evening. Gary Christensen said the Board of County Commissioners would likely institute an interim ordinance as they take a view to a longer-term approach for lot certification issues. He also noted that divergent groups came together with common themes, which made an impression on the Commissioners. Mike Hulbert felt that the public hearing was a great opportunity for agriculture to “speak with one voice” and join with other interests in the county in voicing its opinion on the proposed ordinance.

e. Miscellaneous

A sub-committee was established to explore the current rules regarding farmstands. Rose Merritt, Mike Hulbert, and Randy Good will work with Bob Rose and Allison Deets to develop a proposed position for the Agricultural Advisory Board to take on farmstand-related issues.

Oscar Lagerlund reported that he attended a meeting of the Puget Sound Action Team. The discussion centered around “hobby farming” and he noted that the general public doesn’t understand pollutants or the care of land and water quality. He also said that progress had been made in educating the participants – Puget Sound Action Team meeting attendees recognized that farmers have “turned it around” and are the example to be followed on land management and water quality management.

Adjourn regular session.