

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Minutes – December 15th, 2004

Members in attendance:

Dave Boon
Oscar Lagerlund
Lyle Wesen
Randy Good
Rose Merritt
Murray Benjamin
Bob Hughes
Annie Lohman
Mike Hulbert

Members not in attendance:

Roger Knutzen
Kim Mower
Larry Jensen

Others in attendance

Diane Kamionka
Ned Zaugg
Kay Haaland
Dyvon Havens
Kendra Smith
Allison Deets

1. Call to order & introductions:

Dave Boon called the meeting to order at 6.07pm, and welcomed board members and guests Diane Kamionka (Washington Association of Small Business Incubators), Ned Zaugg (WSU Extension), and Kay Haaland (WSU Extension). (Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland), Mike Shelby (Western Washington Agricultural Association), and Dan Craig (USDA).

2. Minutes:

The November meeting did not have quorum, so the minutes from October were not ratified. Dave Boon requested corrections or additions to the October minutes. Hearing none, Dave Boon called for a motion to accept the minutes from October 20th. Randy Good moved, and Oscar Lagerlund seconded, to accept the minutes as presented. Motion carried. Dave Boon called for a motion to enter the discussion items from the November 17th into the record. Lyle Wesen moved, and Randy Good seconded, to enter the discussion items as presented.

3. Discussion Items:

a. Ag Incubator – Diane Kamionka/Ned Zaugg

Ned Zaugg, Director of the WSU Extension Program in Skagit County, opened up the discussion by talking about the ten ag innovation centers that have been funded around the country. Linking the proposed Innovation Center at WSU with the Ag Incubator project will allow a pooling of resources and shore up research efforts and business development, and help provide ongoing resources.

Diane Kamionka, who is working with the Washington Association of Small Business Incubators, explained the purpose of a business incubator, which is typically a central place where start-ups can have access to resources. Generally incubators focus on small businesses, and have very good success rates – 87% of small businesses that have been “incubated” succeed. Most incubators have a board of directors and criteria for acceptance to the incubator, and many also have a mentoring group to assist in the development of businesses in the incubator. The ag business incubator feasibility study

would include a 16-person advisory team comprised of representatives from each of five counties: Skagit, Whatcom, Snohomish, Island, and San Juan.

b. Strategic Plan – Kay Haaland

Strategic plan facilitator Kay Haaland reviewed the AAB’s plan and progress in the 10 months since the Board retreat. She presented some recommendations for the Board, including making some of the goal topics standing agenda items and forming committees to address issues. She also noted that this is her last visit unless the AAB wishes her to make periodic “check-ups.” After some discussion, Chair Dave Boon suggested that Kay return next fall to check on the progress of the Board.

c. Reports – Committee

- (i) Ag Summit – Board member Annie Lohman reported that she attended the Washington Ag Summit with staff on December 9th in Puyallup. She stated that there were fewer than 80 attendees, including only a couple members of the host Pierce County Ag Advisory Committee, and a few legislators represented. She reported that the highlight of the Summit was the presentation by New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus. New Jersey has not “lost” the industry to departments and agencies, instead developing a comprehensive plan for the maintenance and enhancement of agriculture. Every year, Secretary Kuperus tasks his department with developing 10 ways to do something positive for agriculture. Annie spoke with Secretary Kuperus following his presentation and he provided several contacts in his department who can provide assistance in developing comprehensive ag economic development programs, planning programs, and policy. Annie noted that overall, this Summit underscored the success of the Ag Summit hosted by Skagit County in March.
- (ii) Focus on Farming Conference – Mike Hulbert reported that he attended the Focus on Farming Conference in Snohomish on November 18th. The conference was focused on Snohomish County, but provided an opportunity to connect with some legislators and learn about the goings-on in Snohomish. About 300 people attended the conference, which featured Dr. John Ikerd, Professor Emeritus from the University of Missouri, as the keynote speaker. Dr. Ikerd discussed the opportunities and obstacles associated with the changing face of American agriculture and its family farms.
- (iii) Comp Plan Update Committee – Lyle Wesen and other members of the Ag Subcommittee reported on the progress made with regard to update recommendations. The Committee is comprised of members of the AAB and CFAC – Roger Knutzen, Mike Hulbert, Annie Lohman, Randy Good, Curtis Johnson, and Lyle Wesen. Lyle presented the recommendations to the Board for its endorsement; these recommendations will be passed on to the full Skagit County Comp Plan Update Committee if supported by the AAB and CFAC.

d. Discussion/Action Items

- (i) Ag Incubator Feasibility Study Letter of Support – Staff had prepared a letter of support for the feasibility study proposal which is currently being considered for funding. Lyle Wesen moved, and Murray Benjamin seconded, that the AAB support the funding proposal for a feasibility study of a Northwest Ag Incubator Program. Motion carried.

- (ii) Real Estate Transfer Disclosure Statement – Lyle Wesen presented the Real Estate Transfer Disclosure Statement, developed and recommended by the Ag Subcommittee. This statement would provide a standard form to realtors in order to address the “Right-to-Manage Natural Resources” element of the County Code and would replace the current “Right-to-Farm” document, which references a no-longer-existing code section. Lyle Wesen moved, and Annie Lohman seconded, the AAB support this document and forward it to the Board of County Commissioners for its formal adoption as the standard form related to the Right-to-Manage section. Motion carried.

- (iii) Proposed Comp Plan Recommendations – Lyle Wesen moved, and Annie Lohman seconded, that the Comp Plan Recommendations, including the Real Estate Transfer Disclosure Statement, submitted by the Ag Subcommittee be recognized and entered into the record as AAB recommendations. Motion carried.

Adjourn regular session.