

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Minutes – January 19th, 2005

Members in attendance:

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

Members not in attendance:

Kim Mower
Larry Jensen
Rose Merritt

Others in attendance

Dyvon Havens
Kendra Smith
Allison Deets

1. Call to order & introductions:

Chairman Dave Boon called the meeting to order at 6.10pm, and welcomed board members to the January meeting.

2. Minutes:

Dave Boon requested corrections or additions to the December minutes. Hearing none, Dave Boon called for a motion to accept the minutes from December 19th. Randy Good moved, and Murray Benjamin seconded, to accept the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

3. Standing Discussion Items:

a. Drainage

Board member and Drainage District Commissioner Roger Knutzen gave an update on the progress of the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan. Planning Development Services (PDS) Director Gary Christensen is working through the UGA expansion plan for Bayview Ridge and has asked for a letter of support from the affected Dike & Drainage Districts, 12, 14, and 19. Although the drainage issues have not been resolved, the County PDS has promised that they will be, and requested the support of the Districts to get the Subarea Plan approved and moving forward to the Commissioners.

Roger noted that the proposal for the Subarea Plan doesn't account for water that will have to travel ¾ of a mile before it reaches a ditch, and must therefore pass through agricultural land. The Districts want a guarantee that the water coming off of Bayview Ridge will be handled properly. After further discussion about Bayview Ridge and other hillside developments, Lyle Wesen made a motion that the Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board oppose further hill development projects until drainage impacts on agricultural lands are resolved for each. Motion seconded by Oscar Lagerlund. Motion carried unanimously.

Specific to the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan, Board member Randy Good moved that "Until such time as the drainage issues have been resolved, the Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board is opposed to approval of the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan." Motion seconded by Oscar Lagerlund. Motion carried unanimously. Staff is instructed by Board Chair Dave Boon to draft a letter to the Skagit County Board of Commissioners regarding the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan.

Board member Lyle Wesen reported on the progress of the 1418 Legislative Task Force, which is finishing up its work. The Task Force will be presenting its findings to the Legislature during a Senate committee work session on February 22nd. John Roozen and Curtis Johnson will be representing ag at that session. Lyle also noted that there are two bills addressing the HPA process, HB 1083 and SB 5095, which he suggested the Ag Advisory Board review and revisit next month to gauge board members' positions on the bills.

b. Critical Areas

Skagit County Natural Resources Policy Coordinator Kendra Smith provided an update on the Critical Areas Ordinance, which has been under scrutiny by the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board. The WWGMHB found the County out of compliance with Growth Management with regards to its adaptive management program for agriculture. Kendra will continue to track this and report back to the Board as she gets more information.

c. Other

Board member Randy Good reported that the Samish Instream process is on hold, but that the Cattlemen's Association has requested that the County continue working on the issue.

Annie Lohman presented a letter from the Franklin County Farm Bureau regarding public hearing requests for the Critical Habitat designation for salmon. The letter encourages county Farm Bureaus to contact county commissioners and state and federal officials to request that they ask NOAA Fisheries for a public hearing on the designation, as well as an extension of the comment period so agricultural interests can assess the designation's impact. Oscar Lagerlund moved that the AAB encourage the County Commissioners to request a hearing pursuant to the NEPA regarding NOAA Fisheries Critical Habitat designation for salmon. Randy Good seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Kendra Smith reported that the state Department of Natural Resources is planning on redoing its water-typing system from "Types 1-5" to a model being used in Wyoming that identifies streams as "fish-bearing," "non-fish-bearing," or "unidentified." There will be a workshop on February 2nd to provide information on the proposed new modeling system. After some discussion, Murray Benjamin moved, and Randy Good seconded, that the AAB recommend that the Commissioners urge the State not to adopt the DNR water type maps until further review and analysis has been conducted and the accuracy of the new system has been determined. Motion carried.

4. Legislative Issues

Staff handed out bills that have been filed for the 2005 legislative session that might be of interest to the AAB. Those bills include ballfields legislation, which would open agricultural land up to recreational use; additional funding opportunities for conservation futures programs; legislation related to the efficiency of the HPA process; agricultural economic development legislation; and various commodity bills. The AAB will be reviewing the bills passed out at the meeting, and revisit them at the next meeting to see if members wish to take a position. The bills distributed were SB 5032 (property tax exemption review), SB 5027 (water rights/real estate tax), SB 5092 (beginning farmer loan program), SB 5093 (agricultural economic development planning fund), HB1083 and SB

5095 (HPA administration clean-up bill), HB 1245 (ballfields), and SB 5109 (conservation futures funding).

5. Miscellaneous/Member interest

Four AAB members' terms are expiring this year, and staff is requesting those members to indicate whether they'd like to continue on the Board. Members Bob Hughes, Mike Hulbert, and Roger Knutzen indicated they'd like to continue on the Board. Staff will contact absent member Larry Jensen, whose term is also up, to find out if he would like to continue. Reappointment of Bob Hughes, Mike Hulbert, and Roger Knutzen approved by consensus. Staff will submit a resolution to the Board of County Commissioners reappointing those three members.

Further discussion of the quorum requirement prompted a proposal by Lyle Wesen to reduce quorum back to seven members. Oscar Lagerlund seconded the motion. It was recommended by staff that rather than make a decision regarding quorum at this meeting, the committee overseeing operating procedures reconvene or be re-constituted to review the quorum after election of officers and identification of committees at the February meeting. Lyle Wesen moved to table his motion. Seconded by Oscar Lagerlund. Motion carried.

Mike Hulbert presented a draft proposal for a federal appropriation for farmland preservation in Skagit County, with a request that the AAB consider supporting the request and submitting a letter to the local Congressional delegation. Lyle Wesen moved to support the request for \$9 million dollars in federal appropriation for farmland protection. Annie Lohman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Adjourn regular session.