

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Minutes – June 15th, 2005

Members in attendance:

Oscar Lagerlund (Chair)
Dave Boon (Vice-Chair)
Murray Benjamin
Randy Good
Mike Hulbert
Annie Lohman
Bill McMoran
Rose Merritt
Kim Mower
Lyle Wesen

Members not in attendance:

Bob Hughes
Roger Knutzen

Others in attendance

Mike Stansbury
Oscar Graham
Carly Ruacho
Allison Deets

1. Call to order & introductions:

Chairman Oscar Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 7.10 pm, and welcomed board members, new board member Bill McMoran, and guests Oscar Graham (PDS) and Mike Stansbury (PW) to the June meeting.

2. Minutes:

Oscar Lagerlund requested corrections or additions to the April minutes. Hearing none, Chair Lagerlund called for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Lyle Wesen moved to accept the minutes as presented. Annie Lohman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Bayview Ridge Drainage Plan – Mike Stansbury

Mike Stansbury from Public Works provided the AAB with an update on the progress of the Bayview Ridge Drainage Plan. He outlined the timeframe expected for completion of the project. The complete draft of the technical work will be submitted by the end of July, and a draft of the entire report will be completed by mid-August. After review, the final draft is anticipated to be complete by September 30th.

Mike Stansbury also reported that a meeting with the affected drainage districts will take place on Friday to review the project to date; Public Works started meeting with the districts about one month ago. It is possible, he said, that the County, through the Drainage Utility Fund, will enter into interlocal agreements to manage drainage from Bayview with Drainage Districts 12, 14, and 19. He noted that if one examines the various basins, most, if not all, have problems to begin with, and that Bayview will only exacerbate those existing problems. Issues for the Plan to address include, but are not limited to: detention storage, replacement of culverts, increasing volume, and adding a pump station.

Board member Lyle Wesen asked if Semrau Engineering is doing all of the Bayview areas, or just one. Semrau will be doing all, but sequentially. Lyle Wesen also asked if the drainage utility tax is adequate to handle the problem presented by Bayview, and if the fee for residents on Bayview will be “one-time only” or annual. Mike Stansbury reported that no, it probably is not; the Drainage Utility Fund was never intended to deal with the construction of major projects, and said his guess would be that it will not be a “one-time only” fee.

Board member Dave Boon asked if the planning for upland development and stormwater management is comprehensive for the whole county or specific to Bayview. Mike Stansbury

reported that it this plan is specific to Bayview, but other plans related to upland development are underway.

Lyle Wesen asked if there's any look toward increasing the density on Bayview to handle the projected increase in the County's population. Carly Ruacho from Planning and Development Services stated that the density will be at the planned four units per acre, phased in over time. Board member Mike Hulbert followed that up with a question about whether Semrau is taking this "sliding scale" for density into account. Mike Stansbury reported that, yes, when looking at flows, Semrau is examining it from the perspective of the impact of maximum build-out according to the Subarea Plan.

Board member Murray Benjamin stated that somehow, the County needs to address the issue of liability and protect agriculture from blame for ridge runoff. Mike Stansbury said there are some components addressing that already in the plan. Board member Annie Lohman followed up with a question about whether the County has a mechanism for retention pond maintenance enforcement. Mike Stansbury reported that Ric Boge from Public Works could answer that question better, but it is his understanding that requirements for retention pond maintenance are in the Code, but that enforcement is a problem.

Board member Bill McMoran asked how much new development we can expect to see if the Subarea Plan is fulfilled. Mike Stansbury reported that there would be approximately 3,420 new residents and 700 acres of industrial land by 2015.

After some further discussion, the Board agreed by consensus to forward a letter to the County Commissioners expressing opposition to the passage of the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan prior to the completion, and readiness for implementation, of the Bayview Stormwater Management Plan.

4. Lot Aggregation – Carly Ruacho

PDS employee and ex-officio member Carly Ruacho provided an update on the lot aggregation issue. After providing some history of log aggregation in Skagit County, she reported that the ordinance passed by the Commissioners last spring, which was interim pending approval under Growth Management, has been approved in the last week by the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board. Carly Ruacho reports that this means aggregation as we know it no longer exists – unless someone files an appeal by Friday's deadline – because the County is moving from a test of ownership to "performance" testing for determination of lot certification.

For other zoning designations, there is a "reasonable use" process whereby one can apply for a building permit, but in resource zones, no variances will be considered. Additionally, in its order, the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board found that "agriculture is a reasonable use" in the agricultural zone. This provides the County with no option for granting a variance, unless the parcel meets the list of exceptions in the ordinance.

5. Housing in the Ag Zone – Oscar Graham

Guest Oscar Graham, Deputy Director of Planning & Development Services, brought a problem to the AAB that PDS faces with some regularity, related to the "temporary farmworker housing" provision in the Code. The Code defers to the state Code, which is vague in its definitions and requirements. The problem faced by PDS is in units that are "temporary" farmworker or "mother-in-law" turning into rentals for property owners. Oscar Graham, on behalf of PDS, is seeking some guidance from the AAB in this matter.

After some discussion, several courses of action were recommended by board members. Board member Murray Benjamin recommended an annual review of those "temporary" residences. Mike Hulbert recommended a requirement to re-apply for permits. Board member Rose Merritt suggested the properties or projects be put in a "tickler" file, and that a small fee be

charged to enable the County to review those permits on a regular basis. Board member Dave Boon suggested stating a specific anticipated duration of use, and requiring re-application at the end of that time.

6. Miscellaneous

Chair Oscar Lagerlund officially welcomed new member Bill McMoran to the Board, and asked him to give a brief self-introduction.

Staff reported that the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan was released for public review on Monday, June 13th. There will be upcoming meetings of the various Skagit County ag groups to discuss a response from the ag community.

Staff reported that there may be an opportunity to participate in a “Critical Mass” study for Skagit County agriculture, if the AAB is interested. The Farmland Legacy Program has been identified as the entity favored by the stakeholder groups to lead the project, given that it serves as staff to the Ag Advisory Board, which represents all sectors of ag in the County.

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called for a motion to adjourn. Murray Benjamin moved, and Rose Merritt seconded, that the June meeting of the Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board be adjourned. Carried.

Adjourn regular session, 9.05 pm.