

**Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Minutes – November 16th, 2005**

Members in attendance:

Oscar Lagerlund (Chair)
Dave Boon (Vice-Chair)
Randy Good
Bill McMoran
Murray Benjamin
Lyle Wesen
Mike Hulbert
Kim Mower
Kraig Knutzen (for Roger Knutzen)

Members not in attendance:

Rose Merritt
Annie Lohman
Bob Hughes

Others in attendance

John Vendeland
Sara Jo Breslow
Holly Freishtat
Bob Rose
Jessica Gigot
Jan Flagan
Ric Boge
Carly Ruacho
Allison Deets

1. Call to order & introductions:

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 7.05 pm. He welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Sara Jo Breslow, a graduate student with the University of Washington who has attended the Ag Advisory Board meeting in the past, introduced Jessica Gigot, another grad student studying here in Skagit County. Jan Flagan and Ric Boge attended from Public Works–Surface Water Management. John Vendeland, who lives up on District Line Road and works in agriculture, was in attendance. Bob Rose, Executive Director of Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland, introduced Holly Freishtat, the coordinator of the new Agricultural Marketing Program, co-sponsored by EDASC and SPF, and additionally funded by USDA, WSDA, and Skagit County.

2. Minutes:

Chair Oscar Lagerlund requested additions or corrections to the September and October minutes for the Agricultural Advisory Board. Dave Boon moved, and Lyle Wesen seconded, to accept the September and October 2005 minutes as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Bayview Stormwater Management Update – Jan Flagan & Ric Boge

Ric Boge and Jan Flagan, from Skagit County Public Works-Surface Water Management Division, reviewed the status and progress of the Bayview Stormwater Management Plan. Public Works had a work session with the County Commissioners the week of the 7th to review and update them on progress and challenges with the Bayview Stormwater Plan. Ric Boge said he and Jan Flagan would cover essentially the same territory they covered with the County Commissioners, and provided the handout that was given to the Commissioners as part of their meeting package last week. Ric further provided some background and history of the project, and answered some basic questions.

The plan as drafted does not replace stormwater or drainage requirements already associated with development in Code. Semrau Survey & Engineering and Tetrattech are conducting the feasibility, and a “95% draft” has been released; this was discussed at the

October Ag Advisory Board meeting. Since the release of that draft, Public Works has been meeting with more interest groups and will continue to do so as the plan moves forward.

Jan Flagan, a new Surface Water Management Division engineer, provided further technical information on the plan, including an update on the status of the study of the perimeter ditch concept. Jan noted that she was not planning on covering details of specific projects – as Ric Boge pointed out, this is a study to address increased flow, not issues which are addressed under drainage code.

Cost has been a concern throughout the process, though the Districts and Public Works-Surface Water Management (PW-SWM) tend to be in general agreement about the approach. One idea that has come up recently is the concept of a “hill ditch.” Jan Flagan noted that this proposal has some positives, including its ability to capture all the water coming off the hill. However, there is a need to have some flow on the lowlands. The engineers working on the feasibility study are currently examining the technical feasibility of a hill ditch. It may be possible to do a portion of the stormwater management as a perimeter ditch, and to also make that ditch a fish enhancement project.

Mike Hulbert asked about the timeline for the hill ditch analysis; Jan Flagan reported it would be completed by mid-December. Ric Boge said that PW-SWM will come back to this group, the Western Washington Ag Association, Drainage District Commissioners, and other stakeholders with a report. Another briefing will also be held with the County Commissioners prior to asking for County Commissioner Board action. The intent of the plan is to maintain or improve drainage conditions below the ridge, and PW-SWM feels it is important to try to keep everyone informed and to get some comments and guidance as the project develops.

Kraig Knutzen said he appreciates the effort to split the plan and the funding into two parallel issues, but is concerned about that; he believes the plan and the funding should go hand-in-hand. If the funding isn’t taken into account somehow, the plan will never be implemented. He is also worried that the Districts will end up with all the water and no improvements at all.

Jan Flagan said that what she hears is support for the hill ditch concept from the Ag Advisory Board. Oscar Lagerlund agreed, but said the Board is cautious about fully supporting something which hasn’t been fully reviewed. Lyle Wesen also agreed, noting there is an attraction to a project that might be classifiable as a salmon habitat enhancement project.

4. Critical Areas Lawsuit Update – Annie Lohman

Annie Lohman is out of town at the Washington State Farm Bureau meeting.

5. Land Use Committee Update

Mike Hulbert, Chair of the Land Use Committee, reported that the Land Use Committee continues to meet regularly, on a weekly basis. He outlined the timeframe for the Comprehensive Plan Update, as well as providing some background on code revision recommendations the Land Use Committee might be presenting to the Ag Advisory Board for its review and approval. The Land Use Committee will meet on the 7th and 14th of December: the 7th will be a line by line review of possible changes, and the 14th will be a meeting to finalize the language prior to meeting with the Ag Advisory Board.

Issues being addressed are:

- Farmstands/Seasonal Roadside Stands. Recommended changes include a maximum size limit of 5,000 square feet, with different permitting levels. Other changes include changing language from “portion” of products grown in Skagit County to “significant portion.” Any non-agricultural products will need to be related to the core operations. For example, Rosabella’s Garden is focused on

- Accessory Dwelling Units. No major changes are recommended.
- Setbacks. Placement of a mobile home will be expressly permitted through special use permit process, but must be located within farmstead and no land can be taken out of production
- Temporary Manufactured Home – Farmworker housing. The language has been tightened and will include a requirement to demonstrate wages paid to the farmworker through the IRS Form 943. Also, the County will require an annual self-certification process for this and all other special use permits.
- Bed & Breakfast. Beds and Breakfasts will be required to be secondary and incidental to an actively managed agricultural operation.
- Home Based Business 2. Changed to require that it be incidental to an agricultural operation.
- Habitat Conversion. New definitions are being developed, as well as a special use permit requirement, and other code revisions.

After some discussion, Murray Benjamin made a motion to change the December meeting from the 14th to the 13th in order to review the proposed code revisions. Lyle Wesen seconded the motion. Motion carried.

6. Miscellaneous

Oscar Lagerlund reported that Rose Merritt has resigned her position on the Board due to the time commitments of her business. The Ag Advisory Board will put out a request for candidates for the open position after the first of the year. Dave Boon moved, and Murray Benjamin seconded, to accept Rose's resignation. Motion carried.

Chair Oscar Lagerlund adjourned the meeting.

Adjourn regular session 8.10pm.