

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Meeting Notes – November 8th, 2006

Members in attendance:

Oscar Lagerlund (Chair)
Randy Good
Murray Benjamin
Bill McMoran
Roger Knutzen
Mike Hulbert (proxy for Bob Hughes)
Kim Mower

Members not in attendance:

Dave Boon
Lyle Wesen
Annie Lohman
John Vendeland

Others in attendance

Jan Flagan
Don McMoran
Carly Ruacho
Allison Aurand

1. Call to order & introductions:

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 6.08pm. He welcomed members and guest Jan Flagan (Skagit County Public Works) to the meeting.

2. Minutes:

Chair Oscar Lagerlund noted that there was no quorum for the meeting and that minutes could not be approved.

3. Bayview Ridge Update – Jan Flagan

Jan Flagan, from Skagit County Public Works, reported on the progress of the Bayview Ridge Stormwater Management Plan. After much discussion, Public Works has agreed to take a look at stormwater impacts inside the UGA boundaries, partly to provide analysis for the subarea planning process, and partly to determine what the impact fee assessment should be for development on the ridge.

At the same time, Public Works is examining implementation options. A huge pump station was recommended for District 14 by the consultants working on the stormwater plan; however, Public Works is now looking for alternatives to a large, expensive pump station, including channel widening.

In Joe Leary Slough, channel widening appears to have a very positive impact; this channel widening would traverse the Peth property and go up to Farm-to-Market Road. Public Works also looked at widening the channel from Ed Knutzen's to the "Y" at Sakuma's, with an anticipated positive impact on the south spur. Jan Flagan reported that what Public Works has seen is happening is that water is getting backed up from the Maben's to the south spur. A south spur pump station may not be necessary, according to Public Works; what Public Works is proposing instead is that they proceed with channel modifications, but leave the south spur pump station open as an option. Widening the

channel would lower the water level by a foot, and a pump station would lower the water level by three feet.

Public Works also looked at cost impacts for proposed changes due to development within UGA; however, the County can't plan for just UGA development – it must look at whole basin. The County is still considering the channel widening south of Allen West Road, which would cost approximately \$800K. A south spur channel widening is estimated at about \$500K. It looks like doing this will help us get away without huge pump station.

AAB member Roger Knutzen is concerned that the costs seem to have changed so much; the engineers say it will work, but when he reviewed the numbers, Roger discovered the engineer was talking about 100 acres, when it is actually 500 acres within the UGA. The thing that concerns Roger Knutzen the most is that if we take the word of the consultants and all the development goes in, we're stuck with it no matter the costs. District 14 has hired someone to take another look.

Jan Flagan noted that the County can study things to death, but what we need is to come up with a plan to actually establish facilities to handle the water. The analyses were based on existing development in the UGA and existing farmland, and then based on existing plus future development.

Roger Knutzen noted that when the UGA is done, there is an area that's a "reserve." Once that "reserve" is in the UGA, the County can allow the whole area to be built out. Carly Ruacho noted that once the County hits 70% in UGA build out, the rest of it ("reserve") can be opened for building. Jan Flagan said the study was conducted on the UGA, not on current zoning. She is unsure if the engineers used the "reserve" area in the analysis, but will contact them and inquire.

Roger Knutzen also noted that channel widening alone will not resolve the water problem: no matter that the channel is widened, the system cannot handle nine times more water than it's getting in storm events currently.

Regarding No Name Slough, Jan Flagan reports that the County added some channel widening to the study. The major impact shown is a decrease in the amount of increase for the outfall pump station. Don McMoran asked how the County would deal with the salmon issue; Jan Flagan said that permitting would be a problem and the County may have to mitigate for the widening.

Jan Flagan said she met today (November 8th) with District 19. Big Indian Slough is almost totally fed by the UGA. Public Works has looked at channel widening there as well; however, it doesn't appear to be feasible because it would require fee simple purchase of property. The County is trying to find an alternative to that – possibly a perimeter ditch around the toe of the hill that would tie into Big Indian Slough down near the intersection with SR536. This alternative would still require some property purchase. There are still some widening possibilities, but they may be challenging. Public Works will be sitting down with other agencies and District 19 to look at solutions.

On November 14th, the Commissioners will be considering an ordinance for adoption. This ordinance is the formal instrument for approval of the Subarea Plan. After adoption, Planning & Development Services has 10 days to file a status report with the Growth Management Hearings Board to let it know what has been adopted and to provide all the documentation. Following that, there will likely be a hearing to determine compliance with the Growth Management Act. The County will ask for an allowance for a 60 day appeal period before the compliance hearing. One of the concerns about the Plan relates to location and density: Can the County have a residential component in the UGA? The current UGA is industrial only, and the County is moving to a residential component. Separating drainage out will be a question as well - Do drainage and planning need to be tied together? The County would like to allow the 60 day appeal period and then consolidate all appeals into one action so all the questions can be answered at once. The clock starts on the appeal period as soon as the Commissioners sign the approval instrument.

Finally, Jan Flagan noted that what is key in this re-examination is that we may be able to eliminate the huge pump station. Roger Knutzen agreed.

4. Committee Update – Mike Hulbert

AAB member Mike Hulbert brought up the need to put the economic development committee to work, though he feels it is important to be realistic about what government can and cannot do to help agriculture. Chair Oscar Lagerlund requested volunteers or recommendations for the Committee. The Committee will include Lyle Wesen, John Vendeland, Dave Boon, Roger Knutzen, and Bob Hughes, if they agree. Mike Hulbert noted that John Vendeland is a wonderful resource with his experience in agribusiness, and we should utilize him to help us think about the future of agriculture and a strategy to overcome the economic challenges currently facing agriculture.

5. Miscellaneous

Don McMoran reminded the Board of the upcoming workshop series on farm succession planning. The workshops will be held November 15th and 16th.

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called for adjournment of the meeting.

Adjourn regular session 8.00pm.