

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Minutes – January 17th, 2007

Members in attendance:

Oscar Lagerlund (Chair)
Dave Boon (Vice Chair)
Murray Benjamin
Randy Good
Annie Lohman
Bill McMoran
Kim Mower
John Vendeland
Lyle Wesen

Members not in attendance:

Roger Knutzen
Mike Hulbert
Bob Hughes

Others in attendance

Sharon Dillon
Carly Ruacho
Allison Aurand

1. Call to order & introductions:

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 6.05pm. He welcomed members and guest Commissioner Sharon Dillon to the meeting.

2. Minutes:

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called for review and correction of the November & December minutes. Randy Good moved to approve the minutes as presented. Annie Lohman seconded. Motion carried.

3. New Commissioner Welcome/Discussion – Commissioner Sharon Dillon

Chair Oscar Lagerlund welcomed Commissioner Sharon Dillon to the meeting. Commissioner Dillon was elected to serve the third district in November, and has taken on the additional responsibility of chairing the Board of Commissioners this year as well. She shared a bit about her history and interests, and provided the AAB with some insight as to her vision. She also requested board members' thoughts and inputs, and some "agriculture education." Chair Oscar Lagerlund and other board members discussed current hot issues, like canola seed production, the challenges faced by the dairy industry, and growth problems affecting agriculture. Oscar Lagerlund also discussed the past work of the AAB, including the Board's efforts on the Comprehensive Plan, wetland mitigation banking issues, and state and local issues directly affecting agriculture.

4. Legislative Update – Board/Staff

Annie Lohman discussed the "ag viability bill" (HB 1167/SB 5248), which would help protect agriculture from critical areas regulations requiring buffers. The bill states that legally existing agricultural activities on designated ag lands may not be prohibited or be required to be removed by local critical areas regulation.

The Board also discussed the "wetland mitigation banking" bill, which would prohibit wetland mitigation banking on land designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. The bill would allow for special use permits allowing wetland mitigation banking on "other ag lands."

Allison Aurand shared the Office of Farmland Preservation bill and a handout. The Office of Farmland Preservation would be housed within the Washington State Conservation Commission and would work with a farmland preservation task force on strategies to retain agricultural lands for agricultural production.

5. Bayview Subarea Plan – Carly Ruacho

Carly Ruacho reported that the appeal deadline to the Growth Management Hearings Board on the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan is February 5th. The drainage plan is expected to come up later in February, and the hearing in front of the Planning Commission on the drainage plan is scheduled for the 26th of February.

Randy Good asked about the timeline of the Critical Areas Ordinance. The non-ag portion of the CAO update will be released before the end of January, with hearings anticipated for March and April.

6. Miscellaneous

Annie Lohman reported that Ag Marketing Program Coordinator Holly Freishtat is moving out of EDASC and into Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland's offices. She is concerned about this move because the Farm Bureau and the County committed funds to Holly's position with the express caveat that she be housed in the EDASC office.

Oscar Lagerlund and other board members discussed the new roundabouts proposed for the intersection of Best and McLean Roads, and Big Rock. Farmers have found the current roundabout at La Conner difficult and sometimes impossible to navigate with equipment. Staff suggested that concerned board members contact Public Works and/or the Commissioners to express their concerns.

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called for adjournment of the meeting.

Adjourn regular session 8.15pm.