

## Agriculture Advisory Board

Minutes for July 8<sup>th</sup>, 09

### **Members in Attendance**

Randy Good    Bill McMoran            Murray Benjamin    Kraig Knutzen            Kim Mower  
Greg Lee (Mike Hulbert's proxy)    Nels Lagerlund (Bob Hughes' proxy)            Lyle Wesen

### **Others in Attendance**

Carolyn Kelly – Skagit Soil Conservation

Kendra Smith – Natural Resource Lands Policy Coordinator

Carly Ruacho – Planning and Development Services

Gary Christianson – Planning and Development Services

Don Stuart – American Farmland Trust

Roger Knutzen – Skagit Farmer

Toby Rodgers – Soil Scientist

Mary Heinrich

### **Call to Order, Introductions, and Consent Agenda**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kim at 6:58 PM. Introductions started with Board members and continued with guests.

The Agenda was noted with a few changes to reflect the present guest speakers.

### **Minutes**

The Minutes from the June meeting were reviewed and amended with the correction of Committee Report b. name change from Dan Berringer to Dan Berenson. Also Kim noted to add the Minutes were taken by Murray. Bill moved to pass, Greg seconded, motion passed.

### **Guest Speakers**

Don Stuart – Presentation on ecosystem credits for farmers and farmland. He spoke of \$350 million spent on mitigation for transportation last year. A great deal of effort to get these transactions through, and regulations make transaction difficult for farmers. He stressed farmers need to get involved. They need to look for opportunities in several categories, primarily a. carbon markets (no till, rangeland management, digesters, etc.), b. water quality trading (he mentioned not much going on in this area in Washington State), c. mitigation of

wetlands on farms with areas that can be converted, d. wildlife habitat mitigation, e. NOA biological opinion to FEMA may also open areas for farms to collect funds.

Roger Knutzen – spoke on county flood water situation and the drainage countywide plan for floodwaters. County originally had \$9 million for projects, but soon found number was shrinking and worked on UGA first because of costs constraints. District 14 had an agreement with County for a \$1.6 million grant to be used during the period between 2006 and 2009. So far no money has been received by the District. A meeting made an interlocal agreement – District 14 would do all the work on the projects. Changes were then made by County on its obligation for the funding, offering only 25% with remaining costs going to the District. More discussion of how the rain water accumulates from different parts of the landscapes with farmland only being a part of the whole picture, yet getting stuck with the costs of drainage. The FAA will not allow retention ponds anywhere close to the airport, as they will attract wildlife that can be a threat to aircraft.

Toby Rodgers- working to certify wetland scientists and soil scientist for consistency out in the field. He was looking for support from the ag community for the bills going through congress to achieve this goal. This will help alleviate the discrepancies that are causing problems. He is concerned without this legislation the soil scientist will lose credibility and jobs will go to other scientist, such as geologists.

### **Committee Reports**

Land Use – Kim referred to the letter the AAB voted on at the previous June meeting, how Mike read it at the Public Comment period. Kim also reflected on the past week's Public Comment period and how she and others in the county had gone before the BoCC to ask for an extension of the comment period for the Code Amendments. This was granted and the new deadline was extended to July 21<sup>st</sup>. Discussion around the room about the language of the code amendments and what it all meant to the lay person. Carly and Gary spoke in depth about this and answered a few questions. Kim asked that more focus on the subject at a committee meeting. This was scheduled for July 15<sup>th</sup>, noon, at Planning.

Drainage and Irrigation- Bill presented information on how to get in contact with the City of Anacortes for irrigation water. Terry Nemeth – 293-1921 is the guy to call. He passed around a map for everyone showing the pipes and other information. The City of Anacortes is very willing to work with the ag community to supply irrigation water. Farms must submit an application, they pay a set fee of \$350.00. The charge is \$138.00 per million gallons of water. There are two 36 inch lines. The only reason for denial of water is when not enough instream flow is present.

CAO – no report

Open Spaces – no report

### **Old Business**

- a. Kendra spoke on the Affidavit of Agriculture Accessory Use that came with the packets. Gary said Planning is waiting for the go-ahead from AAB to start using it. Discussion about how much time was spent on developing this document.
- b. Vacant positions still not filled. Kraig spoke of his conversations with a possible candidate, Richard Sakuma, who has declined. A comment that Nate Youngquist was interested, and still needed to send an application.

### **New Business**

Discussion about wetlands awareness and some ominous regulations. Need flexibility on rules for different kinds wetlands Lyle spoke of his concern of wetlands expansion

### **Extra Discussion**

Mary reminded the group of the Clear Valley Appeal meeting at the Commissioner's Hearing Room Tuesday July 14<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 AM.

Roger asked the AAB if they were willing to have him represent the ag sector at the Highway 20 ribbon cutting ceremony Thursday, July 16<sup>th</sup>. He asked for comments. The Board gave him permission to speak for them.

### **Next Meeting**

The next AAB meeting will be August 12<sup>th</sup>, 7:00PM to 9:00PM at the Valley Business Center, 20211 E. College Way, Mt. Vernon

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was moved to adjourn by Murray, seconded by Greg, motion passed, at 9:05

Minutes by Murray, prepared by Kim

Work items – contact Nate Youngquist for application