



## **SKAGIT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD**

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### **Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Minutes**

**March 14, 2012**

**Crane Conference Room, County Administration Building**

#### **Members in Attendance**

Murray Benjamin

Randy Good

Kraig Knutzen

Bill McMoran

Lyle Wesen

Jim Carstens

Michael Hughes (proxy for Mike Hulbert)

Nels Lagerlund, Chair

Kim Mower, Vice Chair

Nate Youngquist

#### **Others in Attendance**

Don McMoran – Mount Vernon Northwestern Washington Research & Extension Center (WSU)

Carolyn Kelly – Skagit Conservation District

Kirk Johnson, Skagit County Planning & Development Services

Steve Omdal, District 2 Port of Skagit County Commissioner

Linda Christensen, County Planning & Development Services

Bill McCord, Public Citizen

#### **Call to Order, Introductions**

Nels called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and Steve Omdal was introduced as well as the rest of the AAB and other attendees.

#### **Consent Agenda**

There were no changes to the agenda.

#### **Minutes**

Lyle motioned to accept the January 11, 2012 meeting minutes as presented and Murray seconded. The motion passed.

#### **Planning and Development Services Update**

##### TDR

Kirk gave an update for the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) grant project funded by the Washington State Department of Commerce. The grant agreement document is currently being reviewed by the county legal staff and Board of County Commissioners. Nels and Kim

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also received a copy. It is expected that the agreement will be routed and signed for signatures by the end of March.

Kirk said that the stakeholder committee should be formed and ready to meet by May 2012. The AAB will be represented by Kim Mower and Andrea Xaver for the Conservation Futures Advisory Committee. Kirk expects a member from the Forest Advisory Board will also be a part of the stakeholder committee.

Kirk noted that there is a clear distinction that the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) has an opportunity to decide whether to move forward with a TDR program. This distinction is written as part of the grant scope of work, Task A.5. If the BCC approves the process the program goes forward through the legislative process, i.e. planning commission and public comment. Kirk continued to talk about the general scope of work. Randy and other members of the AAB felt it is important that the Skagit County Farmland Legacy Program continue to play an important role to preserve farmland. The TDR program needs to be open and transparent. Kirk said that it is the departments desire to keep the lines of communication open with e-mails or monthly AAB meeting updates.

#### Comp Plan Amendment Update

Kirk said there are items currently up for the 2011 docket review by the Planning Commission. The AAB should resubmit their comments by the first Tuesday in May.

#### Envision Skagit 2060 Update

Kirk reported that the Citizen Committee recommendations will be presented and discussed with Skagit County city and town elected officials, planners, and the general public during April and May.

#### Board of Commissioner Letter to the Planning Commission

The AAB gave their concerns and comments regarding question #4 and #17, county wide policy on ethics and rules of conduct for boards, committees, and commissions, and process requests for these boards respectively. The AAB is concerned about the lack of communication with the Planning Department staff as a result of budget cutbacks. The Planning Department is no longer represented at the AAB meetings on a regular basis to discuss issues and the ability to take these issues back to the department. Lyle reiterated that the AAB role, stated in resolution R20020134, Section 2, shall report and make recommendations to the Skagit County Board of Commissioners and Planning Agency on agricultural plans, policies, and programs. Kirk said that in regards to code amendments, the advisory committee members can bring their questions to the Planning Commission monthly meetings; however he understand this is not the most comfortable and convenient time to discuss the issues while under a televised situation. The AAB would like to use Linda as a conduit to communicate issues between the Planning Department and this board.

### **Committee Reports**

#### Shorelines

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Kraig gave an update for the Shoreline Master Program in regards to dike and levy ownership designation. Community access to the dikes and levys are a challenge. As far as he knows all dikes and levys are privately owned except for Dike District 12. Kraig will ask Betsy Stevenson, project manager for the Shoreline Master Program to give an update at the next AAB.

### Economic Development

Bill McMoran reported that Draper Valley property at the port recently came up for sale. There is discussion currently in process that this property could function as an agriculture transport facility. The Western Washington Agriculture Association and the Port of Skagit County supports this idea. This property currently has rail availability. Steve Omdal from the Port commented that the Port of Skagit County is supportive and this is a cooperative opportunity for the agriculture viability. The Port will discuss this at their meeting on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 9 a.m.

### **Old Business**

#### Agriculture Summit

Kim gave a brief overview of what kind of information and experiences would result from the agriculture summit that is planned for May 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Brightwater Education Center in Woodinville. Kim asked the AAB for their support and will represent Skagit County. The AAB's involvement will be written in a letter to the Board of County Commissioners, composed by Kim. Linda will assist Kim with a PowerPoint presentation and other AAB members will provide photos and pertinent information.

### **New Business**

#### Farmland Trust Invitation

The American Farmland Trust will be presenting an award to Skagit County in appreciation for its exemplary farmland protection program on April 10, 2012 at 10:30 a.m. in the hearing room. AAB members are encouraged to attend and stay for a short coffee social afterwards.

### **Extra Discussion**

#### Legislative Update

Carolyn Kelly provided an update on legislative action. Of note is the passage of SB 6082 which strengthens state policy regarding the preservation of agricultural lands. Many thanks go out to the bill sponsor, Senator Haugen, and to Rep. Bailey who made a critical floor amendment. Senate bill 5292 also passed. This bill clarifies the exemption from drainage ditches from critical areas ordinances. It appears that the current agricultural related tax exemptions will remain at this time. The bill that would allow habitat and wetland projects on agricultural land to occur without SEPA review appears dead at this time.

Progress in the Samish Watershed was also briefly discussed, and an upcoming meeting for livestock and horse owners was announced.

### WSU Update

Don announced he has become a tenured faculty member. In other news Don appointed a Beachwater Coordinator, Nancy Olsen and Master Gardener Coordinator, Lisa Hervieux. The

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agriculture research projects have been fully funded as well as an additional project for corn from the Dairy Federation. Don asked everyone to save the date, August 30th for the Skagit County 90th birthday celebration which will be held at the Port of Skagit. A farm safety course is starting in April and is available for all ages. WSU has added a conference/class room at the port facility and everyone is encouraged to utilize this room.

**Adjourn**

The next meeting will occur on April 11<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM