



SKAGIT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
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Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Minutes
September 11, 2013
Skagit County Administration Building

Members in Attendance

Nels Lagerlund (Chair)	Murray Benjamin	Jim Carstens
Brian Duquaine	Tye Clark	Michael Hughes
Greg Lee	Dan Lefeber	

Others in Attendance

Linda Christensen, Skagit County
Kirk Johnson, Skagit County
Liz McNett Crowl
Don McMoran
Steve Omdal
Randy & Eileen Good

Call to Order

Nels Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes

Murray Benjamin moved to approve the August 14, 2013 meeting minutes and Brian Duquaine seconded. The motion carried.

UGA Open Space Discussion

Kirk Johnson, Senior Planner for the Skagit County Planning & Development Services Department and Liz McNett Crowl, contracted staff for SCOG, were present to share some information about the plan and to hear questions and concerns from the AAB and others in attendance. In a follow-up email, Kirk summarized the evening's discussion and on Liz's behalf below.

"Liz and I want to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the UGA Open Space plan at your meeting last night. It was a good opportunity for us to share some information about the plan and to hear your questions and concerns.

I'm forwarding some excerpts from the plan, below, as a way to recap some of the things we discussed last night, and point out several specific sections or references in the plan to the conservation of working agricultural resource lands. (a copy of the excerpts are available upon request to Linda Christensen, lindac@co.skagit.wa.us)

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board Members:

*Nels Lagerlund (Chair), Kraig Knutzen (Vice Chair), Murray Benjamin, Jim Carstens, Dan Lefeber
Greg Lee, Bill McMoran, Mike Hulbert, Nate Youngquist, Michael Hughes, Tyler Clark, Brian Duquaine*

There appears to be a lot of positive emphasis on conservation of working agricultural land in the plan, and the plan could be an asset for furthering that goal. At the same time, there can be very real conflicts generated from trails or other public access adjacent to farmland. The plan does recognize that fact (see below), and has some recommended safeguards to minimize or avoid those conflicts. Adequate representation on a UGA open space advisory committee would help to ensure that those safeguards are put in place as the plan is implemented on a project by project basis.

Liz or I would be happy to talk or correspond with anyone individually if you have further questions, comments or concerns. The full plan can be viewed on line at: Narrative Report, Appendix A.

Consultation during the planning process

As we discussed last night, the inside front cover of the plan identifies the individuals and organizations who were consulted during the plan development process, including several from the agricultural community:

Steve Omdal asked if there are duplications on other programs. Kirk responded by stating what the plan does and does not do. It will coordinate and complement existing programs, with a specific emphasis on the cities' urban growth areas and identifying gaps in open space protection. Steve also asked how agriculture would be affected. Kirk said the plan won't change the way agriculture is currently used in that it doesn't modify or affect the current Ag-NRL zoning.

Randy Good is pleased that the process has slowed.

Liz McNett Crawl noted what was discussed at the July SCOG meeting. On that agenda the commissioners brought forward the open space concept plan to discuss SCOG's possible involvement in implementing the plan. No decisions were made.

Don McMoran mentioned how current trail plans have had an effect on commercial agriculture land in regards to spraying and other types of agricultural practices that trail users might complain about. .

Kirk agreed that there are specific instances, such as the Padilla Bay Trail, where those types of conflicts have occurred.

Liz said that an open space plan keeps the urban areas from sprawling and creates boundaries for the higher density urban areas. People who live in Skagit County enjoy the quality of life and access to local produce. She also noted that the agriculture community should be a part of the open space advisory committee.

Transfer of Development Rights Project Update

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Kirk Johnson said the project is currently in the market analysis phase. The purpose of the market analysis is to determine whether and where there is demand for development, over and above what's permitted by baseline zoning. It will answer how that demand can be harnessed to conserve land while providing an economic incentive for desired development. This phase of the project will provide essential market data for implementing bonus density provisions in the Bayview subarea plan and PUD ordinance. Information about this phase is available upon request (Power Point slides and are available by request to Linda Christensen, lindac@co.skagit.wa.us.)

Committee Reports

Drainage:

Yesterday the drainage committee met with Skagit County Public Works staff, Kara Symonds and Dan Berentson to ask questions about the GI Study alternatives. A letter will be written to the Board of Commissioners explaining the AAB concerns. Nels Lagerland said that the date for determining the preferred alternative is towards the end of November 2013, not early October as previously set. One of the alternative titles was changed to Urban Comprehensive Levy Improvement. The AAB discussed the alternatives and how devastating a flood would be for agriculture land. There was not a lot of support for any of the alternatives, other than the "do nothing" option. Tye Clark suggested that Nels write the letter and send out to all for comment and finalize at the October meeting.

WSU Report:

Don McMoran spoke about upcoming classes at WSU Extension and the beach waters coordination position is being filled.

Adjourn and Next Meeting

Today's meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm and the next meeting is scheduled for October 9 at 6 p.m.