



**SKAGIT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD**  
**1800 Continental Place**  
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**Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Minutes**  
**December 11, 2013**  
**Skagit County Administration Building**

**Members in Attendance**

Kraig Knutzen (Vice-Chair)	Murray Benjamin	James Carstens
Ty Clark	Michael Hughes	Mike Hulbert
Greg Lee	Bill McMoran	

**Others in Attendance**

Dan Berentson, Skagit County Public Works	Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning
Kirk Johnson, Skagit County Planning	RC Cavazos, Skagit County Assessor
Dave Thomas, Skagit County Assessor	Annette DeVoe, Skagit County Assessor
Steve Omdal, Port of Skagit County	

**Call to Order**

Kraig Knutzen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Minutes, November 13, 2013**

Ty Clark moved to accept the November 13, 2013 meeting minutes with one change made by Murray Benjamin regarding the Elk herd/assessor section. Murray Benjamin seconded. The motion passed unanimously with the change.

**Transfer of Development Right (TDR) Project Update – Kirk Johnson**

Kirk Johnson, Senior Planner for Skagit County Planning and Development Services, gave an update on the TDR project, timeline and distributed a handout that shows an overview of sending and receiving areas on maps and other general information. The project's current focus is the market analysis, performed by the consultant, Heartland. A Focus Group exercise will be conducted on January 7 with forestry, agriculture, and developer groups participating. Kirk explained in detail, beyond the handout, examples of density credit sales already taken place in the City of Burlington. Kirk explained that this TDR program compliments the current Farmland Legacy Program.

Mike Hulbert questioned the accuracy of the sending zone map, slide #29 of the handout. He said the 84,000 Ag-NRL acres might be an inflated amount. Kirk responded on what GIS looked at when preparing the latest survey and will relook at the data.

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### **Drainage Utility, Clean Water, and Drainage Permits - Dan Berentson**

Dan Berentson, Interim Public Works Director, explained how the Drainage Utility code and rate will be restructured. The proposal is to remove the impervious surface calculation and replace it with a flat fee per parcel. The county feels this is a fairer proposal. Dan discussed the county partnership with the county's drainage districts and the amount of money the drainage utility tax has collected. Various projects have been completed which is a mutual benefit for the county and drainage districts.

Dan explained that the Clean Water program was established in 2005 by the Board of County Commissioners and gave a substantial overview of the program and budget. One benefit of the program is to allow the county to work with other agencies in a volunteer basis to keep water clean. Ty Clark asked how restoration projects are related to the clean water program. Mike Hulbert desires if Skagit County could keep a running total of projects for habitat. Kraig Knutzen mentioned that there hasn't been any improvement in the past five years as far as clean water in certain areas of the county.

Dan mentioned new projects in the drainage districts. Steve Omdal would like statistical information on money spent on projects through the Department of Ecology. Jim Carstens asked how the wildlife population is monitored. Dan said that a public meeting is scheduled in January to discuss clean water.

### **Agriculture Tax Assessment Discussion – RC Cavazos, Dave Thomas, Annette DeVoe**

Staff from the Assessor's Department was available to explain the current use agriculture assessments. There were three handouts. Staff discussed and explained several aspects of this assessment.

Kraig noted that he has noticed a 50% tax rate increase on developed land. Staff explained that the calculation used to reach the tax amount is regulated by the Department of Revenue. Skagit County must adhere to rules in the WAC. Kraig said he is finding it difficult to keep up with current farming practices due to the higher taxation rate and could be a threat to conserving farmland. Murray Benjamin is concerned on how a producer in Skagit County can make farming smoother as a result of the tax increase. He said that wetlands are not farmable.

Staff said they can take the concerns mentioned above into consideration to review individual assessments. There might be different land classifications that can be defined that might change the assessment. This is case by case. Annette explained there are forms that farmers can submit to the Assessor's office to audit each case. Staff spoke about senior exemptions and how property can be reassessed with a senior audit in regards to agriculture land production.

### **Committee Reports**

It was noted that Brian Duquaine is chair of the Economic Development Committee.

### **District 1 Vacancy Applications**

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Murray Benjamin moved to table the District 1 vacancy discussion until the January meeting. Mike Hulbert seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Election of Officers**

Nels Lagerlund was nominated to chair the AAB for 2014, and all hands rose to approve the nomination. Kraig Knutzen was nominated to vice-chair the AAB for 2014, and all hands rose to approve the nomination.

### **Other Business**

Steve Omdal made an announcement regarding new 50-year leases at the Port of Skagit. He also mentioned that Japan and China are interested in buckwheat. We will try to grow the seed here and send to these nations.

### **Adjourn and Next Meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m. and the next meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2014 at 6 p.m.