



SKAGIT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
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Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Minutes
November 12, 2014, 6 p.m.
Skagit County Administration Building

Members in Attendance

Nels Lagerlund Barbara Cleave Michael Hughes Jim Carstens
Ty Clark Greg Lee

There is not an attendance quorum for today's meeting. The meeting is conducted for general discussion with no voting activity.

Others in Attendance

Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner
Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning Administrative Coordinator
Dan Berentson, Skagit County Public Works Director
Bill Rogers, Skagit County Public Works
Steve Omdal, Port of Skagit Commissioner

Call to Order

Chair Nels Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Consent Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda. Due to an absent quorum the October meeting minutes will be reviewed at the December meeting.

Commissioner Ron Wesen

Commissioner Ron Wesen said that Skagit County is in need of adequate farm worker housing and asked the AAB for their perspective on this issue. He said that Skagit County land use codes would need to be changed for any new farm worker housing built on agriculture zoned land. Also, the cost of building is likely prohibitive.

Ron left the meeting early and the AAB continued the discussion towards the end of the meeting. The AAB suggested that staff from the Planning & Development Services Department should attend a future meeting to discuss land use code. There was also discussion about crops grown in the Skagit Valley should be the type that do not require a large amount of human pickers.

*Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board Members:
Nels Lagerlund (Chair), Kraig Knutzen (Vice Chair), Murray Benjamin, Jim Carstens, Ty Clark,
Barbara Cleave, Brian Duquaine, Mike Hulbert, Michael Hughes, Greg Lee, Dan Lefeber, Bill McMoran*

Steve Omdal suggested the AAB invite the city and town mayors to a future meeting. The AAB could express their passion for Skagit Valley agriculture, and discuss the need for adequate housing.

Noxious Weed Board Update

Bill Rogers, Noxious Weed Coordinator for Public Works, gave an overview on what his job entails and the purpose of the Noxious Weed Board. Skagit County has a Noxious Weed Board comprised of five members, including Jim Carstens, District 3 AAB member. Bill and his staff treat various weeds and the program is funded with grants from the Department of Agriculture and Samish Indian Nation. All weeds treated are tagged by GPS and an inventory is recorded. Soon, this inventory will be tracked using smart phone technology. Bill noted that his department is working hard at treating various noxious weeds and some varieties are difficult to destroy. Bill can be contacted at 360/336-9430.

Buckwheat Fact Finding Trip Presentation

Steve Omdal and Patsy Martin, Executive Director for the Port of Skagit, toured Miyamoto Sei-fun, a Buckwheat processing plant in Tokyo during July. The purpose of the tour was to explore the possibility of growing and milling Buckwheat in the Skagit Valley. Earlier this year, the owner of Miyamoto Sei-fun toured Skagit Valley. He met with Dr. Stephen Jones, WSU Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, to discuss the Buckwheat crop. Currently Miyamoto receives Buckwheat from Eastern Washington. Miyamoto produces Buckwheat flour which is made into soba noodles for high-end restaurants.

Steve Omdal said that Buckwheat can be used as a rotation crop and has a 80 day growth cycle beginning in June. Buckwheat has the possibility of being a viable crop in the Skagit Valley and the Port of Skagit is willing to support its production. WSU sent four varieties to Miyamoto Sei-fun as a trial to test the quality and flavor of the Buckwheat flour for soba noodles. Tokyo's local restaurants will provide feedback and then a test will be conducted in the United States.

Nels Lagerlund Update

Nels presented the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Study, Appendix A, restoration site fact sheets sponsored by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Four of the twelve projects are in Skagit County. These two agencies will be accepting public comment through November 24, 2014. So far there has been limited public outreach. Dan Berentson mentioned that Public Works is developing a public comment letter that will be signed by the Skagit County Board of Commissioners. This letter will be circulated to the AAB and dike districts for their input.

Voluntary Stewardship Program Update (VSP)

Dan Berentson told the group that the VSP Watershed Group and a Technical Review Panel were appointed by the Skagit County Board of Commissioners through Resolution

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R20140330. AAB member, Ty Clark, is among the Watershed Group. Other Watershed Group members are: John Anderson, Jodi Bluhm, Ann Childs, Bill Dewey, Oscar Graham, Oscar Lagerlund, David Olson, Bill Schmidt, Jeff Schwab, Jason Vander Kooy, and John Wolden.

The VSP Technical Panel members are: Daryl Hamburg (Skagit County Dike District #17), Carolyn Kelly (Skagit Conservation District), Kris Knight (The Nature Conservancy), Allen Rozema (Skagitians to Preserve Farmland), and Larry Wasserman, (Swinomish Indian Tribal Community).

AAB Member Update

Nels announced he received a copy of an e-mail from Dan Lefeber announcing his resignation in District 3. Linda will ask Commissioner Dillon on how to proceed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 10, 2014, 6 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.