



SKAGIT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
Phone (360) 416-1338

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
April 12, 2016 6 pm
Skagit County Administration Building

Members in Attendance

Murray Benjamin	Jim Carstens	Barbara Cleve
Michael Hughes	Kraig Knutzen	Nels Lagerlund
Greg Lee	Steve Omdal	Terry Sapp

Members Absent

Steve Bertelsen	Scott Hanseth	Sloan Johnson
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Others in Attendance

Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning & Development Services
Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works
Allen Rozema, Skagitionians to Preserve Farmland Executive Director
Skagitionians to Preserve Farmland Board members: Darrin Morrison, David Hedlin, Darrin Morrison, Kevin Maas, Julie Blazek, John Roozen

Call to Order

Nels called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

Agenda Review

There were no changes to the agenda.

Meeting Minutes

Murray moved to approve the March 9, 2016 meeting minutes and Kraig seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Skagitionians to Preserve Farmland (SPF) and Ag Advisory Board (AAB) Group Discussion

SFP board members and Allen Rozema, Executive Director, were present to discuss current Skagit County farming trends and issues. Darrin Morrison gave a historical overview of SPF and their goals. SPF and AAB have common goals to assure the Skagit Valley's agriculture viability. John Roozen expressed his concern that hundreds of acres of farmland are converting to habitat. Both groups agree that it's important for younger generation farmers interested in farming.

Kraig spoke about the impression that SPF has become a regulatory group and would rather have them be at a farmers back door for support. Several SPF members took a turn at explaining this is not true.

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Their goal is to avoid, minimize, and mitigate to keep farming viable. Kraig appreciated the explanation and will pass on this information to others in the farming community.

Darrin encouraged Skagitians and the Ag Advisory Board to continue these meetings to discuss common issues and goals.

Comprehensive Plan 2016 Update Comment Letter

Nels distributed a draft letter he prepared. Comments in the letter contain 3C-5.5, agricultural industrial park; C-34 Rural Business; and 3C-10.5 Home base businesses. Steve said he would like to see more restrictions for the home base business.

Kraig moved to submit the letter with changes as discussed and Murray seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Nels and Linda will work on the letter tomorrow and finalize before the deadline, April 14, 4:30 pm.

The motion carried unanimously.

Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)

Kara Symonds gave a brief VSP update. She said the VSP watershed group, public works, planning, and GIS staff completed meetings throughout 2015 to draft components of a Voluntary Stewardship Program work plan. We put the plan out to our local technical working group over the winter. Skagit County signed a contract with the Washington State Conservation Committee in January 2016 to provide funding for further VSP work plan development. We've started quarterly watershed group meetings in 2016 with our first meeting in March to discuss feedback and create a game plan to complete a final draft of the work plan.

The main components of the work plan are:

- background on GMA and critical areas
- Goals and Benchmarks including participation, protection, and enhancement (both critical areas in Ag and Ag)
- summary of voluntary programs available in the basin
- summary of the regulatory backstop
- monitoring and adaptive management plan

There are two state committees related to VSP, a technical panel and stakeholder advisory group. County staff will present our draft plan, first informally, then formally, to the technical panel. County staff attended a joint meeting of these two groups in February and there was an indication these groups needed time to learn the background on VSP and set up processes for their plan reviews. Twenty-seven counties have opted in to VSP; all received money this biennium.

Other Business

The May AAB meeting is cancelled due to farming activities will keep everyone busy. The next meeting will occur June 8, 2016, 7 pm. June begins the summer late start schedule, 7 pm – 9 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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