



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

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2016, 7 pm
Skagit County Administration Building

Members in Attendance

Barbara Cleave	Scott Hanseth	Michael Hughes
Sloan Johnson	Kraig Knutzen	Nels Lagerlund
Steve Omdal	Terry Sapp	

Proxy Designation

Michael Hughes for Greg Lee

Members Absent

Murray Benjamin	Steve Bertelsen	Jim Carstens
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Others in Attendance

Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning & Development Services
Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works
Betsy Stevenson, Skagit County Planning & Development Services
Ryan Walters, Skagit County Planning & Development Services

Call to Order

Nels called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

Introductions were made around the room.

Guests, Don and Mary Fine

Don Fine spoke about his property he owns with his wife, Mary, near Bradley Road. He learned recently they cannot build a home on this property zoned Ag NRL unless they meet the requirements of Skagit County Code 14.16.400 according to Skagit County Planning & Development Services staff. Mr. Fine believes his property does not fit the spirit or intentions of this code. Don distributed a letter which explains more detail about his concerns. Don and Mary Fine are asking the Ag Advisory Board if they can make a recommendation to the Planning and Development to make an exception to the code.

Michael spoke about why the code was established. Nels said the Ag Advisory Board is an advisory group and does not make policy. Nels also asked Don what his intention was for the property, which is to build a house and shop. Terry commented on the May 14, 2010 memo written by Gary Christensen stating it was a thoughtful and through analysis of the code. Terry also stated because the Christensen memo was

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so extensive and clear, the AAB should not try to re-examine the relevant code, as the Fines may have been asking. Rather we should accept the analysis and conclusions of the memo and rely on it as a guide. Kraig said Don and Mary don't stand alone; others have presented the same issues. Nels said he will contact Brandon Black with the Planning Department.

Meeting Minutes

Kraig moved to approve the June 8, 2016 meeting minutes and Steve Omdal seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Shoreline Master Program (SMP) Update

Betsy Stevenson, Project Manager for the SMP provided an update. Next steps are to bring a draft document to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to receive direction regarding preliminary adoption. Then staff will make edits which the BOCC authorizes, tidy the document, and submit a resolution to the BOCC describing the adoption process and attaching the SMP the County intends to adopt, provided it is approved by the Department of Ecology (DOE).

If Ecology determines the SMP is complete, they will provide notice for a public comment period and at their discretion a public hearing could be held. The County will provide a response to the comments received by Ecology and a conditional approval letter will be issued by Ecology with recommended changes to the SMP. The County will consider the changes and options moving forward by either agreeing to the proposed changes or submit an alternate proposal.

Before final adoption, the County will open another public comment period. The public can go to this link for additional information. www.skagitcounty.net/smp

Terry asked what particulars other counties are dealing with. Betsy responded how Skagit County is unique compared to other jurisdictions. He also asked if there is a connection between the Volunteer Stewardship Program (VSP) and the SMP. Betsy said yes and no, if the VSP is adopted and approved, the County won't have to come back and update its CAO for ongoing agriculture. The County hopes to work with the VSP in a cooperative manner.

2017 Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPA)

Ryan Walters, Assistant Director for Planning & Development Services, summarized the CPA process. The County received 13 public petitions, two map amendments (one was brought back that was deferred from the 2015 docket), and 17 county initiated proposals. The Ag Advisory Board is especially interested in the petition submitted by Skagitionians to Preserve Farmland. Ryan read a description of this proposal.

There was a discussion about proposal, PL15-0383, submitted by Skagit Partners LLC for a fully contained community near Butler Hill. There was a discussion about population forecasts and Ryan explained the process the County went through during the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update for the cities and towns. Nels wondered if there were changes to the proposal this year for the GMA Steering Committee to say yes to the project. Nels also asked if the area property owners have given their consent for this project. Nels mentioned that Skagit County owns property within the proposal's mapped area and asked if the county will give consent. Ryan responded that is an interesting question, and those decisions have not been made.

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Kraig inquired about P-1, submitted by Friends of Skagit County, regarding CaRDs. Nels inquired about C-12, a County initiated proposal for the repair, replacement, and maintenance of water lines. Michael inquired about C-7, another County initiated proposal for rural freeway service and rural center development size limits. Ryan explained all three proposals.

Ryan mentioned C-16, a County initiated proposal, regarding MRO correction.

Terry spoke about population numbers in and out of the UGA and Ryan responded by explaining the 80/20 split, which is the urban/rural growth target that forms the basis for UGA sizing.

More information can be found on the 2017 CPA webpage. www.skagitcounty.net/2017CPA.

Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Update

Kara Symonds, Public Works Watershed Planner, provided an update on the VSP Work Plan. Kara spoke about the Work Plan process for the past 1 ½ years and key components.

Nels spoke about Open Space taxation and Kara said the Puget Sound Partnership conditioned open space concept is no longer in the Work Plan. Nels also brought up the CREP and what occurs once the agreement ends and how the VSP will incorporate these lands. Ryan said there needs to be further discussion on what happens with the CREP lease ends. There was a discussion about tree loss because of natural causes in critical areas and how the VSP handles these situations as excusable losses.

Kara mentioned several components of the Work Plan. She said the current plan is being updated based on comment and the next step is additional outreach. The VSP advisory group will meet again to review the Work Plan and then County staff will submit it to the state technical committee. This committee will review if the Plan meets the intent of protecting critical areas.

More information can be found on the VSP webpage. www.skagitcounty.net/VSP

Other Business

Ryan mentioned that the Planning & Development Services Department is now accepting appointments for building permit submittal. This applies to a permit ready for submittal. He also spoke about building permit processing goals for 2017. The handouts in the lobby kiosk are being updated.

Terry spoke about the USDA mobile animal inspection and processing unit. It will be September or October. He mentioned the North Cascade Meat Producers is a component of this process available to small scale animal farmers. Terry talked about the full process and more information is available on the meat producer's website, <http://www.northcascademeads.com/>

Steve Omdal mentioned the 2017 Ag Summit progress and how local farmers were invited to give their input on topics and group questions to be presented in January or February 2017. The Ag Summit Committee will get speakers and agencies on board for the 2017 event regarding agricultural producers concerns going forward. Other topics include water rights, labor availability and Department of Ecology regulations

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The AAB briefly spoke about the 2017 CPA and whether they should comment now or wait until public comment is formally requested. The AAB will discuss this at the October meeting.

A discussion regarded the Skagitationian proposal ensued. They discussed what the benefit and loss of benefit would be if approved. Nels suggested the Land Use Committee come up with comments and draft a letter. Barb said she would draft a letter and send to Nels.

The October meeting is rescheduled to Thursday, October 13, 6 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

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