

**Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Minutes**  
**March 8, 2017, 6 p.m.**  
**Skagit County Administrative Building**

**Members in Attendance**

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

**Members Absent**

Steve Bertelson      Sloan Johnson

**Others in Attendance**

Don McMoran, WSU Extension  
Ken Dahlstedt, Skagit County Commissioner  
Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner  
Dale Pernula, Skagit County Planning & Development Services Director  
Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning & Development Services

**Call to Order**

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

**Meeting Minutes**

Murray moved to approve the January 11, 2017 meeting minutes and Greg seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**Board of County Commissioners**

Commissioners Wesen and Dahlstedt were in attendance to hear concerns from the AAB and how they can help the agriculture community.

- Don McMoran provided an update on the recent Ag Summit held Saturday, February 25. The Summit was held at the WSU Extension building. Topics of discussion included ag labor, water, and economics. Question and answer platforms were utilized using Smart Phone technology. Per input from attendees, the next Ag Summit will be held during the week in February 2018 instead of a weekend. Content will be geared towards education and farm labor.
- Commissioner Dahlstedt spoke about the current labor force situation because of recent Federal rulings; it's out of our control. A topic the Skagit Valley can address locally is water through local and state groups, i.e. National Association of Counties and the Washington State Association of Counties. The Commissioner also spoke about the local tribes involvement with water and its relationship to fish.

- Nels asked about plans for flood control and drainage. He'd like to see a mechanism to help control flooding and improve drainage similar to what Snohomish County is using.
- Kraig is concerned about future labor pool availability as it relates to the current federal and state rulings on migrant workers. Profitability is at stake. Commissioner Dahlstedt suggested that the AAB contact Western Washington Ag, Farm Bureau, and other agencies.
- Nels is concerned about pollution counts in the Joe Leary Slough area, Dahlstedt Road, Bayview, and other areas being used in a government study. Nels also emphasized the use of the County's Septic Program in these areas, being sure septic systems are working properly.
- Commissioner Wesen asked the AAB what they want to focus on this year and next.
  - Kraig said labor is a big issue.
  - Nels said keep on working on water and drainage and being smart on where habitat restoration is applied on County farmland.
  - Kraig wanted to know how and what situations will the AAB communicate with the Board of Commissioners? Commissioner Dahlstedt said to continue providing input to the Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners regarding drainage and agriculture issues. You've been consistent providing us with letters of concern on many issues.
  - Terry spoke about small farmer economic viability and marketing. This topic was presented at the recent Ag Summit.

### **2017 Docket of Proposed Policy, Code, and Map Amendments**

Dale Pernula presented and disturbed a handout explaining a code revision proposal that may affect agricultural land, C-2 US Bike Route 10 (Coast to Cascade Trail) Corridor Study Revision. The Planning Commission 2017 Docket public hearing is scheduled for April 4, 6 pm and public comments can be submitted by April 6, 4:30 pm.

The AAB will write a comment letter regarding proposal C-2, Bike Route 10. They agree with the Planning Departments recommendation that this bike route be modified to state:

*Unused County right of way through agricultural land between Burlington and Bayview Ridge should not be considered as a potential future route for US Bike Route 10 on its own; however, if a road is constructed there, consideration should also be given to providing safe access for bicycles and pedestrians along this route.*

Kraig made a motion that the AAB submit a public comment letter supporting the Planning Department's recommendation. Michael seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Murray asked Dale about proposal C-17, Seattle City Light lands to ORSI. How does this proposal affect local tribes? Dale will ask staff to follow up and respond.

### **Other Business**

Don McMoran reported several updates including:

- Don is going up for a full professor position this summer and welcomes letters of support.
- Upcoming workshops: Western Washington Seed workshop, Western Washington Potato workshop, Skagit 2018 Ag Summit planning, Western Washington Berry Workshop, and Farm Safety Courses
- Upcoming grants: WSU WISE Grant, WSU PAWS Grant, PSE Grant, and LFPP Grant
- Upcoming journal articles: American Journal of Potatoes, Parsnip Trial, WSU Extension Publication, Irrigation Scheduler Mobile – Journal of the National Association of Agricultural Agents
- WSU NWREC Update: New Cider Specialist begins in May and a Soil Faculty position has been posted
- Innovation Partnership Zone (IPZ) is finalizing their working document

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.