

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2017, 7 pm
Skagit County Administration Building

Members in Attendance

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| Nels Lagerlund | Michael Hughes | Barbara Cleave | Murray Benjamin |
| Sloan Johnson | Terry Sapp | Tim Van Hofwegen | |

Proxy Designations

Nels Lagerlund for Steve
Michael Hughes for Scott Hanseth

Members Absent

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| Greg Lee | Kraig Knutzen | Scott Hanseth | Steve Bertelsen | Steve Omdal |
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Others in Attendance

Don McMoran, WSU Extension
Stacie Pratschner, Sr. Planner at Skagit County Planning & Development Services
Kathy Jewell, Skagit County Planning & Development Services

Call to Order

Nels Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Introductions around the table

Meeting Minutes

Michael Hughes moved to accept the September meeting minutes as amended, Murray Benjamin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Nels explained the purpose and mission of the AAB for Stacie. He also explained that the board would like more interaction with planning department, not every meeting but on a regular basis. This would result in more open communication between PDS and AAB.

Local Issue – Agritourism/ GMA – Stacie Pratschner

Nels asked about definition of “hospitality” industry means with regards to restaurant. What does GMA say about this and restaurants? Stacie discussed how accessory ag uses does not include restaurants at this point. Need a definition of limited food service and restaurants. Stacie asked where the board stands on this issue.

We want to maintain production agriculture in Skagit County. How do we manage agritourism & production agriculture? How to maintain the environment and balance “Agri-tainment”? Want to preserve private property rights to do what they want with their land.

Discussion about the pros and cons of agritourism in Skagit valley. As a community none of the cities put in the effort to create a festival weekend (like crabfest in Port Angeles) that includes everything from restaurants, hotels, etc in a central downtown area and keep the crowds off the county roads the farmers are trying to use.

The AAB has differing opinions on the topic but all are coming together to find a workable solution for everyone. Several feel that ultimately it’ll be a regulatory issue with framework. We currently have a framework but it could be changing.

Terry went to Farmer Bureau meeting last night and this was the topic, demonstrates how pertinent the topic is right now. Hoping it's not done on a case-by-case basis but rather a code defining what is allowed.

Don spoke about how he sees a huge movement for ag in the middle. People want to know the source of their food, but regulations are squeezing out the farm in the middle. This increases costs and time, so farms either have to go big or smaller. Several have quit growing vegetables because of that.

Nels asked if Roger's application is going to be the forefront of this issue. Per Stacie a couple important things;
1). the restaurant is subordinate to ag (Nels asked what is the share 49 ag tour/51 farm%?
2). only happen on the parcel with existing impervious surface that are already on the property and not taking from ag land.

It's up to PDS and Code to handle the population growth/traffic growth and agritourism.

Ag processing; can build a processing anywhere on the land. What's the difference between putting on an accessory use vs a potato shed?

Stacie asked how the AAB feels about Rogers comp plan amendment being docketed. How it will go to the board in November. Nels replied that they would discuss and get back to her. The AAB will draft a letter and vote on before submitting to the Planning Commission. Stacie asked that AAB lets her know in the next few weeks. Going to the Board of County Commissioners on November 21.

Stacie discussed how GMA says population growth is supposed to be close to an 80 city/20 country. Thurston county draft code on agritourism and it has specific limitations. Suggested an agritourism overlay district. Stacie will look into what was adopted. And then make a copy for AAB.

OLD BUSINESS:

Seattle City Lights (SCL) relicense by 2025

Several members opened the link and read the license prior to the meeting. Skagit river project license updated several interests but not agriculture. Western Washington agriculture doesn't have a real plan to address this. PSE wants to meet with farmers who need water. Need to figure out how to reach out to John Chandler at PSE. Does this fall under the ag summit? Nels suggests they encourage the Board of County Commissioners to reach out to PSE and SCL for water.

Sloan read through and thinks we need a seat at the table for Ag community to discuss the number of CFS water they need and when. Terry wonders if we want a fixed number, that it should be environmentally affected. Sloan reminds us that they want a 25 year contract so a minimum number should be stated. Sloan is going to ask Will Honea about how to structure it. Water feeds the fish but it feeds the farm as well. So plan is:

1. Express to BOCC that we want involved and support Kara Symonds and her work on this
2. Follow up with Brandon Roozen
3. Figure out what we want and then present it
4. State what we want and why; make logical sense of why

Action Items:

1. Ask Kara –Ask her what has been happening since last AAB meeting with regards to this. Who is her contact at SCL? How can AAB help her? Should we be communicating with the commissioners?
2. Don will ask John Chandler at PSE to speak at the ag summit on 2/16

SPF meeting joint meeting- informal

Darrin Morrison wants to know if he can meet with AAB the next 2 months at a breakfast meeting. SPF & AAB board, the meeting has been set for November 1 @ 7:30am at the Farm House. Kathy to send out an email after Nels confirms the day. Agenda is Agritourism.

Ag processing facilities on ag land. The code just says it's allowed; doesn't say anything about if it's for the owners use or anyone's use. SPF – greenhouse farming is also a hot topic.

2018 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Proposal

Stacie brought up Roger Wechsler's proposed comp plan amendment application and submitted to AAB for review and comments. The board will review and talk about at next meeting.

WSU Extension Update – Don McMoran

Working on Brassica issue and hopes to strengthen issue in WAC. He has also met with Will Honea about this. Don is hoping to address it at both the state & county levels. Don will bring Will's suggestions to AAB, probably in December.

Recent potato survey and got samples of new insects & diseases never seen before.

NO COMMITTEE REPORTS

Adjourn

Sloan Johnson motioned to adjourn, Murray Benjamin seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm