

**Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 14, 2018**  
**Skagit County Administration Building**

**Members in Attendance**

Nels Lagerlund	Michael Hughes	Barbara Cleave	John Morrison
Kraig Knutzen	Murray Benjamin	Sloan Johnson	Terry Sapp
Tim Van Hofwegen			

**Proxy Designations**

Michael Hughes for Scott Hanseth  
Nels Lagerlund for Steve Omdal

**Members Absent**

Greg Lee                      Scott Hanseth                      Steve Omdal

**Others in Attendance**

Don McMoran, WSU Agriculture & Natural Resources Extension Educator  
Hal Hart, Skagit County Planning Director  
Stacie Pratschner, Skagit County Planning  
Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works  
Joe Shea, Skagit County Public Works

**Call to Order**

Nels Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

**Meeting Minutes**

Kraig Knutzen moved to accept the February 14, 2018 minutes as amended. Michael Hughes seconded. Motion carried.

**Local Issues**

**Joe Shea – Skagit County Noxious Weed Coordinator**

Looking for potential Noxious Weed Board (NWB) members and hoping AAB knows of people who may be interested in joining the NWB. In District 4 & 5 Concrete & Darrington areas. In July there will also be an opening in District 3. Need names soon . Must live or own property within the district. The terms are 4 years.

The NWB meets quarterly; duties include getting weed list on state each year, select weeds of local importance. Adopting the weed list, adequate budget for weed control and good relationship with the BOCC. Can be as active as they want but main requirement is 4 out of 5 members from Ag community and must come to 4 meetings per year. Joe Passed out noxious weed info list of 150 noxious weeds.

Murray asked what is being done with county roads and state highways. Per Joe, county roads are integrated into the county system and can track it now. At the state level there are issues with DOT. Joe is learning about the HATS program with DOT is putting into place. Joe has good relationship with

regional people at DOT and works to help landowners to control noxious weeds in right of ways/easements.

### **Kara Symonds – Seattle City Lights relicense**

Reiterates the info that was sent out by email prior to the meeting. FERC presented three possible licensing processes to SCL at a September 2017 meeting held in Newhalem with interested parties. The options are Integrated Licensing Process (ILP), Alternative Licensing Process (ALP), or Traditional Licensing Process (TLP). The schedule for re-licensing will depend on which process they select. FERC's preference is the ILP. We won't know the formal schedule until we know the process. If Seattle City Light selects the ILP, the formal process would begin 5 to 5.5 years prior to license expiration; their current license expires in April 2025. Their first formality in the process will be issuing a Notice of Intent to seek a new license.

Most interested parties (NOAA, tribes, etc) are currently preparing Study Requests so they will be ready when there is a formal call for them (under the ILP it would be February 2020). The Study Request must be the first thing prepared. In the FERC PowerPoint it outlines the specific components of the study request. It will also be outlined in the notice of intent, but Kara suggests to start working on Study Request now. She has started working on it for flood.

Nels asked Kara if the AAB must start now on Study Request regarding irrigation water, Kara advised to start now. The Dike & Drainage districts just formed a consortium with irrigation in mind. She feels that several groups in Skagit County will submit study requests on irrigation or the same subjects. Stacie asked what communication should happen regarding the changes to the flood code our Building Official is proposing. Kara replied that Dan Berentson, Director of Public Works, will gather a group within the County to discuss the various interests.

Nels asked how this will be relicense process be announced. Kara is on the FERC's distribution list for the Skagit River project. The announcement will most likely come in this form, so she advised everyone to sign up for on the distribution list.

Terry asked Kara how she became the vocal person for flood control and how did flood become a priority. Did BOCC decide that flood control is an issue that she should work on? She replied it's never been that clear. Part of her job is flood related, and she came into the contract renewal for PSE late in the process, so she learned and has a background in the licensing process. Kara wants to make sure we are all sharing notes between departments and groups. There was discussion about AAB doing the research for this issue and the right role for the AAB in this process. Nels plan is not to have the AAB put in separate time for the study, but to coordinate with the various groups and then report back to the BOCC and ask for support. WWAg and SPF has submitted a request to legislation, requesting funding for something related to irrigation. There is already work happening collectively on that topic in the community. The Consortium just recently formed in the past couple months per Kara and Nels.

Nels & Kara committed to attending the consortium meetings and keeping up on their opinion regarding dike, drainage, flood, irrigation, etc.

Tim – asking about timeframe previously thought it would be April 18, which was speculated, but at this point it is unknown what the timeframe is as to when they file the Notice of Intent. Kara advised what

the board can do now is go through the study request criteria. Don't use too many words. Be concise in your writing. Ended with Kara promising to keep reporting information as it comes up.

### **Stacie Pratschner- Agritourism**

Handout regarding Comprehensive Plan item P-2 Samish Bay Cheese docket request.

Stacie proposed three options regarding this issue. We also are in an advisory situation with BOCC so looking at our options as:

1. No change to code
2. Bigger than a Comp Plan and needs to be on long range work program which would take longer to study
3. Move forward with recommending code amendment
  - a. Make it hard-design code, supporting code and performance standards. Design guidelines, setbacks
  - b. Or loosen regulations like Thurston Co to encourage growth.

. Michael asked about what type of permits require public noticing now and discussed various situations. Majority of AAB members want public notifications.

Stacie pointed out that restaurants are limited to more intensely populated rural village commercial areas. We could permit in Ag-NRL but do we open it up to anyone who is farming in Rural Reserve or some other zone? Do we limit it to Ag-NRL or open it up larger.

Terry wants clear specific criteria, strict bookends, not make it too easy. Nels feels ag zone is for farming. EDASC is looking for economic growth, but Nels feels the ag land it already producing economically so don't want to make it easy.

Scott asked if the intersection by Samish Bay Cheese is a LAMIRD zone? The Rhody & BowEdison Fine Foods are zoned as Rural Center, which allows restaurants. However, Samish Bay Cheese is zoned Ag-NRL and Rural Reserve.

Both Nels and Kraig asked about the reason he is allowed is because it's related to his ag business? What is the enforcement that if he sells the place the next person buys it and expands the restaurant and drops the ag/farming completely? Once allowed then we can never change. County enforcement is questionable. Enforcement is complaint driven that creates neighbor wars. That's not good for the Ag zone. Nels mentioned the case we took to court, won and then we settled, so they feel there is no enforcement for not following code.

Nels reminded everyone that in Snohomish, King, and Thurston counties they chose agritourism over production agriculture. Once production agriculture is gone, then it's permanently gone.

Kraig advised Stacie to listen to the farmers here at the table if we want agriculture to continue in Skagit County. He feels that Roger can get a restaurant in town, or farm stand where they take the burger and leave, not a sit down restaurant. Quit stacking restaurants one upon another and changing codes to fit each request. There are restaurants less than 1 mile away in town where they should be.

Terry is interested in the option #2; due to the many options of Agritourism EDASC is pushing. Will this grow from restaurants to many other options. It opens up the land for any activity. Terry thinks an in depth study would address the larger issues of other economic opportunities. Think more broadly about what could occur and regulations for it in the Ag-NRL zone. His greater concern is not what's allowed on a certain property, but how does this impact contiguous farming. Dairies are required to file reports about how much gas cows are creating. How can have 50 people next door breathing it. Why would there be a concern and the farmer must quantify it but 30 people can have wine & cheese and breathing it. Is that what EPA is concerned about. What is the impact & what restrictions will be imposed on the neighboring farmer because a restaurant is next door.

Nels goes to Bob's Burger and patrons complain about smell, or dust when coming off road with hay, so it limits his operations and ability to farm and changed the way he farmed. So had to change the way he farmed to be a good neighbor. It affects his farm and the way he operates and is an added pressure. We must look at the unintended consequences.

Kraig says need to also look at temporary events vs permanent. Restaurants are permanent.

Stacie is looking for guidance how to proceed. AAB does not want to look at option 3. Prefers either option 1 or 2. Stacie cannot guarantee if the BOCC chooses the Long Range Work Program option when agritourism would appear on the work plan; the earliest would be 2019. The AAB likes our current code and does not want to see changes. It will affect agriculture, as we know it now. If you want to keep actual food production in Skagit County we need to be restrictive on Ag-NRL land. People must value the production farming they have now. There is no way to stop everything in the ag zone, but once you relax the rules it opens the flood gates.

Stacie suggested the code could address it by square footage instead of people limit (20 people + 5 employees), parking, stormwater, signage.

Kara Symonds stated that the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) when writing the literature the #1 way to protect the land is by having restrictive code.

Terry discussed how property values are changing so much lately that \$100 gross income per acre production is not much to build a residential home on the 40 acres. Nels agreed there are ways around it, but it has held a lot back. The production quota is no longer a monetary prohibition in our county. Current levels of funding has increased. There are people building \$800,000 homes in our community. Nels agrees it's an issue, but the only want to curtail is to come up with a number.

Stacie will come to next meeting with draft code/suggestions

**State Level** – nothing to discuss

No Committee reports

**New Business** -

Scott was contacted by Penn Cove Shellfish, Ian Jefferds, on Whidbey Island and Samish Bay. They have 100 acres of land from Blau Oyster. They've asked to refurbish bldg. 6206 Farm to Market Rd in Bow for processing shellfish. Appeal for a permit was denied based on fact that shellfish are not an agricultural

product. He requested Scott to encourage BOCC to amend and include shellfish as agriculture instead of aquaculture. Appellant submission is due tomorrow, and hearing examiner is April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Aquaculture differs from agriculture and it not included in the code. The BOCC decision will come on Tuesday, April 10.

Kraig; flood and drainage committees issues with Big Ditch. It starts at Lincoln Elementary and all the way to Stanwood. Doing sampling in Skagit Bay and coming up marginal on E.coli. Trying to be preemptive on Big Ditch and Dairy Farms. It is moving faster than methodically. Open 4k acres of shellfish beds, the tribes are also interested, so government is cracking down. Dept. of Health and Department of Ecology are doing the testing. The tribes & governor is pushing this. Cover crops and birds crap a lot. Nels mentioned that the push with septic inspections has made a big impact.

### **Don McMoran, WSU County Director**

3/23/18 - Berry workshop - has 4 pesticide credits

4/19 – Safety workshop

Writing up grants such as the \$720k Agribility grant trying to get it again to help farmers with disabilities to continue farming.

Ag summit was very successful and thanked Michael & Stacie for their presentations. He is putting together report 3/20 at 10am with BOCC.

Economic Dev – Port of Skagit doing work on new logo. Port is looking at doing more processing in the valley. New infrastructure Seeds of Season.

Sold 100 acres to Paccar and used that money to buy the Bosloug land which will allow them to grow.

Michael Hughes moved to adjourn, Murray Benjamin seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm

Next meeting April 11, 2018 at 6 pm. Time changes in May