

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
April 11, 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	Steve Omdal		

Proxy Designations

Michael Hughes for Greg Lee

Members Absent

Greg Lee Scott Hanseth

Others in Attendance

Stacie Pratschner, Skagit County Planning
Allen Rozema

Call to Order

Nels Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Meeting Minutes

Terry moved to accept the March 14, 2018 minutes as amended. Sloan seconded. Motion carried.

Local Issues - Stacie Pratschner- Agritourism

Stacie proposed four options regarding this issue:

1. No change to code
2. A long range work program item which would take longer to study but include many aspects of agricultural vertical integration, including wedding venues, tasting rooms, breweries, wineries, and restaurants.
3. Amend the code per Samish Bay Cheese request.
4. Amend the code per the Department's draft.

PDS Director asked Stacie to draft code that could work for restaurants in the Ag-NRL zones. Stacie discussed the proposed language options of limiting it by size / occupancy rating, food service connected to foods predominately produced on the farm, special use permit process, prohibit drive-thrus and parking lots be gravel.

John questioned the actual enforcement if new code were to be approved. Would we require annual renewal or review? What happens if farm is sold or new owner? Needs to be some sort of limitations. Stacie suggested that PDS can add provisions during the special use permit process that the new owner is really going to still farm the land as the primary.

Stacie discussed how Skagit County Code 14.16.900(2) states that for a Bed and Breakfast, it must be owner occupied and managed. Murray asked, what if a second generation wants to continue the special use permit, would the process start all over? Terry asked about once established with capital investment, would it really be taken away? Tim wants a stronger word than "accessory" say something

like it must involve product grown or produced on that land. Stacie replied that it is hard to enforce that.

Steve asked does the code have a standard occupancy for all of them or can you change it for each instance? Then he suggested that it is better to do option 2 and look at the overall reaching picture of the various options of agritourism. Wants to know what Stacie actually wants from AAB.

Nels discussed parking on site, gravel, is there talk about where the parking is placed and if they can convert farm land or not? Asked if there is anything in code about not converting Ag land to parking? Per Nels, once land is graveled it can no longer be converted back to farmland. Production commercial farms is totally different from the small farmers for agritourism

Kraig suggested tying it to processing to make it stricter. Make it a value add situation.

AAB does not want Agritourism or sit down restaurants until enforcement catches up.

Stacie explained her timeline to go to Planning Commission (PC) with docket. She offered to contact with Whatcom County about enforcement. Review again by Asst. Director & Director. Presenting to PC next month (June). Open for public comment sometime in May until the public hearing with Planning Commission. Stacie suggested the AAB write a letter as a board and individually and to come to the public hearings and give verbal public comment. It will be non-project SEPA / DNS- Determination of Non Significance.

Alan suggests a MDNS; siting criteria in 14.16 that does not apply to Ag structures. This creates some ambiguity as an Ag structure that is an accessory to ag. He asked how will the current code dovetail into this. Such as septic/health dept upgrades to septic systems. How it will affect the other code requiring trips generated, drain fields, parking, etc. Stacie is getting info from Public Works regarding trips generated. Alan explained why he suggests a MDNS and question about class B occupancy. Where is SCC does it reference to building code & occupancy?

AAB warned that PDS is not looking at the unintended consequences; Stacie asked for clarification. Impact to adjacent Ag lands. Impact on the zone. Everything impacts the neighbor. Dust, odor, winddrift, chemicals, noise, spraying for potatoes several times a year, all make up the function of agricultural farming. Setbacks, dogs loose, standing water, birds, activity that needs huge setbacks to comply with their commercial ag restrictions. This all adds pressure to the farmers to be able to keep farming.

Economic development should be in areas that are not being actively farmed as commercial production. The County's Comprehensive Plan and Farmland Legacy Program are written to protect ongoing agriculture, so Skagit County needs to protect the farmer.

Stacie advised that regarding restaurants in Ag land, Commissioner Wesen wants to consider the distance of these restaurants from each other. Is that something AAB would like to see? Could help mitigate traffic issues and too many in one area.

Stacie will refine the draft further and Kathy will send to AAB and notify AAB when it goes to public comment.

AAB feels that City leaders need to take time to understand what the farmers do and the pressures they are up against. The city chambers benefit but the farmers do not. Discussed the need to invite

the City Mayors, Chamber leaders, EDASC, etc to the table to learn more about farmers and talk about ag related impacts, revenue sharing, etc. Possibility to do so in July or August.

Nels asked the Land Use Committee to work on a letter to BOCC regarding this agritourism. Terry volunteered to assist the committee with the letter. Plan to draft letter to BOCC first and then again in public comments for Planning Commission.

Kraig moved to write a letter to BOCC promptly expressing AAB full opposition to any changes to this part of the code regarding restaurants in the Ag-NRL zone. Terry seconded.

Tim & Steve proposed discussion about if they should encourage BOCC to explore option 2; longer term work study in the letter to BOCC. Discussion ensued. 2 points in the letter; at this point not in favor of changes but recommend a longer term strategy review of the topic. Vote on the amended suggestion of recommending option 2 as well; no second.

Voted on 1st motion; letter to BOCC expressing opposition. Motion passed unanimously

Stacie advised that this Tuesday PC workshop is about Stormwater Management outside the UGAs and municipalities. Invited members of the board to join the meeting. We are not sure if this is the last workshop before public hearing.

Penn Cove; resolution of the decision this week. The hearings examiner decision was reversed.. Penn Cove will start operating in the building.

OLD BUSINESS

Nels talked about getting on a study request

State Level – nothing to discuss

No Committee reports

New Business –

New ordinance recently passed that imposes closure time on county buildings. This building must be vacated by 9:30 pm.

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

Next meeting May 9, 2018 at **7 pm**.