

# Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

## Meeting Minutes- May 9, 2018

### Skagit County Administration Building

#### Members in Attendance

Nels Lagerlund  
Sloan Johnson

Michael Hughes  
Tim Van Hofwegen

Barbara Cleave  
Steve Omdal

Murray Benjamin

#### Proxy Designations

Murray Benjamin for Greg Lee

#### Members Absent

Greg Lee  
Terry Sapp

John Morrison

Kraig Knutzen

Scott Hanseth

#### Others in Attendance

Hal Hart, SkAgit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)  
Don McMoran, WSU Extension

#### Call to Order

Nels Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 6:59 pm.

#### Meeting Minutes

Sloan moved to accept the April 11, 2018 minutes, Murray seconded. Motion carried.

#### Local Issues

##### **Hal Hart- SkAgit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)**

Discussed issues PDS is dealing with such as Water issue. Commissioners have asked for a heat map on water availability. Looking into new ideas such as a water mitigation bank, which would solve issue for approximately 17 residential properties, but have around 97 applications with issues. Tim asked if the total is residential only or commercial too. Hal will look into it and report back.

Hal updated that PDS is working with GIS to create a permit map (heat map) showing where the growth is happening in the county. Will send to AAB so they have a copy. Headed towards how it affects the Ag land. Murray asked about expansion of the PUD system. Look at their capital plan to find out expansion.

Skagit Co. Comprehensive Plan – 2016; asked what questions do the AAB members want us to track or find out. Policy 4.a.24. Hal asked the board what do you want PDS to track regarding data to show AAB the patterns in the county? AAB members discussed ideas of permits; housings & commercial buildings in Ag zones. Building accessory buildings in Ag land, and how SPF trying to limit that. Parcel, subdivisions, boundary line adjustments that are carved down from 40 acres of Ag land. If 40 had house, separated off 1 acre with house from lot. Card program would be good to track too; size, etc. Amount of ground that has been converted to conservation purposes; salmon restoration, crab, VSP. We should ask Kara Symonds for a map of what is being conserved through the Farmland Legacy Program

Per Nels; in past there was an attempt to inventory Ag land and the results were conflicting. He would really like to know how many acres are being actively farmed.

Hal asked if all the committees with Ag interests ever get together; Conservation Futures, Farmland Legacy and AAB. The response was no, but it would be good if we have data to present at such a meeting. Hal would like to create a report every 2-3 years of maps and data and share with all the committees.

Discussions then turned to the Agritourism issue. Steve talked about Viva Farms and how they don't have the farm stand anymore because they make more money selling CSA to Seattle. The fish market on hwy 20 is farmland that doesn't grow what they sell. So how do we get ahead of it and say no.

Regarding the P-2 docket item there are the following options;

1. No action/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.

Hal suggested that AAB needs to say in their public comment what they are supporting and what options they are Against and why.

AAB members expressed concerns. They want to promote innovation and economic growth, but need to preserve Agricultural Ag land. It's a struggle to protect the large farmers. Not wanting to hurt the large production farmers for the sake of the little designer farmer.

Still very worried about enforcement what if the farmer gets the zoning code change, and then sells the farm and the new owner decides to not farm and just run the restaurant. No enforcement by the county. Cited what happened with BTI, county settled after winning the suit and settled on appeal. So BTI is doing what they've done all along with no enforcement.

Barbara is going to draft the letter and email out to everyone for input. Kathy will notify AAB when docket becomes open for public comments.

Food Safety Security Protocol. Talked about how people do not seem to value farmland as anything more as open land and scenic. Need to understand and value that farmland is foodland. It's the future of food.

Hal brought up the option of Edison as a gathering spot for the "farm fresh crowd" focus gathering places in towns like Edison, La Conner, Concrete, Conway and drive people to that area with farmers markets and keep them off farm lands. What is the venue for? Who does it serve? And how does it affect Agriculture. Focus away from the farm. Murray suggested that if you want anything other than small farmer markets then it needs to be in the city of Burlington, involve restaurants, hotels, etc. Available sewer, water, services.

## **Don McMoran, WSU Extension**

WSU- grants for Cover Crop, WSU WISE (water system efficiencies),  
New Proposals: PSP NTA (\$750,000), AgrAbility (\$720,000)

Publications: Being the First in Your County to Discover an Invasive Insect – JOE & NACAA, PVY-Organic vs conventional.

Workshops:

Seed in January 2019

Ag Summit – working on next year’s programming; go big or go small? Asked for feedback of options

Tractor Safety – finishing up this week

Potato

Berry

State Agency for WEASA met and decided to write a letter of no confidence regarding the WSE Extension. Don will keep us updated on this.

Hiring new Soils Scientist at WSU NWREC and a new Dean at WSU CAHNRS.

## OLD BUSINESS

Drafting letter for public comments on the 2018 docket that will help form a policy

State Level – nothing to discuss

No Committee reports

## New Business –

Michael moved to adjourn, Murray seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm

Next meeting June 13, 2018 at **7 pm**.