

# Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

## Meeting Minutes – June 13, 2018

### Skagit County Administration Building

#### Members in Attendance

Nels Lagerlund  
Tim Van Hofwegen

Michael Hughes  
John Morrison

Barbara Cleave  
Kraig Knutzen

Murray Benjamin  
Terry Sapp

#### Proxy Designations

#### Members Absent

Greg Lee

Scott Hanseth

Sloan Johnson

Steve Omdal

#### Others in Attendance

Hal Hart, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)

Dan McCarty, Skagit County Public Works, Natural Resources

Don McMoran, WSU Extension

Kathy Jewell, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)

#### Call to Order

Nels Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

#### Meeting Minutes

Kraig moved to accept the May 9, 2018 minutes, Tim seconded. Motion carried.

#### Local Issues

Dan McCarty introduced himself and talked about his background and his role with Public Works, Natural Resource Manager. Then we went around table introducing everyone present.

Nels asked about status of 2018 comprehensive plan docket becoming open for public comment. Per Hal we hope to have it ready within a couple weeks. AAB plans to submit a letter regarding P-2.

SPF had a forum; Terry, Nels, Michael, Don & Hal attended. It was a good discussion with both sides of the issue. Nels felt the questions brought up there had questions that seemed to lead towards a longer term study. SPF going to write up about this and Kathy will send to the AAB.

Nels feels it boils down to enforcement and lack of. Who will enforce, who will pay for it etc. If the code says ok to restaurants on Ag zoned land it'll be a free for all. What parameters will be put in place to regulate? Kraig mentioned the real infraction is when we go from a temporary fruit stand or wedding 3 times a year versus a permanent agritourism such as restaurants. Keep in mind the temporary aspect vs permanent.

Terry felt the meeting was that they presented that they felt the county should have a broader code regarding agritourism. Was a diverse group of speakers who all seemed in consensus that they want agritourism code. Consensus seemed to want it wider than just approving individual projects. Nels

agreed and says what we have now is what we want to keep. The moderator mentioned she had moderated down south and they admire and are envious at how Skagit County has preserved our farmland. Number one priority for Nels going forward is to maintain the large land base in Ag zone. We need to draw the line for Ag zone. We are the largest chunk of farmland still farming west of the cascades.

Terry states this line is hard to hold since the force against this is so diverse, strong, financially strong, etc. This makes holding the line defensive. Code is always going to be some line of defense that will be challenged by individual petitioners. Makes it very difficult to fight for this battle and win.

Nels; regarding unused buildings in Ag zone. Why can't we use them? How many buildings come up to code? Talked about instance in Oregon who wanted to have a tasting room in an old shed. Didn't want to bring it up to code. Discussion about how everyone must be held to the same codes.

Kraig brought up conflicts with food safety codes and how the regulations are escalating yearly. How agritourism would affect this the farmers regarding these food safety codes. If a house is next to farmland and the dog goes in field then it could negatively affect the farmer. Dog foot prints and poop would lead to deductions and could lead to a loss of sale of product. Perfect example is the latest issue with the romaine lettuce in AZ. Inspectors are out looking for violations even more. Tourist activity could infringe on farmers ability to farm and sell product.

Again, the idea of centralized/clustered places for agritourism was discussed and agreed it would be better than having it spread out all over the county ag land. At the SPF forum Terry chatted with Cindy Verge of the Tulip Festival, who was very supportive of ag land being preserved to attract tourist and feels that the facilities must be centralized. She thinks there should be shuttle service during tulip season to keep so many cars off the roads that farmer's needs. Kraig agrees with consolidating agritourism in one area. Murray expressed the need for the cities to get involved in promoting it and providing services such as food and hotel center. Wenatchee – Pybus Market in downtown has a good model per Don McMoran

Discussed how to contact the stakeholders and invite them to a AAB meeting. Discussed how IPZ is involved. Invite many key people and ask them about their view of agritourism in their city and Skagit County.

July 11<sup>th</sup> meeting

Terry will invite Kathy from La Conner Chamber of Commerce

Kraig or Don will invite Mayor Jill Boudreau from Mt. Vernon

We are trying to preserve our status quo and want to direct agritourism activity to the cities, so want your input. How can we do this together?

## Old Business

Per Nels, keep draft letter until next meeting or until the docket becomes open for public comment.

Don McMoran's Update:

IPZ met and created criteria to guide them. They also discussed the agritourism topic. Their next meeting is July 5, at 7:30 am at the Port Admin Bldg. Meetings are open to the public. AAB needs to formalize something with IPZ.

Regarding the WEASA letter, all issues are being resolved with both sides communicating.

## NEW BUSINESS

Ag summit Fri. 2/8/19 – change agenda slightly, labor, water, econ in morning and in afternoon break up into groups on topics like water. After committee work then meet together in evening as a social hour, and fundraiser. Don wants to make it a fun event and competition in ag agencies. Open to ideas.

WSU NWREC Field day is July 12<sup>th</sup> from 3-6 pm at 16650 S. R. 536 Mount Vernon

WSDA training for pesticides training next year.

*Murray moved to adjourn, Michael seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:13 pm*

**Next meeting July 11, 2018 at 7 pm.**