

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Summary – January 9, 2019 Skagit County Administration Building

Members in Attendance

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| Michael Hughes | Nels Lagerlund | Barbara Cleave | John Morrison |
| Murray Benjamin | Steve Omdal | Steve Wright | Terry Sapp |
| Tim Van Hofwegen | | | |

Proxy Designations - none

Members Absent

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| Scott Hanseth | Kraig Knutzen |
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Others in Attendance

Lisa Janicki, Skagit County Board of County Commissioners
Jenna Freibel, Consortium Dike & Drainage District
Hal Hart, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Dan McCarty, Skagit County Public Works, Natural Resources
Justin Hayton
Brandon Stone, Skagit Valley Herald
Kathy Jewell, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)

Call to Order, Introductions

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. Introductions were made around the room

Approval of Meeting Summary

Nels Lagerlund moved to accept the December 19, 2018 summary, Steve Wright seconded. Motion carried.

Guest Speaker

Commissioner Janicki

Commissioner Janicki has spoken with several people about water lately. She was at Skagit Valley College today regarding the onsite template for mitigation program for the small portion of residential lots in the Big Lake area. Many in the community just assume that farmers can get the water they need to grow crops, but it is not so. She carries that message to Olympia that our farmers need water.

Discussed the Seattle City Lights and Puget Sound Energy relicensing. To get 200 csf down here they'd have to release a huge amount of water from the dam, they can't measure 200 csf. Needs a legislative fix. Dan Berentson and Kara Symonds are both working on it and are aware of the farmers need.

Water Taskforce; she asked that they make agriculture viable for the future. She asked to learn about crop rotations, critical timing, etc. this is the message she wants to carry to the legislators in Olympia. Funding allocation ends in 6 months, final report can extend beyond that. Crafting a report and asking for reallocation of funding for studies on water use, water need, April meet again as a group and then taskforce ends. Purpose of JTF was to find out what general information is still needed. What the farmers need and where exactly.

AAB members asked Jenna Friebe about what mechanism do we have to get a legislative fix? Response was that we need more consensus, a comprehensive plan from the task force before a bill can be written. Ask legislators up for a tour, a pilot study of what farmers need and where, need for storage? So far just ideas that need investment in time, money, relationship building. T

Questions about interruptible water rights vs senior water rights; Jenna discussed it and how districts are building the infrastructure and filling the ditches. Why are water allocations/rights reserved for housing and not for agriculture? Commissioner Janicki invited each board member to visit with her individually in her office about each of their situations and water needs.

Committee Reports

Economic Development- Don McMoran (Chair), Steve Omdal, Terry Sapp

Discussed the Skagit Valley Herald article; availability of small parcels for startup farmers. A lot of farmer models out there which is in conflict with large productions. The leases are locked up before it even comes available. Small farmers with specialty crops are willing to pay top dollar for leases.

12% decrease in farms in a 5 year period; size increased by 11%. Total number of acres farmed decreased by 2,000 acres in 5 years. Is that part of tide gates, restoration/preservation, farm land in city limits, etc.

Small acreages aren't staying in farmlands. People are interested in small parcel farming, and we need parcels available for them. The article talked about linking together landowners and small farmers; discussion about how to help support this.

Critical Areas – Nels Lagerlund (Chair), Murray Benjamin, John Morrison

Sent email a few weeks about from Salmon Recovery council. Concern about proposal 1 in Skagit River initiating a 3 year project repairing habitats along salmon streams. Dept. Ecology enforcing temperature and dmdl? 100 ft setbacks would lose more ag land. How are we going to get water if we need to save the orca?

Land Use –Barbara Cleave (Chair), Michael Hughes, Scott Hanseth, John Morrison, Steve Wright

Nothing this month

Flood, Drainage & Irrigation – Kraig Knutzen (Chair), Nels Lagerlund, Scott Hanseth, Steve Wright

Nothing this month

Old Business

Handouts of bylaws and resolutions to all the board members.

New Business

Welcomed Justin Hayden to the AAB representing District 2 starting next week.

Don McMoran, WSU Extension Update

Budget 1% cut for 2019

Publications: Two PBYs for potatoes and parsnip

Grants: WSU Water Irrigation Systems Efficiency (WISE) and Cover Cropping grants are going as planned, hoping to continue 2019. Looking at writing a grant for blueberry commission.

Still waiting to hear back on the proposals for the Puget Sound Partnership Near Term Action (NTA) grant which is large. National Agribility was out doing tours and Don feels confident. Farm Bill passed today with will have positive impact on these grants.

Workshops at WSU extension in Mount Vernon

Jan. 11- W. WA Seed Workshop

Feb 8 - Skagit Ag Summit

Feb. 22 - W. WA Potato Workshop

March 8 - W. WA Berry Workshop

April – train the trainer for worker protection standards

End of April - prelicense pesticide training

April – Tractor safety

Adjourn

Nels Lagerlund moved to adjourn, John Morrison seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm

Next meeting February 13, 2019 at 6 pm