

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board
Meeting Summary - March 13, 2019
Skagit County Administration Building

Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes	Nels Lagerlund	Justin Hayton	John Morrison
Steve Wright	Murray Benjamin	Steve Omdahl	Barbara Cleave

Proxy Designations

None

Members Absent

Kraig Knutzen	Scott Hanseth	Terry Sapp	Tim Van Hofwegen
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Others in Attendance

Don McMoran, WSU Agriculture & Natural Resources Extension Educator
Hal Hart, Skagit County Planning Director

Call to Order

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Meeting Minutes

January minutes will need approval during the April meeting (quorum).

Guest Speaker

Hal Hart – Skagit County Planning Director

Hal Hart presented material on ‘What’s going on in the county’ in the Ag areas. There is a report that will be released on Friday March 15, 2018 regarding this. It will be emailed to the AAB.

Hal provided a map and summary of commercial and residential building permits received in 2018 in the Ag-NRL Zoning Designation. There are 170 – 200 homes countywide but not many in the Ag area. Planning is currently analyzing a PUD request to put water in county. Commissioners have asked the Planning Department to find out the density units in the county. Some of these may be adjacent to Ag land.

There is a lot of collected data the county can use to look at where growth is occurring in the county. This helps determine how the county is issuing permits and if/that the county planning is doing what they need to be doing.

This year’s planning requests include 2 hotels, 1 large nursery, and an inquiry concerning ‘warehouse ag’ from an east coast agricultural group. The hotel requests have been directed to the cities. The nursery inquiry wanted to use Ag land; they were directed to existing operations and to the Port of Skagit County (AAB noted that Ag land coding does not allow cement floors for greenhouses in Ag land).

AAB discussed that Skagit Partners withdrew their application for PL18-0405 (Avalon Fully Contained Community) from the 2019 Docket. Questions arose regarding what type of development this was.

Hal explained there are two types of developers. One is a development packager – they package a ‘product’, sell it then walk away. The second is an actual developer – comes to the area and stays for a long time. The Avalon development is packaged. Due to this, we don’t know what the development will be or the impact.

Growth

From the growth plan set up by the county in the early 2000’s, the cities should be getting 80% of the growth, with 20% of growth occurring in the county. The numbers indicate the county is currently doing this.

Paccar is in the process of a major expansion. They need physicists, computer scientists and estimate 75K employee addition with the expansion. Janicki is expanding, with an estimated 150,000 employee addition. Growth will be coming.

Committee Reports

Economic development

Steve Omdahl visited S. Korea with 10 other people (agriculture and food product-based). They met with the following:

- Korean Importer’s Association
- E-Mart Distribution
- The Department of Agriculture Affairs. They discussed growing Korean trends (health, organic) and the push for Korea to have investment in other countries.
- A wholesale market where farms bring product to be sold by bids in larger lots or to daily shoppers by individual/small amount.
- American Chamber of Commerce
- Importers; discussed different trends occurring and matching up needs to supply both with US to Korea and Korea to US. There is a move to get their farmers into a higher value bracket for sales of their products.

This was a beneficial trip and attendees made connections with potential markets.

Flood, Drainage and Irrigation

Steve Wright discussed issues with Ag Storage buildings (pole-built) and requirement of back-flow preventers. Example pole building will have no water to it but requires a back-flow preventer. Besides the upfront cost, it needs to be inspected every year. You must have power to it to keep it from freezing. This requirement is generated from changes to water regulations. Steve commented this feels excessive for a building with no water.

Land Use

Don McMoran mentioned that a new Department of Commerce Opportunity Zone will be established that allows for tax breaks for those who want to develop in those zones. This new zone is on Riverbend Road. These opportunities occur in ‘impoverished’ areas.

Old Business- No discussion

New Business – No discussion

Don McMoran, WSU Agriculture & Natural Resources Extension Director

General information

- There is a 1 ½ % cut for WSU in 2019. In 2020, WSU hopes to return to normal budget.
- 60K grant from department, delegated toward Ag-Related suicide prevention pilot program.
- 400K grant from Puget Sound Partnership for the Samish Watershed to reduce fecal coliform.
- Upcoming workshops: Worker Protection workshop, Tractor Safety workshop (tentative, need 10 to sign up).

For 2018, Skagit WSU Extension released the most publications it ever has and hosted the most workshops.

Nels Lagerlund moved to adjourn, Steve Omdahl seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:47 pm

Next meeting April 10, 2019 at 6 pm. Time changes in May.