

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Summary – February 12, 2020 Skagit County Administration Building

Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes	Nels Lagerlund	Tim Van Hofwegen	Don McMoran
Justin Hayton	Kraig Knutzen	Murray Benjamin	Steve Omdal
Terry Sapp			

Proxy Designations

Steve Omdal for Barbara Cleave

Members Absent

Barbara Cleave	Steve Wright
John Morrison	Rachael Ward Sparwasser

Others in Attendance

Craig Macku-Member of the Public
Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works
Hal Hart, Director-Skagit County Planning & Development Services

Call to Order, Introductions

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm

Approval of Meeting Summary

January minutes were reviewed and motion was passed to approve the minutes with clarifications on Commissioner Dahlstedt's comments from the last meeting specifically stating: Agricultural Watershed Council responsible for funding for salmon protraction both Allan and Brandon stopped going to the meetings. They didn't feel their attendance in these gatherings was going to be beneficial to agriculture.

Guest Speaker

Kara Symonds- Skagit County Public Works

- Kara gave an update regarding the Seattle City Light Danm Relicensing Project
- SCL's current license expires in April 2025
- Haven't heard which license process pathway SCL is taking, their selection determines timeline
 - Integrated Licensing Process (default / FERC recommendation)
 - Alternative Licensing Process (Collaborative – PSE's path)
 - Traditional Licensing Process (less complex projects)
- Expect a Notice of Intent (NOI) and Pre-Application Development 5 to 5.5 years before license expiration
 - The NOI should identify the process
 - This will determine formal comment periods, study requests, and indicate specific timelines
- 2019 Informal Study Plan development; local study requests were submitted and either rejected or placed in a parking lot
- 2020 Informal study plan implementation
- Formal Study Requests will come early in the process, quick turnaround once public notified

- Motions to Intervene for the PSE relicensing were submitted in 2004, license issued in 2008
- FERC's Notice of Application Accepted For Filing and Soliciting Motions To Intervene and Protest will outline deadline to file motions to intervene
- Motion to Intervene outlines the parties interest in the outcome of the license
- Skagit County has tasked Gordon Thomas Honeywell (government affairs lobbyists) with tracking the re-licensing
 - Paul Hoover assigned as senior staff in DC
 - Commissioners meeting with FERC next week
- General questions – Kayla Schott Bressler key county policy person for the Commissioners now
- The consortium could act as an intervener for instream flow and flood storage. Doing that gets you in the door to ask for what you need in the longer term.
- Kara brought up staffing for agricultural programs in the future:
- County agricultural position could embody many efforts. What are the other agricultural community needs? The position would be designed to support existing needs and other identified needs. Kara has a .3 FTE look at various farmland legacy – comprehensive plan programs. Feedback from committee was generally positive but program details are needed.
- Farmland legacy – generally very good in 2019. They have been struggling with market value for development rights
 - Development Rights values are going up our appraisal is the before and after value.
 - A traditional 40 acre parcel in the heartland may run around \$80,000.
 - We fund approximately 30% of the applicants that apply.
 - The program vets these applicants through a lot certification process...the applicant will look at different options...and then move.
 - Question (Sapp) how many development rights are out there? We look at the history of the parent parcel/deed history. This is a very difficult and very expensive project to put a precise figure for that out.
 - Envision estimated 13,000 development rights in the County. Terry would like more information on that.
 - Josh Greenberg made a study of this and he may have an idea from GIS. Where are the 13,000 development rights?
 - How much agricultural land is subject to housing development in some way? Ask Josh in GIS to see if he can answer the question.
- Discussion about the precarious nature of agriculture in the east county area.....What would help is to figure out how the east county can get a return on their natural resource property, can we put together a program to get carbon credits for doing the right thing – a return on their holdings.
 - Farmland legacy/fish/whale/carbon dollars....Farm Bureau stack them up.
- Kara Legislative Bills Discussion
 - Farm Bill VSP bills should not impact us negatively? We enrolled in VSP in 2011.
 - Five year report due January 2021. Whatcom County may want to enroll, Legislation would enable them to do so.
 - 2556 Net Ecological Gain Bill the County Association is opposed to this but it has been put into a study format as of last week.
- **Hal Hart, Director's Update: Skagit County Planning & Development Services**
 - **Last meeting** – Ag permitting discussed and housing goal discussed – how are these linked. Trying to keep agricultural ground for growing things, working with the cities to put higher density housing together in specific neighborhoods of Mount Vernon.

- **Housing Report** – For the unincorporated County we are seeing similar housing numbers but we are down somewhat. Our value is also down. We attributed that to a lack of lot supply. Additional Dwelling Units was up but still about 10% of the overall housing mix. We are seeing changes to the ADU category additional dwelling units (ADUs) increasing in size, value. Commissioners have asked for what are the cities up to and we are working on a report.
- **SEPA** – 9 Sepas last month (January)
 - **Distillery at Bayview** (the Agricultural Board ask for a copy of the project site plan)
 - **Agricultural Project – two building projects – Seed facility and Storage.**
- Stormwater is a key issue – We are studying policy changes as a result of our review of the 2016 – 2017 Snohomish County Supreme Court Decision. We will keep you in the loop going forward.
- Drainage districts do not want drainage coming from development above them in the hills and then being trapped by tide gates and flooding their fields as a result (in the area of Bayview this was the scenario we heard about recently).
- **Request to see the Westland Distillery project.....**where is within the Bayview area? The project has been submitted the SEPA was recently put out for review and the project has an appeal associated with it. Please send the Westland Distillery plan to the Ag Board.
- Island Grown cooperative – expand facility to about 15-20 animal processed per day with freezing/chilling/storage/wrap and packaging. Eighty two members who are made up of many local companies. Currently they are multiple months out presently to process animals so this would be a significant improvement for the members.
- Global Green world’s largest pickle producer is interested again in this area.
- Potato producers meeting next week in Skagit County.
- Systima- thank you for getting that permit out.

Areas of Concern

- Land Use – flood and drainage continue to be a concern for the subcommittee.
- 2415 District Election should go down.
- 6514 concern legislative body regulating chemicals vs others who have good science behind it let the regulators work with good science behind them. Concern about Round Up issues. Glypherafoss duresban good chemicals not used much anymore
- Flooding is an area of concern in Sedro Woolley
- Jones Road development 61 lots in Sedro-Woolley - some are underwater.
- Agricultural/Housing/Economic Viability / third paragraph
- General discussion on the role of committees to come up with more solutions the value of the dialogue.
- Dairy industry is on the precipice-no diary’s on the Westside? Consolidation to 10 20 or 30 thousand cows. Coop paying for plants in Idaho and we will pay for that.
- People want organic farming but there are limitations on this
- We hope that this is a good place to be. Can we be reactive or more proactive? State is not the friendliest to agriculture.
- We need to fix the ditches & levies

New Business

- Rachael Ward Sparwasser new member of the Agricultural Advisory Board
- Discussed letter to the Board of County Commissioners-January Meeting Summary-Approved sending the letter

- Review Letter submitted to Planning Commission regarding Docket Item C-5:SCC 14.16-Ag board will send follow up letter with clarification
- Keep an eye on the Docket- Peter Gill or Michael Cerbone will provide an update soon

Committee Reports

Economic Development- Don McMoran

- Don reported funding looking good.
- Five county tour of local counties
- Seed workshop and Ag summit that recently happened. Take a year off – how would that function.
- Potato Research Workshop next Friday March 13 Barry Workshop after that farm and tractor safety.
- Meetings have value....We need to have an understanding why this is trending down so steeply.

Critical Areas – Nels Lagerlund

None at this time

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

None at this time

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

None at this time

Old Business

Nothing at this time

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm

Next meeting is March 11, 2019 at 6 pm