

# Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

## Meeting Summary – June 11, 2020

### Via Zoom Meeting

#### Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes	Nels Lagerlund	John Morrison	Don Mc Morran
Kraig Knutzen	Steve Omdal	Terry Sapp	

#### Proxy Designations

None

#### Members Absent

Steve Wright	Justin Hayton	Rachel Ward-Sparwasser
Barbara Cleave	Tim Van Hofwegen	Murray Benjamin

#### Others in Attendance

Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works  
Jenna Friebel, Executive Director at Skagit County Drainage and Irrigation  
Hal Hart, Director Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)  
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)

#### Call to Order, Introductions

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 7:08 via zoom meeting

#### Approval of Meeting Summary

Steve Omdal moved to accept the February meeting summary, John Morrison seconded. Motion carried.

#### Guest Speaker

**Kara Symonds- Skagit County Public Works**

**Jenna Friebel-Skagit County Drainage & Irrigation**

**Hal Hart-Skagit County Planning & Development Services**

**Kara Symonds joined the meeting via zoom to provide an update on the Seattle City Light Dam Re-licensing Project:**

- SCL relicensing participation is open to any government, agency, NGO, tribe or member of the public
- SCL following Integrated Licensing Process (ILP); seeking 50 year license
- Notice of Intent and Pre Application Document submitted on April 30, formally kicking off the relicensing
  - The Pre Application Document contains 24 studies that were all agreed upon during the working group meetings of 2019 (e.g. cultural resources, instream flow model, Operations model, shoreline erosion, vegetation mapping)
  - Flood control/timing study request was kicked to Operations Model, irrigation water study request considered outside license process
- Study Requests submitted directly to FERC are due no later than August 28, 2020, must follow federal code
- Potential study requests being explored include flood storage timing, impact of SCL land ownership, and irrigation water.

Jenna Friebel also spoke about the Seattle City Light Re-Licensing Project:

- Discussed changing operations for storing water and releasing for irrigation and water supply
- They did not carry forward in the draft operations plan
- Deciding to submit directly to Birk as an individual organization or as a partnership, don't know if it will help or not
  - Skagit County
  - Upper Skagit Tribes-(Copas B)
- Everyone wants more water in the river
- May be working with the Department of Ecology they have 401 Certifications and can add conditions that Birk can add to the license
- They will keep perusing, it may not go the way they want though
- In August they will submit the study request that will be worked on for 1-2 years
- Question asked, if Tribes are asking the same questions for water storage- Yes, they are continuing to put pressure.
- There is the Seattle City Light Website that is tracking the progress of the Re-Licensing Project

#### **Hal Hart gave a Planning Department Update:**

- Since March Planning and Development Services has responded to the situation by: (1) ensuring that work could carry on remotely; (2) Working to keep permits moving through intake, review, issuance sequences. (3) Responding to each of the executive orders that apply to Skagit County.
- One of the key outcomes of Governor Inslee Stay Home Stay Safe order has been the closure of public meetings limiting the business of Cities and Counties around the State.
- Planning Commission, Forestry Advisory Committee, Agricultural Advisory Boards and similar boards and committees have been limited by the Governor's orders in the majority of cities and counties around the state but not everywhere. One of the key problems was allowing for citizen input into public hearings in a way that was consistent with the Washington State Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). As we have adopted and invested in technologies these meetings are becoming more feasible.
- The Governors order and the Attorney General's guidance laid out criteria as to what qualifies as necessary and routine...the bottom line is if it's a public meeting that can wait then it probably should.
- The Governors order allowed essential industries to continue their construction projects even those in review in our office these industries included:
  - Defense
  - Agriculture Industry
  - Forestry Industry
  - Manufacturing

#### **April to May 13, 2020**

- County and City Planning Directors have been lobbying the Governor on these issues but at this time there has been no additional guidance provided.
- The Governor replaced the initial order allowing the construction industry to reopen to projects that were in place in mid-march but had been stopped. These have now been given the green light.
- The County has determined that they will take in all projects, review them and issue these permits going forward but do so that consistent with the Governor's current orders.
- At this point the Governor's initial order and amending orders continue to encourage people to stay home. This continues to limit local governments from having a wide variety of meetings and many cities and counties across the state are currently in the same predicament with their work programs (on hold legislatively).
- Through April the County was permitting essential industries outlined by the Governor.

- A very significant new project moved forward at Bayview during this timeframe – Defense Contractor Systema Corporation continued to build its testing facility at its forested construction site.
- This has changed with the Governor’s latest order and much more construction is now taking place.

#### **Key Agricultural Projects Spring 2020**

- Seed Factory
- Potato shed
- Riding Arena Clear Lake (10,000 square feet<sup>4</sup> in the Rural Area)
- 2020 to date, Agricultural Related buildings: Of the 16 commercial building permits that have come in the only ones that appear to be Ag related is the Vikima Seed Storage Building and Herbal Tech, the I-502 project (2 new structures, 1 barn remodel).

#### **Other Significant Projects**

- Westland Distillery at Bayview developing in separate phases, distillery, visitor’s center, aging rack houses.
- Dermody Project – working on this large warehouse structure to be located near the airport.
- Pac Car Project – long term investment in high technology for transportation innovation.

General Development Continues around the county in rural areas including Single Family Residential Development. The County is thousands of housing units below the projected housing units it needs to meet past demand and future forecasted demand.

• New Rural housing start near Sedro Woolley along Fruitdale Road. A new housing start at Big Lake Hal will send follow up in regards to Dermody, 400 new home project near Walgreens in Sedro Woolley, and the Island Grown Farmers Co-Op.

#### **New Business**

##### **Covid-19 Shutdown**

- Hard for farmers to comply with regulations and are having major issues trying to continue business
- Does anyone need help in the Ag Community
- Equipment needed to be prepared for a second wave
- Masks and other PPE are hard to find
- Can Farms meet compliance
  - Sanitization
  - Hand Washing
  - Social Distance
  - Masks
- Farm Bureau has been very helpful
- When it is Harvest time they will need more employees making it harder to comply with regulations

#### **Committee Reports**

##### **Economic Development- Don McMoran**

- Marine- Trolling Boats & Taxi Ferries
- Conway Port ground plan, Jim looking into, the Railroad is not being helpful
- Swift Center looking for options with selling property, may not be feasible for an Agriculture Group

##### **Critical Areas – Nels Lagerlund**

None

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

None

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

None

### **WSU Update**-Don McMorran

- Ramped up electronic communication it is up about 600% since February, feels good about communication with the community, keeping growers informed, will be happy to collaborate with farms and help work out any issues, just reach out with whatever you may need.
- WSU asked for a Cut of 10% from the Budget for WSU-waiting to hear from the County
- Grants- much of the same
  - Work and cover crops, Irrigations systems emergency, Puget Sound Partnership, Farmers working longer into their careers, Farm workers and owners working with injuries and assistive technology, Suicide Prevention, & Farm Stress
- Publications- Irrigation, working on Aggrability
- New Hires, Elizabeth Chilton, Research Centers-Chad is leaving-WSU may or may not fill the position.
- Ag Leaders Breakfast last week- Corona funding being passed down. They have 36 applications 85% of the applications are from dairies, they are expected to get \$6 per (hundred weight) of milk they produce. Very well needed support for the dairy's

### Old Business

None

### Adjourn

Terry Sapp moved to adjourn, Steve Omdal seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm

Next meeting is July 8<sup>th</sup>, at 7 pm