

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

Meeting Summary – January 12, 2022

MS Teams

Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes	Terry Sapp	Tim Van Hofwegen	Michael Trafton
Kraig Knutzen	Murray Benjamin	Steve Wright	Nels Lagerlund
Justin Hayton			

Proxy Designations

Members Absent

Steve Omdal	Rachael Ward Sparwasser
John Morrison	

Others in Attendance

Hal Hart, Director, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Peter Gill, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Don McMoran, WSU Extension
Craig Macku, Community Member
Blake Vanfield, Community Member

Call to Order, Introductions

Kraig Knutzen called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Tim VanHofwegen moved to accept the December 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes; Steve Wright seconded. Motion carried.

Guest Speaker

Hal Hart, Director, Skagit County Planning and Development Services

- Overall looking at building permit levels approximately 25% above the previous year. Approximately 203 housing units in the County were approved.
- Bayview and Nookachamps area continued to see single family residential development (Significant number of these were replacement homes). Some 20% of the housing units were ADUs.
- Increasing number of housing units in the Cities were expressed as multi- family housing in 2021.
- New aviation projects came to the County.
- Legends Brand Completed their expansion. Amazon began their last mile logistics project.
- The Westland Distillery business came to Skagit County in a big way. Two of Thirteen rack houses were completed eleven more are planned one more is now under construction – other facilities will follow.
- Commercial Projects at the airport:

Project #	Project Name
1.	Amazon – Walls up
2.	Sakata Seed Expansion – Research/greenhouse going in place.
3.	Distillery Expansion – multiple projects Third Rack House Construction underway
4.	Smith Morrison Farms Potato Processing Building- 19,250 adding to the total it will be over 102,450 sq. ft.
5.	Chuck a Nut Brewery Expansion underway
6.	Heritage Flight Museum Expansion underway
7.	Expansion of Hangers (Commercial-multiple projects and smaller hanger types) Several more coming.
8.	Vander yacht Propane - Rail Spur Expansion
9.	Pac Car Testing Facility Expansion Phase I of Multiple phases
10.	Vikima Seed Expansion Project
11.	Kobota Dealership on Cook Road is expanding-

- **Short Legislative Session County Priorities**

- **Association of Washington Counties** – “communities have faced a massive affordable housing shortage and a growing number of individuals entering homelessness ...”
- **Behavioral Health Needs** – need for essential county services such as mental health and substance use and disorder programs, has significantly increased during the pandemic.
- **Planning issues** – Climate change, Forest Health, Waste Management, Growth Management, Water Quality and Water Supply issues.

- **Legislative Update – County Perspective**

- **Climate Change**-If the legislature delegates new authorities to counties – counties asking for flexibility to meet those mandates...
- **Salmon Recovery**- Counties can help meet the court ordered fix to fish blocking culverts by 2030 with appropriate funding.
- **Forest Health** – wildfire threats to every county and to air quality – counties can play a role to ensure communities are fire resilient.
- **Waste Management**- counties support a uniform standard for recycling-state support for solid waste has declined 62% over the years.
- **Growth Management**-seeking greater flexibility in planning and sustainable funding source for current responsibilities.
- **Water Quality and Water Supply**-new legislation and responsibilities to address water quality issues requires dedicated funding.

- **Projects to Watch in 2022**

- **Watch Cities Unit Counts** – single family residential vs town house/apartment/other kinds of housing.
- Affordability issues

- Demographics
- Delay in purchasing homes/delay in family formation/lowest birth rate in modern times/retiree's downsizing all drive market factors
- **Job Creation** – Port of Skagit – continued expansion of job base/Amazon last mile facility/aviation expansion/hiring by existing companies already in the county.
- **Housing** – Sage Homes 2022 New Project Announcement Stephen Apartments/49 new homes in Mount Vernon/70 units of affordable/homeless housing/other projects/Additional town home/housing projects in Anacortes coming this year. Sedro Woolley has several housing subdivisions along with the start of a new Urban Village to watch this year.

New Business

Michel Hughes discussed making some Docket Comments. Michael motioned to comment on the Docket Rough Draft Memo, Tim VanHofwegen 1st, Steve Wright seconded. Motion carries. Kim will add letter to letterhead and send it in to the PDS Email.

Don McMoran presented for WSU:

- Don is seeking permission from the board for Terry Sapp to present for the Land Use Committee at the Skagit Ag Summit, motion Kraig first, Murray Benjamin seconded no opposition.
- Workshop Season:
 - Western Washington Seed Workshop
 - Ag Summit February 11th
 - Potato Workshop February 25th
 - Berry Workshop March 11th
 - Safety Course for Farm Safety
- Budgets are good with the County and looking good with the state
- Filling Vacancies
- 100th year of interlocal agreements with Skagit County- Continue to work together

Next Month still work on the Agritourism Rough Draft

Committee Reports

Economic Development- Don McMoran

Nothing at this time

Critical Areas – Nels Lagerlund

Nothing at this time

Land Use – Terry Sapp (Chair), Kraig Knutzen, Murray Benjamin, Michael Trafton, Steve Omdal

- Terry Sapp presented a letter:

The Land Use Committee, in its ongoing effort to offer guidance to the Agricultural Advisory Board regarding Agritourism policy, at this time, recommends:

1. A Preliminary Policy Position

- a. Skagit County Code be written to identify **activities** associated with agritourism
- b. Agritourism activities allowed in the Ag-NRL be subject to a **close connection to actual ongoing agricultural production** on the site of the producer
- c. Qualifying agritourism activities in the Ag-NRL be codified as **accessory to agriculture** and have finer resolution

- d. All accessory agritourism activities be subject to renewable **permits** and scaled **fees**
- e. Non-qualifying agritourism activities associated with public participation be directed to zones and places outside the Ag-NRL
- f. Skagit County restrict new agritourism activities until **enforcement** mechanisms are designed and implemented

2. Further Outreach

The Agricultural Advisory Board should immediately engage a broad base of agricultural interests, both individual producers and agricultural organizations, to join in consensus-building around an enduring agritourism policy before finalizing a recommendation to the Skagit County Commissioners

3. Creation of an Inventory of Agritourism Activities and Sites

4. Recognition of Past and Current Work on Agritourism

- a. A history of attempts to form policy and code extends back in time several decades. That history is informative and need not be duplicated
- b. The Skagit County Planning and Development Department has produced a formidable body of recent presentations on agritourism for review and seeks a comprehensive policy outcome
- c. The Land Use Committee continues to survey the related history, Skagit County Code, administrative practices, and actual business activities in the county involving the agritourism trade. **Essential findings include:**
 - i. Washington State law (mostly in Growth Management areas), and Skagit County Comprehensive Plan and Skagit County code (SCC) clearly and repeatedly emphasize the importance of protecting the agricultural lands as a coveted natural resource
 - ii. SCC is inconsistent, in parts specific on allowed or permitted activities and, elsewhere, too vague, and broad to convey purpose to the public or to govern practice
 - iii. Evidence of agritourism-type enterprise is almost entirely anecdotal – the public record is empty
 - iv. Some existing enterprises abridge a common reading of policy intention of Ag-NRL -- value agriculture first – and drive a fix
 - v. Anecdotal reports on development proposals for agritourism-type activities pressure policy deliberations, confront the permitting process, and produce a current permitting stalemate
 - vi. Reconciling existing and some long-standing agritourism enterprises with new policy and practice standards may highlight “fairness” issues but should not prevent creation of those durable standards
- d. **The Land Use Committee of the AAB shall continue to work** on agritourism at the direction of the Board to guide deliberations and policy considerations

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

Nothing at this time

Old Business

Adjourn

Murray Benjamin moved to adjourn; Tim Van Hofwegen seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:48 pm. Next meeting is February 9, 2022 at 6 pm.