

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

Meeting Summary – June 8, 2022

Commissioners Hearing Room/MS Teams

Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes	Terry Sapp	Michael Trafton	Nels Lagerlund
Kraig Knutzen	Murray Benjamin	Steve Omdal	Steve Wright
Tim VanHofwegen			

Proxy Designations

Members Absent

John Morrison	Justin Hayton	Rachael Ward Sparwasser
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Others in Attendance

Hal Hart, Director, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Sarah Stoner, Skagit County Public Works
Don McMoran, WSU Extension
Lisa Grueter, Berk Consulting
Craig Macku, Community Member

Call to Order, Introductions

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Change Spelling to Dr. Coslor, Meeting Minutes with amendment of spelling, Kraig Knutzen to approve. Motion carried.

Guest Speaker

Sarah Stoner, Agricultural Lands Coordinator, Skagit County Public Works

Sarah gave a presentation on the Skagit County Farmland Legacy Program

- Program Concept- Protect Ag Lands in Skagit
 - Compensation for Development Rights in exchange for Deed of Conservation Easement held by Skagit County
 - Development Restrictions
 - Limit land's use to agriculture
- Program Accomplishments
 - Protected 14,068 Acres
 - 263 Extinguished DR
 - \$23 Million Paid 1996-present
 - Funding: County \$13,500,000, Local & National Partners \$9,500,000
- Protected Properties
 - County & Local Partners in 2021 spent \$1,691,000
 - 2022- 640 Acres in Queue
 - 16% of 89,000 acres zoned Ag-NRL
 - Budgeted \$1,800,000

- Skagit County will soon have the most farmland preserved in Washington
 - Skagit County has 14,000+ acres preserved & King County as 15,000 acres of farmland protected
 - An average of 550 acres have been put in the program per year in the last 25 years
- Farmland Legacy Easement is forever, it is a legal contract
 - Only the Ag land is preserved, not existing homes
 - Climate change- still need to protect the land, growth will always continue to happen

Lisa Grueter, Berk Consulting

Lisa gave an Agritourism Survey Update

- Process 2021-2022
 - We are now at the end of the Policy Concepts phase of the process and will be entering the Legislative
 - Development of code
 - Comprehensive Plan
 - Hearings & Meetings
- Policy Goals for AGt
 - Clearly define agritourism uses
 - Clear and consistent standards
 - Identify relationship to on-site agriculture
 - Consistency with our Comprehensive Plan Policies
 - GMA
- Policy Options
 - No Action- Current Code
 - Option A – Accessory Agritourism
 - Option B – Agritourism Overlay
 - Option C – Rezone: Small Scale Recreation and Tourism
- Input on Agritourism Uses & Options
 - Public Workshops 3/30
 - 8:30 AM there were 40 participants
 - 6 PM there were 20 participants
 - Online Survey- 235
 - 107 surveys in zip codes in county: similar results as overall respondents
 - Other Presentations April
 - Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board
 - Skagit County Tourism Promotion Area- (TPA) Advisory Board
 - Respondents taking the survey in Skagit County zip codes was 96
 - Responses in the top 3 most important are the same as the overall number of respondents
- Farm Stands, U-Pick, & Farm Tours
 - Farm stands: Support Permit & Standard Improvements
 - Persons taking survey in Skagit County zip codes = 85
 - Level of importance was in a similar order as all respondents
 - Comments: Parking must be of low impact design. Pavement is a huge negative on our farmlands. We are not doing 1/ 40 if we also allow a paved farm stand area
 - Farm stands, U-pick, and Farm Tours are a real advantage we have here in Skagit County. Encourage them! Do not tie up the applicants for permits
- Farm Stays: Allow with Low-Impact Standards
 - Persons taking survey in Skagit County zip codes = 84
 - Level of importance was in a similar order as all respondents

- I have concerns about farm stays in RVs, as it would be difficult to impossible to monitor how long people stay.
- Maximum number of RVs should relate to size of property. Being able to generate rental income could help smaller farmers.
- Tasting Rooms, Restaurants
 - Persons taking survey in Skagit County zip codes= 79
 - Restaurants/Tasting Rooms: Allow small/accessory
 - Restaurants/tasting rooms: Why no seating? This is a nonstarter for our business.
 - What about making the allowances based upon existing infrastructure such as parking bathrooms and potable water.
 - I think a restaurant is inappropriate for ag properties, but a small tasting room might fit well. Size of parcel should not limit eligibility.
- Weddings
 - Persons taking survey in Skagit County zip codes= 75
 - Weddings: Consider wedding facilities as an accessory use
 - Farms make beautiful venues for weddings and may help small farms afford to stay in operation.
 - The noise is the biggest impact that wedding venues have on the neighboring properties. There should be some time and noise level restrictions.
 - I think rezoning (for weddings and other agrotourism) could be allowed on a case by case basis, but only if there is a requirement to have the majority of the land still in ag production.
- Permit Process and Criteria Improvements
 - Persons taking survey in Skagit County zip codes= 72
 - Permit Process: Support for improvements
 - Annual self-certification seems an unnecessary burden. Every three years would suffice to attain goals.
 - Don't make it too complicated!
 - I do not want farmland land permanently lost due to rezoning.
 - Providing programmatic and well defined permits and codes will help ensure limited impacts on Commercial Agriculture.
- AAB- April 13th meeting
 - Agritourism activities accessory to agriculture that fit concepts, to agriculture that fit concepts, goals, and recommendations: goals, and recommendations: Farm stands, U—pick, Farm tours, &
 - Bed and breakfast hosting
 - Non-agricultural accessory agricultural accessory agritourism activities that do not agritourism activities that do not fit concepts, goals, and fit concepts, goals, and recommendations:
 - Tasting rooms, restaurants, & Weddings
 - Weddings
 - Especially if permanent, year-round
 - Consider Size, Intensity, & Frequency
- Early Ideas for Preferred Alternative
 - Farm stands ,U-Pick, Tours:
 - Make permit & standard improvements
 - Farm stays:
 - Allow with low--impact standards impact standards and limit number and size
 - Tasting Rooms:
 - Allow limited size as accessory if there is on-site produce
 - Restaurants:

- Rural zone (RRv). Farm to table or relationship to agriculture. HEX.
 - Weddings: Develop options
 - Temporary —similar limit as similar limit as Spokane County
 - Permanent —if in existing barn, 1-acre, like Snohomish County
- Next Steps:
 - Develop Preferred Alternative (May-June)
 - Planning Commission (June-July)
- Questions & Comments:
 - Who does the code writing? Lisa to prepare the draft then it goes to staff
 - Not many people involved with the Survey, approx. 50% were from out of Skagit County, less than 100 people were from Skagit County
 - Content on Survey was bias, this survey was directed for a positive outcome. There was not enough outreach to the Ag Community
 - Compliance is a huge issue! What is an On-Site Production and how can the County enforce this?
 - What kind of permitting should be used?
 - Many of the responses didn't know what the current code is to be able to answer the questions.
 - Land Use Committee did not have a chance to meet and review the survey results, they were not given enough time.

Hal Hart, Director, Skagit County Planning & Development Services

Hal gave his update:

- Docket Update next week with Commissioners
 - Met with Swinomish tribe, looking at Climate Change
- Hearing Examiner RE: Farm Implement Dealer proposing 15,000 sq. ft. addition at Cook Road, comments open until Monday
- 13 Unit Housing on Peterson Road
 - KSA Private Road- Comments open until Monday
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- What is going on at PDS? Growth & Jobs
 - Approved-additional aviation hangers approved. Next up additional aviation apron improvements are now under review.
 - Brewery Expansion: brewery expansion approved at the airport it will mean up to 35 employees will be on site over the several years as they scale up production.
 - Tallow Processing: (heavy industrial zone) approved – this project will feed the BP plant with natural source of materials just as the Canadian facility does now.
 - Tallow Processing Shipping: will be shipped by rail car then processed at the site and next sent by truck from this site to Cherry Point for energy processing.
 - Lindell Yachts submitted their Phase one: land clearing & grading permit last week

New Business

Don McMoran WSU Update

- Funding level is good at this time- starting to work on the 2023 Budget submitting in July
- Working on some Publications on irrigation three of the five have been published, last ones to be published next month
- Usual Grants- three going smoothly-Puget Sound Partnerships, Agribility, & Farm Stress Suicide
- Hired new Translator (Spanish)
- Budget goes to Skagit in August
- Looking for a Agribility Coordinator- Help Farmers get back to work with Assistive Technology

- June 4th 100 year party- Bread Lab-pizza oven, truck & Tractor Show was amazing

Committee Reports

Economic Development- Don McMoran

Amazon- new large parking lot, IFGC up at the port, Skagit Malting, Westland Distillery – almost done, Lumber Company waiting for the offer- Contamination needs to clean up, Port Tour- Port of Chehalis/Vancouver- June 28th-29th- call Steve Omdal for information.

Critical Areas – Nels Lagerlund

Nothing at this time.

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

Terry Sapp- Questions on Farmworker Housing- Does the Board want to engage? Steve Omdal suggested, should weigh in on allowing permanent housing- should be concerned.

- Want to put in Rural Areas
- Not on PUD (Edison/Blanchard water issue, big issue to comply with Health)
- 23-30 People on once septic
- Presented to BOCC- if they want to docket it- AAB will dig deeper and need to give recommendations- Will wait to see if it gets docketed then comment
- Main major issue is Enforcement- too many living full time, who will enforce the rules
- Don't want to promote unsafe situations, sewer (too many people), junk cars, garbage

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

Nothing at this time.

Old Business

Next Meeting: Jenna to discuss Water Task Force & Flood Presentation. Michael will not be able to attend, Kraig Knutzen to run the meeting.

Adjourn

Murray Benjamin moved to adjourn; Steve Omdal seconded. Meeting adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Next meeting is July 13, 2022 at 7 pm.