

**Agricultural Advisory Board
Agritourism-Related Discussions
April 9, 2025**

Board Members: Michael Hughes, Chair
Kraig Knutzen, Vice Chair
Terry Sapp
Cindy Kleinhuizen
Don McMoran
Justin Hayton
Nels Lagerlund (proxy for Steve Wright)
Matt Steinman
Michael Trafton
John Morrison

Guests: Daryl Hamburg, Dike District #17
Mikala Staples Hughes, Community Member
Lora Claus, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland
Owen Peth, Community Member
Amy Frye, Community Member
Jessica Nguyen, Community Member

County Staff: Jack Moore, Planning Director
Tara Satushek, Senior Planner
Malia Agpawa, Permit Technician/Receptionist
Will Honea, Prosecuting Attorney's Office

(Skip general introductory comments to the meeting.)

(Skip Will Honea's presentation on the Haller Farm purchase.)

(Skip Tara Satushek's presentation on the Comp Plan Update.)

Chair Hughes: Let's see. The next topic I had on there – I know we're running a little but late. The agritourism advisory group finally met last week for the first time?

Tara Satushek: Last Thursday.

Chair Hughes: Last Thursday. They're meeting again tomorrow. So far they have not gotten into policy. They've just gotten started. I don't know where I was going with this now. I know Matt attended. Cindy?

Cindy Kleinhuizer: I'd like to.

Chair Hughes: Okay.

Ms. Kleinhuizer: If I could. But I can't now.

Chair Hughes: Yeah. I know. There's a couple of public members who were there as well. So they're meeting every other week through ____, correct?

Ms. Satushek: Correct.

Chair Hughes: So they're putting together what they'll put together. When will the Planning Commission take this up again?

Ms. Satushek: Unless we have materials for that.

Chair Hughes: Materials, okay.

Ms. Satushek: Yeah, so we'll take their recommendations in addition to the work that was previously done and then work to develop code language to go to the Planning Commission.

Chair Hughes: Okay. _____ the input.

Ms. Satushek: I have fingers crossed but I don't know honestly – yeah, ____ that we have established.

Director Jack Moore: Yeah, I just want to mention – so it would be very helpful for staff once we get to the point that we're drafting code language on recommendations to ensure that we have your final recommendations from this board.

Chair Hughes: Okay.

Director Moore: So ideally, you know, right now by June 6th –

Chair Hughes: Okay.

Director Moore: – or before, if we could get your recommendations on that before that.

Chair Hughes: Okay. So what my ask is going to be that I've been working on is I would like the Land Use Committee to have a meeting. I've already worked on – with input from everyone – a framework of what our positions have been. I would like the Land Use Committee to get together, go over that, discuss them, elaborate on them as much as we can. That way before we get to June we can have a document that share the answers, specifically the five questions that were remanded from the County Commissioners. Don, you hear that?

(incomprehensible)

Don McMoran: Yeah, I gotcha.

Ms. Satushek: I also just wanted to – we just got this up. So if you go to the Planning and Development page, on the left is In the Spotlight, and there's a Community Advisory Group on Proposed Agritourism Code Changes. All the materials will be there. We're working on the transcripts. We're putting the video there. All the materials that are shared. Our goal is to make

this as transparent as possible. So that's where you'll find it. I did also add a hyperlink recently to the Agritourism webpage. It'll have the Planning Commission Remand section and it'll go there. But the easiest way to get to it is just go to the Planning and Development Services webpage and the Spotlight is on the right – that's on this side – and it'll say that – ____ position.

Chair Hughes: Okay. Any questions on agritourism from our Board?

Terry Sapp: Just procedural.

Chair Hughes: Yes?

Mr. Sapp: Jack – and to Jack, if you could help: Would – is it likely that in the course of timing – scheduling and timing – that this Board would see recommendations from the Citizens Action Committee, or is it Community Action Group? Whatever – that one. Would we would see their comments before our comments are in, or are we working separately, independently as this Board and their board?

Director Moore: Yeah, we know.

Mr. Sapp: Before we see their recommendation.

Director Moore: That's a great question. Maybe I'll even revise my recommended date based on that. Yes. I mean, the idea is that everybody works together. I mean, we have, you know, representation on both boards, both this board and the community advisory group. So Matt's there and can relay anything back and forth as needed. Again, as Tara mentioned, we're trying to put everything up there immediately so it can be reviewed in real time. But, you know, I said June 6 just because that was the last date we have scheduled for them, but it doesn't mean we're going to, like, start the morning of June 7th drafting code language.

So yes, if you want to see their output and then do a final review and any other comments that you have, of course. Yeah, absolutely. We would welcome that. So yeah. I presume by, you know – hopefully – I mean, as we're – as I said, we're going to post it as we go, so you're going to see a lot of it. You know, the questions that were in the remand? You're going to see those – their responses to those as we go. Now they did say that maybe they would have a tentative or a draft response to each one, but then they might not want to make it final until they can work through all of them because it might trigger additional ideas back. And so – you know, that's what we talked about last week, is just sort of the format of how they were going to chew on the work and how they were going to ultimately end up producing it. So that's really the bulk of what we talked about last week, and getting to know each other and et cetera, et cetera.

So yes, I guess back to your original question, certainly. If you would like to take a look at those before this Board finalizes your recommendations, we can make that happen.

Mr. Sapp: Again I ask that with concern for this Board, Michael, that we mind that we not be disadvantaged. Agribiz meeting every other week at a really accelerated pace to go through a broad range of material to come to, their own recommendations. We meet monthly. It might not be easy. It isn't. we're less facile in being able to react to action that's progressing at that pace. So keeping our meetings and our topics and our agenda, focus will be important, and if you want the Land Use Committee to be the active party here, I think that will help and we'll – ____ as I am, I will do what we can, at least –

Chair Hughes: Okay.

Mr. Sapp: – to keep up.

Chair Hughes: At least review what we've done.

Will Honea: If I could have for some comment, I wrote that remand resolution. The discussion was essentially, you know, what's going to happen? I mean, there is no right answer, right? It's not like measuring the mass of the moon. It's sort of what's going to be allowed and what isn't. It's a policy discussion. And, you know, this committee is about reaching some sort of community compromise in the sense of sort of making sausage, you know. But the intent was whatever that produces. The Board still wants to have, you know, a more technical understanding of what are the impacts on production commercial agriculture, which is essentially you're a technical advisory committee as to that subject matter.

Mr. Sapp: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Honea: Now none of this is binding, right? Everybody's an advisory body. This body, the citizens of the Planning Commission's an advisory body. The buck ultimately stops for a decision with the Commissioners. I think that was the intention. There's going to be a big tent compromise, but, you know, like, what is this going to – you know, what – let's have some feedback about the long-term impacts to production agriculture as part of that. Does that make sense?

Chair Hughes: Matt, do you have anything you want to share about the first meeting you were at?

Matt Steinman: I'd say, you know, the participants in that particular group have a much broader range of interests than the AAB. And so it's – I agree with Terry. It's good for us – that's my AAB app speaking – to keep apprised of what's going on there because there are a lot – there are players in that group that are – their interests are particularly tourism, or the Tulip Festival, or other things versus just agriculture in the valley and farming in the valley. So I agree we should – and I'll do the best I can to keep us apprised of what's going on.

I think, you know, there is a quorum or a larger set of farmers who are, you know, generational farmers on that Board. And so I think the view is going to be what's best for farming in the valley, but yeah, I absolutely agree and that we should all be working together and trying to find the best solution for farming. And I'll keep us all apprised the best I can.

Chair Hughes: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Sapp: _____ one point and it's I think not a complaint. It's just a simple fact that the timing couldn't be worse for almost anybody in the agricultural sector right now to go into an intense meeting schedule and try to do this. And I feel for this board that you put together to be attentive to be able to keep up with the studies and the background that they need to do to do that, and also for this board to be able to get it to all the folks it needs to and still stay in business the same time it's convenient ____.

Mr. Steinman: It'll be much better starting in November right now than doing this _____.

Mr. Sapp: Again, not a complaint but just a point of –

Director Moore: We acknowledge that. That was definitely shared last week at that group as well. Is the Board here aware of the makeup of that?

Chair Hughes: I have not prepared that yet. I did not share an email.

Director Moore: I just thought maybe it would be of interest. And there's one amendment that I _____ from the list of _____. Tara corrected me that we had recruited one more member for that group.

Chair Hughes: All right, so –

(several people speaking inaudibly)

Mr. Sapp: Jess Anderson.

Director Moore: Yeah.

Chair Hughes: Okay.

Director Moore: An addition that I had – the one I had left out.

Chair Hughes: So Jessie Anderson, Maplehurst Farms; Tony Wisdom, Skagit Valley Farms; Amy Frye, Boldly Grown Farm; Audrey Matheson, Blue (sic) Hill Blueberries; Darrin Morrison, Morrison Farms; Kai Ottesen, Hedlin Farms; Jennifer Schuh, Schuh Farms; Matt Steinman, Foothill Farms. Rob Ashby, Skagit Valley Tulip Festival; and Kristen Keltz, Skagit Tourism Bureau.

Mr. Sapp: Was that just sent to you or to the whole Board?

Chair Hughes: I just – Jack said it to me this morning. I haven't forwarded it to everyone yet.

Mr. Sapp: Yeah, can we get that forwarded to them? Everybody else? And I'm not saying "you." Because it's just nice to reach out to those people as you see them and ask them any background or questions and stay in contact with them – not to _____.

Director Moore: I'm just happy to send that to you. I'm happy to do that.

Chair Hughes: Do you need me to do a quick comment?

Female: Oh, yeah. Just teeing off that group. I mean, I do feel like there's a good contingent of farms on there and I think we talked when we first met that our goal is to kind of solicit input from our respective communities. And so I would like to chat with anyone. You know, I think that obviously kind of what happened with this process around agritourism previously – and it *had* been a disaster. Let's be honest. And so, like, my hope would be that this Board and that group don't just go along on their own paths, not talking, and then come up with completely different recommendations again. Like I think again, kind of like we can all be on the same page; we're all going to have to make some compromises but let's talk about it and be on the same page. That's going to be a stronger argument to put forward. So just to say I'd love to chat with anyone.

Chair Hughes: ___, I imagine you guys will, but when we went through this – you know, because we've been working on this for seven-plus years now – but other guardrails, we felt, came from

existing laws – the GMA, those things. So all those guardrails – explain to everyone, because I feel like that was a lot of confusion of what those guardrails are operating.

Director Moore: Do you mean in this –

Chair Hughes: For this group, yeah.

Director Moore: Uh- Tara, sorry!

Ms. Satushek: Oh, no no no! Yeah – so the goal – we would definitely – Planning staff would be the technical advisors to the group. But the purpose is to just get ahead with the remand questions and then from there discuss feasibility. So that's the approach to this, is to ____ – for, you know, just to get options out there and then can we – what are the parameters then within those options? But I think right now it's just creating the conversation, and obviously subject to GMA. We have to, but that's the approach, is that they're interpreters of the community and they're networks as best as possible, and then we would provide a technical expertise is like – well, you know, a great idea but there's – you know, there's GMA constraints. But a lot of folks have a basic understanding of, you know, the GMA no conversion of ag land. Pretty straightforward, but I do agree that we've been able – _____ really helped facilitate the dialogue and then be the technical experts _____.

Chair Hughes:: You guys can come up with both what is feasible after you hear the dialogue.

Ms. Satushek: Yeah. So the goal is for them to answer the remand questions. And so we have the remand questions done and then we worked to brainstorm them into goals, for them to address those goals, and for us to take that information and make it into actual legislative language.

Chair Hughes: Mm-hmm.

Ms. Satushek: Because they're not code writers. That's not their expertise. It's more just to provide intent and the background and the content. And then from there we can take that content and fit it into what is allowed, what can be legislated, in addition to, you know, the other work that the AAB will do.

Chair Hughes: Okay.

Ms. Satushek: So that's kind of a very long answer to your question.

Mr. Honea: Right. In other cases it doesn't matter what people recommend. We still have to follow the law, as interpreted by the Supreme Court _____. So that's going to be a filter on this at the end of it.

Mr. Sapp: There might be informative for this whole board before the Land Use Committee of this group goes to the – into greater work, does more work. If you could summarize the five elements of – or was it six? – of the remand resolution, that group is reviewing.

Ms. Satushek: Yes. I actually have copies of the framework here, if anybody wants it. It's working. And again, it's on the webpage – that webpage that just went up. So it's taking the remand questions – that's also on the webpage, but I could read them out for you.

Director Moore: We could send these to you as well.

Mr. Sapp: Yeah, but while we're all here as a group maybe we could hear it all at once altogether.

Ms. Satushek: So number 1: Define agritourism and clarify the scope by specifying what activities fall outside the current definition of agricultural accessory uses.

The second question is: Define the criteria for full and lawful participation in the annual Skagit Valley Tulip Festival, ensuring that it is accessible, open, and offers adequate and equitable opportunities for all interested parties.

The third is: Determine whether agritourism should be treated the same east of Sedro-Woolley as in the Skagit and the Samish delta area, and define the approach for each scenario.

Number four: Determine whether temporary use/events are sufficiently detailed in Skagit County Code for agritourist activities within Ag-NRL-zoned lands.

And number five: Assess the consistency of the proposed agritourism code amendment and existing code with the *King County versus Friends of Sammamish Valley* State Supreme Court decision, along with other relevant state level actions related to tourism – agritourism.

And then six, there's just an open option for others to determine – others to be determined by the advisory group.

Mr. Honea: Yeah, I think when we wrote that the King County decision hadn't come out yet. And, you know, so now, you know, it could – you know, sort of implicitly that remand requirement is – you know, consider that decision like it exists now. It's not a theoretical thing in the future. It's there. It's the law. And that intensity to be taken into account in whatever comes forward. Or if it's not, we will have to. So right, might as well.

Chair Hughes: Okay. Thank you.

Skip to pertinent discussion:

Chair Hughes: Terry, Land Use – anything other than what we've already discussed tonight?

Mr. Sapp: No, but I'll emphasize that I am trying to follow Tara's work with – and Jack's – with that advisory group. Having done the work we have, I think it's important that we try to keep up and keep track of and prepare ourselves to be engaged, and I intend to do that.

Chair Hughes: Okay. Thank you.

Skip to adjournment:

Chair Hughes: 8:19.

END