

**Agricultural Advisory Board
Agritourism-Related Discussion
May 14, 2025**

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

Guests: Kim Matthews, Western WA Agriculture Association

County Staff: Jack Moore, Planning Director
Tara Satushek, Senior Planner
Malia Agpawa, Permit Technician/Receptionist

Chair Michael Hughes: All right. Seven o'clock. Let's call the Agricultural Advisory Board to order at seven o'clock on this May the 14th. We have a quorum present to conduct business. Start with introductions. My name is Michael Hughes. I'm Chair of the Board. I'm a potato farmer mostly around Conway.

Steve Wright: Steve Wright, _____, Bow area _____.

Nels Lagerlund: Nels Lagerlund. I'm a dairy farmer in Burlington.

Michael Trafton: I'm Mike Trafton. I'm a sheep and ox ____ Fir Island.

Kim Mower: Kim Mower, cattle rancher up in upriver area. Former dairy farmer.

Matt Steinman: Matt Steinman, diversified vegetables, berries, just east of Sedro behind the pipeline.

Terry Sapp: Terry Sapp. I raise beef cattle in the Siskiyou between Sedro-Woolley and Lyman.

Justin Hayton: Justin Hayton, the nursery on Fir Island.

Don McMoran: Don McMoran, director of WSU, Skagit County Extension.

Malia Agpawa: Malia Agpawa, Skagit County Planning.

Tara Satushek: Tara Satushek, Skagit County Planning.

Jack Moore: I'm Jack Moore, Skagit County Planning.

Chair Hughes: And Cindy, we have you remote?

Cindy Kleinhuizen: Yeah. Cindy Kleinhuizen, beef cattle in Concrete.

Chair Hughes: We'll start (with) April meeting minutes. I'll entertain a motion to accept once we review them.

Mr. Lagerlund: So moved.

Mr. Hayton: Second.

Chair Hughes: Moved by Nels. Looks like a second by Justin. All in favor?

Multiple Members: Aye.

Chair Hughes: Opposed?

(silence)

Chair Hughes: Thank you. Okay. So kind of going in order. We're going to start with an agritourism update. Jack is able to provide us an update on how the committees' stakeholder group is working and where their progress is and what the current timeline is, and then we'll follow it up. And I would like to talk to you as part of that group and what's going on. Then we'll open kind of a general discussion and questions and next steps.

Director Moore: Sure. So generally we're – the community advisory group is getting into the – you know, the meat of the issue at this point. And we're starting to tackle specifics when it comes to the remand questions. One of the biggest items is just trying to establish levels of different activities and then figuring out where to swap those in. Tara could sure fill us in a little bit more on that, and I think we're trying to firm up some final meeting dates as well.

Ms. Satushek: Yeah.

Director Moore: So, Tara, could you help me with that?

Ms. Satushek: Definitely. Just again for a refresher: The community advisory group to the remand is – their goal is to provide policy recommendations to the Department staff to draft an agritourism code that addresses the Board of County Commissioners' remand questions – those five that we keep on mentioning. And that staff will work with the Agricultural Advisory Board to develop a revised recommendation on agritourism to the Board of County Commissioners. So that's just the background, the overview, and why the group has convened. And what our expectation and the goal and the outcome that we would like to see with this is that the group provides specific,

actionable, and realistic and enforceable recommendations to County staff on the areas needing refinement by the Board of County Commissioners – again, for the remand questions and...

So just so far to date, just a status update. The group has met four times out of the eight- meeting series. The next meeting dates are next Thursday, May 22nd, then the following Thursday, May 29th, then June 17th and June 26th. These dates are all on the community advisory group webpage, ___ share with ___ of the group. The agenda's posted there. We try to get it there about a week ahead before the meeting is scheduled. But it has the dates and locations all _____ there. If you want to plan to attend those, they're from 9 to noon. The meetings are all transcribed and recorded. We haven't been live-streaming and it may be something we might want to consider. It's just difficult for me, as a staff, to participate as a staff member and also moderate a Zoom call, but we'll try to look into that some more. But again, everything is available online – what's been done.

A lot of the work that's been done to date has been focused on data sharing and discussion of what agritourism is and what agricultural accessory use is. For example, we've filled them in on just what the voluntary compliance agreement for agritourism facilities is. That was one of the questions. Even though it's outside of their scope of work, they wanted to understand the peripheral activities that were going on. Part of the other background to-date has been going over Skagit County's legislative timeline to-date starting in 2021 when the County initiated its agritourism study to where we are now, working to develop policy language to provide to the Planning Commission in coordination with this advisory group and the Agricultural Advisory Board to provide to the Board of County Commissioners. We have provided and shared with the group the *King County vs. Friends of Sammamish Valley* summary that was provided by Jason that was shared with the ag advisory group by Jack. He'll actually be attending the next meeting, May 22nd, to just have and go over your questions and just provide some more information on the outcomes of that case and how that may shape – or how that *will* shape legislation or County code moving forward.

One of the other activities the group did was – the group brainstormed on: What is the problem we're trying to fix? There's the photo of that and the breakdown of that on the April 24th meeting summary. And the outcome of that basically condensed is a special priority is needed for clear, actionable definitions and thresholds that support agriculture while allowing – excuse me – allowing appropriate a – there's too many a's! – allowing appropriate agricultural accessory uses like agritourism.

So at the next meeting – again, on the 22nd – the group members have been tasked to provide definitions of agritourism and be prepared to share with the group. We have been compiling a group of agritourism definitions based off of what other states are doing, federal – USDA definitions, commonly understood definitions for different jurisdictions, and also the one provided by the Agricultural Advisory Board and the one provided by the Skagitonians stakeholder – multistakeholder working group. So folks are going to take that, refine to what they think, and then share it with the group; and then the group will work through that and ideally come up with a general consensus. Again, we are going to also document any dissenting opinions – just to document the entire process.

And I think that's about it. That's what we have to date so far. So a lot of it has been just data sharing, brainstorming, and then I think the goal is to set the table and just start getting really into to the outcomes of the remand questions. And so there has been discussion amongst the group but there hasn't been any formal consensus on a recommendation to the Planning Department.

Michael, to you.

Chair Hughes: Thank you. Any questions on what Tara provided real quick? Specifically?

(silence)

Chair Hughes: Matt will look back at this point of view as a member of that committee.

Mr. Steinman: Well, thank you, Jack. That's a very great synopsis. There's been a lot of different conversations going on, cross-conversations. You know, there's a lot to talk about here with the five remand questions which I gave a handout so everybody can have an opportunity to really go over them and understand and give feedback.

We really are getting into the gray areas of the critical use – accessory uses – or of accessory uses and really how do you define the scale of an operation and where those breakdowns are at, if you get into the nitty gritty. And there's – I mean, I think the critical team would love to have more opinions from more stakeholders in particular, both from large farms, small farms. They'd just love to have more, hear more from farms in particular right now. Yeah, but that's – you know, if we could have, you know, more crossover between this group and that group. And there's a lot of good farms on that group. And, I mean, we're all really trying to digest all of the input – all the info that we're being given by the Planning Commission and all the info from all the different working groups that have come before us, and try to find some consensus, and all knowing that this isn't like this is what's going to be the final answer. So the more input from more community members, more farms, the better we can have. I mean, in the past some of these other working groups had been very – have had a lot more from the different spaces that are working and we would love to hear from more farms about what they think and what we want to happen going forward.

And those meetings, like Sarah said, they're open – they're open to everybody – so I would encourage more operations to try to figure out a way someone can be there at least parttime to get their say involved. There's opportunities for anybody here to communicate. Yeah, it's – there's so much going on with that right now! So I feel that the more we can get people involved in it from other farmers and other stakeholders the better we can all be out – we can meet to try to get an answer to these remand questions. And in – like you said, we've gone over to a certain degree all five of them, but, you know, now we're really dialing into the nitty gritty of what's going to happen with each of the five remand in particular. That's how it started. And then we've added a sixth, a sixth question that the group had, and then maybe more going forward. But there's so much. Just more stakeholder input would be really great from the whole community is what I think this group would really love to have. Because we're not, like, here to make the decision but we're here to try to convene the public opinion.

Director Moore: Chair, just a quick follow-up to that. One, I want to just echo what Matt said, is they have expressed much interest in gaining more public input and so we've encouraged them to reach out to any groups they're involved with, any people they're involved with when it comes to farming or anything like that to get as much public input as possible. Specifically one of the things I do remember them asking is they wished they had more representation from east county. That's one thing that *is* lacking on that group. There's not a lot of people from far upriver to get any of that perspective.

And a second thing that they asked for was they want to get together with this group, if it's possible. If you are willing and we can arrange that in some fashion, they asked if that would be

possible. So we've been talking about when to do that, timing. Want to make sure – see if that's something you're interested in, et cetera. It'd be nice to have a little – some thoughts on that as well.

Chair Hughes: Would that be something they want to do soon or towards the end of their getting together? Or what's your – what's their thought on that?

Director Moore: _ _ _ _ _ the latest. I know we were discussing that with our facilitator too, what might be the most effective timing for all of that. Tara, what were –

Ms. Satushek: So towards the end, but the concern that was shared with the group is that they don't – I don't want to say "the group," but some members of the group expressed their concern is coming up with an opinion that's wildly divergent from the Ag Advisory Board. So there's not two, you know. But again, I think – so they would like to meet ahead of time before they come up with a recommendation, but then it was also suggested to meet afterwards so that – then that would give staff time to take in the public comment that was previously submitted with the first run group, recommendations from AAB, and recommendations from them, and then come together at that meeting with AAB and CAG – community advisory group – and just – we took what we thought you heard and would fit into proposed code legislation, did we hear you correctly. And so it'd be kind of a filtering process to see, Did we capture what your input was? So those were the two schools of thought on that. But again, it's also tricky for some scheduling _____. It's real important that I would like Meg to be there. She's been the primary facilitator. And also Jack, as well. So probably it would be, like, end of June, early July, and I don't know if that would work with you all's schedule, but that's _____, I think.

Chair Hughes: Yeah, that's fine. _____ come up with something. I mean, people can schedule around it at that point. So I think that's doable.

Ms. Satushek: Okay.

Chair Hughes: I will say, from all of the meetings we've had in the last little bit, now our opinion's out there. It hasn't changed a whole lot yet as far as – but we're also here – we're here to represent production agriculture and that's what our charter says that we do. So it's something we have to keep in mind. But yeah, I think meeting together is kind of, you know, would meld the two together and be ideal.

Ms. Satushek: Yeah, and one of the – I'm sorry to interrupt.

Chair Hughes: Oh, go ahead.

Ms. Satushek: One of the things too is just that we shared with the group was that even if there are differing opinions, just sitting at the same table and just sharing those thoughts. So part of that was from, like, the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival folks and Skagit Tourism, just to have a platform just to kind of share ideas and just understand where everybody's coming from is also one of the outcomes of the meeting that they would like. That they shared. It's just to continue that relationship really. I don't know what it looks like outside of this. I don't know, but I'm just relaying what they've shared.

Mr. Wright: Has there been any research as far as Snohomish County's regulations for agritourism? Because they've got it pretty well down where they're regulating small venues and some very large venues. And if they – those people down there, if they know what their criteria is,

they have to meet in order to function and get along with the county neighbors and everything. Things like that are pretty well worked out.

Mr. McMoran: I've been to Stocker Farms and I'd suggest *not* using Snohomish County's rules and regulations.

Chair Hughes: Well, we could look at them at least.

Director Moore: We could definitely look at them just to see if there are parts we can glean or if the group is interested.

Mr. Wright: Stocker Farms has two other very large things going on there and it has a lot of people. They march a lot of their product in that.

Mr. Sapp: One of the them that stands out in Snohomish County is the Remlinger Farm Project, which is a very large event venue. So I've heard that situation discussed in various discussions that I have, at least. Even here that would be an important example to consider in respect to what could be. Do we want Seattle Theatre Group bringing busloads of people to Skagit County to participate in a musical venue? That's essentially what's going on there. Or would code somehow address such a prospect?

Mr. Wright: Yeah, it's a – _their need – they're addressing things that are very large theater group things and events of paintball and many things there. A lot of entertainment things along with selling apples and cukes and pumpkins and corn and corn mazes. I don't know.

Chair Hughes: Is that grown onsite or brought in from Skagit County?

Mr. Wright: What's that?

Chair Hughes: Is that stuff grown onsite or is it brought in from Skagit County and eastern Washington?

Mr. Wright: They grow 80% of it onsite.

Chair Hughes: Okay. I haven't been there. Amy goes. And then Mike – or –

Mr. Trafton: I have a question regarding the sheet that you handed everybody here, Matt. Were these topics, were they developed at the meeting, these five or six or seven topics?

Mr. Steinman: I believe that these were – they were not developed at the meeting. Neither the County nor by the Commissioners – even the Commissioners' questions to bring back to create a group.

Mr. Trafton: I'm just curious. Item number 5, it says "Assess the consistency of the proposed agritourism code amendments the Supreme Court ____." Could you speak a little bit more to that? What's going on with that and what's the discussion in this group? That's a pretty serious deal.

Director Moore: It's a – is that the – which case is that?

Mr. Trafton: That's the *King County vs. Friends of Sammamish Valley* Supreme Court decision. What's the latest on that?

Director Moore: Sure. So that decision had been rendered. I did get a summary and I did bring this group a while back, and so I could definitely get you a fresh copy and we could email that out if you want to take another fresh look at it. So our attorney provided a summary of the case and then gave us – I also asked him to do kind of lessons learned for Skagit County. You know, give me his opinion after reading all the case and the background. So he did that and he gave about a two-page, page-and-a-half summary of the case; his take on the case; and then about maybe five bullets of things he thought that we may want to keep in mind when we are working on code.

Mr. Steinman: That's the summary Jack was talking about.

Mr. Trafton: Oh, okay.

Mr. Steinman: I can copy that. We can probably get that copied _____ today.

(several people speaking at the same time)

Mr. Steinman: That hadn't been finalized when the group convened, or it was just in the process of being. But since the group has convened, it's been finalized.

Mr. Trafton: I guess my curiosity was the comment "assess the consistency" of the proposed. I mean, what's that mean?

Director Moore: We just didn't know what the decision was going to be when that – you know, when that was handed back to us, it wasn't – we didn't really even have a good handle on what all the subtleties of the case – what was involved there, and then if it would be applicable to us. So I think that's what I took from that in follow-up conversations with the attorneys is – it was just make sure we're not inconsistent with a recent court ruling. So there wasn't – I don't think there was anything more than that. In reviewing that summary, you'll find that a lot of the decision was – the official decision was focused on the SEPA and process, but there were – there are some – there's some language in the decision that kind of helps paint a bit of a picture of agritourism as well – what might be excessive and what might not be. Yeah, when you get a chance – and we'll email that back out to every – the group here. Yeah, it's been a little while since – since I think we had that in front of us.

Ms. Satushek: _____ I forgot to mention. On May 29th Jen with _____ Studios, who is the consultant hired by the State of Washington to draft this state agritourism study and report, will be providing an update on where they're at with that. That'll be May 29th. We don't have the time yet sketched – I mean, that's from nine to noon, but sometime during that time. But I just wanted also to just point that out if anybody wanted to catch that presentation.

Chair Hughes: Okay, just that – the advisory group meeting that that presentation'll be made?

Ms. Satushek: Correct, and it will be recorded too, so if folks want to watch it when they have the time.

Chair Hughes: Okay.

Ms. Satushek: And I'll share that information with Malia to share with the group.

Chair Hughes: That'd be great. Thank you. Okay, so how I envision attacking this in the next month is these five questions, we've kind of worked on them off and on since the remand had

happened. I will get that finalized and sent to the group ahead of time so you can review it on our own time. And then let me know if we have – if I've missed something or changed – (if) we changed something, then we can discuss it more at our June meeting. That way we're prepared and then we could set up – we'd have something we can, one, send to the Commissioners as requested in the same timeline as what the group's working on. And also we have kind of a process and a cohesive message if we end up meeting with the group at the end of June, first of July, and then whatever goes from there goes from there. So does that sound like a decent plan for everyone?

Male: Yeah.

Chair Hughes: Does that work for the County?

Director Moore: Yeah.

Ms. Kleinhuizen:: I would like to be able to attend that meeting. I will be gone at the end of June. I happen to be going to Alaska on a cruise. But I'll be available in the first part of July. So, you know, representing the upriver and being, you know, that we are in the tourism business ourself, it would be nice to join in on that meeting, so if at all possible.

Ms. Mower: You have this one coming up on May 29th, right?

Ms. Satushek: Correct.

Ms. Mower: And where is it located – the meeting itself?

Ms. Satushek: The meetings are at Skagit County Publishing – or Skagit Valley Publishing on Anderson Road. And I could again share that website with Malia to share out. All the meetings are there upcoming except for the June 17th, which is on a Tuesday. That will be – it's also on the website – and that will be at Padilla Bay Estuary.

Ms. Mower: If you could get those kind of details out in an email so a person could see if they can get it on their calendar. _____. Thank you.

Chair Hughes: I'll work with Malia and we'll email the whole group their whole upcoming schedule along with the website and they can access their documents. I'm saying that out loud so you write it down _____ this week! Okay, thank you.

END OF AGRITOURISM DISCUSSION