

**Skagit County Conservation Futures Program Advisory Board
(CFAC)**

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 13, 2015

Members in Attendance

Scott DeGraw	Owen Peth	Steve Sakuma	Mike Hulbert
Andrea Xaver	Carolyn Kelly	Keith Wiggers	

Staff in Attendance

Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works
Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning Department
Dan Berentson, Skagit County Public Works
Katie McCulloch, Skagit County Public Works

Open

Meeting opened at 7:05 a.m.

Member Update

Kara gave an update regarding the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). The Board of County Commissioner appointed advisory committee will meet for their first meeting on January 22, 2015.

Carolyn said there is talk about Governor Inslee contributing seven million dollars to the VSP planning phase.

Meeting Minutes

Mike moved to approve the October 8, 2014 meeting minutes and Andrea seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Financials and Grant News

Kara gave a historical review of easements that closed between 2012 and 2013 and how we got to the point of grant reimbursement in late 2014. There are currently two easements waiting for reimbursement from USDA.

Kara noted there is enough cash in the Farmland Legacy fund to close nearly all the pending applications this year. She also mentioned that a large property easement will be forthcoming that could include eight development rights consisting of 280 plus acres. This would be a partnership with Skagitians to Preserve Farmland. Carolyn said there is a possibility of USDA funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. In order to not lose

momentum, Scott said that the CFAC should develop a strategy to move quickly to protect these properties.

Kara reported that funding from RCO will be known later this year.

Kara said that the buffer clause in the 2013 USDA agreement is problematic. It is against Skagit County policy to mandate buffers, and property owners do not support the use of this USDA agreement. The best solution to move forward is to remove the buffer clause and update the subdivision paragraph. There will be additional information regarding this issue in the near future.

County legal staff is working up an easement draft that will include USDA and RCO funding language as exhibits. This way, one template can be used and unnecessary exhibits eliminated.

Scott recommended that staff move forward with all pending applications by July, which is when RCO will make their funding decisions, and move forward with the assumption that USDA funding will not be included. Kara suggested that the next two CFAC meetings be dedicated to ranking the pending applications.

Monitoring

Keith was concerned about long-term monitoring funding mechanisms for the Farmland Legacy Program (FLP). This issue could be of serious concern if the FLP became inactive. There was a consensus that there is no threat of this occurring presently or in the near future, but was a valid concern and can be addressed at a later time if needed. Scott added that as long as there was a tax base being allotted to the FLP by the County, funding was sufficient to continue monitoring and this was not a real concern.

Kara reported that Eric Nelson submitted all the 2014 monitoring reports in time for USDA requirements.

Skagitionians to Preserve Farmland (SPF) and CFAC Meet and Greet

There were several comments from the CFAC that the meet and greet between the SPF and CFAC was beneficial. Keith said he learned about the history of SPF, and it was good to share common goals. Dan said it was good to connect with SPF outside the work environment and become aware of all parties involved in the processes. Andrea also said the meeting was beneficial. There was a consensus among the CFAC that it would be beneficial to pursue additional meet and greet events with other groups and agencies who share similar goals.

Other Business

Scott will contact Commissioner Janicki and invite her to one of next meetings to meet the board and answer questions.

The CFAC will be attending the April 7, 2015 Skagit County Board of Commissioner Public Works agenda meeting to answer questions they may have and make introductions. The regular scheduled CFAC meeting, April 14, will be moved to April 7 and end at 8:30 am so the CFAC can attend the agenda meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is Tuesday, February 10, 2015. Keith announced that he is not available to attend this meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 am