

**Skagit County Conservation Futures Program Advisory Board
(CFAC)
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday December 8, 2015**

Members in Attendance

Scott DeGraw	Wendy Pare	Owen Peth
Steve Sakuma	Keith Wiggers	Andrea Xaver

Members Absent

Mike Hulbert

Staff in Attendance

Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works
Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning & Development Services

The meeting opened at 7:00 a.m.

Wendy Parr was introduced to the group as the new CFAC member representing the Skagit Conservation District. Carolyn Kelly, the previous CFAC member resigned.

There were no member updates and no changes to the agenda.

November Meeting Minutes

Owen moved to approve the November 10, 2015 meeting minutes and Keith seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Skagitionians to Preserve Farmland (SPF) Meeting Recap

The SPF Board and CFAC met on November 24 to collaborate funding strategies for a future property purchase. Scott learned the SPF operation philosophy. Scott and Keith agreed a future meeting between the CFAC and Skagit Land Trust would be beneficial. It's a manner which brings funding partners together. This discussion transitioned to property scoring. CFAC comments are bulleted below.

Scott:

The Farmland Legacy Program (FLP) scoring system does not account for match funding in a way that makes these properties as high of priority as they might be. This issue must be addressed so that when such properties are brought forward we respond in a fair and fiscally responsible way.

The county did not adopt the Strategic Plan suggested by American Farmland Trust a few years ago.

Steve:

We need a system which works the stand of time. We need steady input to show how the current system works. Once we get through the current generational easement closing, we may see future easements closing with a younger generation shift with younger farmers. We may see changes in the next ten years. The CFAC will change too, and we need to stay flexible. Generational change will happen.

Andrea:

This program needs to be flexible to accommodate various funding considerations, and any changes in circumstances for farming and farmers.

Wendy:

Funding will change too, and we need to accommodate these changes as we go along.

Keith:

Maintain flexibility. Is there a conflict between public and private funding partners, and how does it affect pending applications in the hopper? Which one becomes a priority, and are we able to treat all fairly?

Wendy:

Transparency is important. Part of the FLP marketing program could be a statement on how we approach positioning in the hopper.

All:

The CFAC said they have strived to be fair and desires a written policy so the intention is clear.

Owen:

There is an interest to preserve ag lands not farmed, i.e. lands near Interstate 5. If ag land is preserved through this program then it needs to be farmed. It would interest the CFAC to focus points for areas potentially convertible. Let's preserve all this land.

Steve:

There could be a challenge with what Owen is proposing. There is not a process which clearly defines this authority. The more we work together for a common interest, then a process can be obtained. The purchase pendulum can shift to the right or left, but the CFAC must be centered through the purchase process.

Keith:

We can preserve this farmland, but we can't make somebody farm the land. We need to focus on the general principle which keeps development out of ag lands.

Andrea:

There needs to be an educational component on how ag lands can be preserved.

Financials

Kara reviewed the cash on hand, temporary investments, and the sheet showing the properties in the hopper. Andrea is requesting a column showing where the property is located. Kara will make a map showing the location of all pending applications.

Kara discussed the closing schedule for the 2014/2015 pending applications and she distributed the easement template.

Several CFAC members are requesting a graph showing future acreage preserve trends into the future. Kara said the graph presented to the Board of County Commissioners last April illustrates the trend.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 12, 2016