

**Skagit County Planning Commission
Update: Agritourism Study
January 24, 2023**

Planning

Commissioners: Kathy Mitchell
Mark Knutzen
Vince Henley
Amy Hughes
Tim Raschko, Chair
Joe Woodmansee
Tammy Candler, Vice Chair
Martha Rose
Jen Hutchison

Staff: Jack Moore, Assistant Planning Director
Sarah Ruether, Long Range Planning Manager
Jenn Rogers, Long Range Planner

Public Remarks

Commenters: Larry Sapp
Andrew Miller

Chair Tim Raschko: (gavel) Good evening, everybody. The January 24, 2023, meeting of the Skagit County Planning Commission is now in order. We have everybody present. And the first thing I'd like to do is amend the agenda. There is no provision for an election of officers and I think it's appropriate that we do that tonight. So does anybody care to make a motion to amend the agenda to include an election of officers?

Commissioner Martha Rose: So moved.

Commissioner Kathy Mitchell: Second.

Chair Raschko: Discussion?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: It's been moved and seconded. All those in favor, say "aye."

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Aye. And those opposed?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: So that passes. Before we go to that, I'd entertain a motion to approve the minutes of our last meeting.

Commissioner Vince Henley: I so move.

Commissioner Mitchell: Second.

Chair Raschko: It's been moved and seconded to approve the meetings. Is there any discussion on the minutes?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: They're all in order so all those in favor, say "aye."

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Aye. And those opposed?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: That follows. So I will now open the floor for nominations for chair of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Joe Woodmansee: I have a nomination.

Chair Raschko: Yes, sir?

Commissioner Woodmansee: I feel like if something's not broke don't try to fix it, so I'd like to nominate you, Tim, as our chair and Tammy as our vice chair.

Chair Raschko: Okay, thank you.

Commissioner Mitchell: Second.

Chair Raschko: Well, are there other nominations?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Come on!

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay. Great. So all those in favor of myself being chair, say "aye."

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Those opposed?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Any abstentions? Aye.

(laughter)

Chair Raschko: Great. Thank you. And then for vice chair, all those in favor of Tammy Candler for vice chair, please say “aye.”

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Opposed?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: So congratulations to us both. Thank you.

(applause)

Vice Chair Tammy Candler: Abstentions are futile.

Chair Raschko: So we’ll open the floor now for Public Remarks. Does anybody wish to address the Commission?

Terry Sapp: I do.

Chair Raschko: Please go ahead.

Mr. Sapp: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Please state your name and address.

Mr. Sapp: Yes, my name – thank you for allowing me to speak for a moment. My name is Terry Sapp. My address is 804 Ferry Street, Sedro-Woolley, and not far from there my wife and I farm a couple of farms, one of which is a farm where I was raised. Can you hear me? Do you think it’s recording okay if you’re doing that? Whatever. I’ll try to speak up.

So I would like to speak to this topic of agritourism and I have a few points to make. I’ll try to make them all in my three minutes. The first one I’d like to make is – the first thing I’d like to say is that a lot of good, I think, is found and spoken about regarding agritourism and I support a lot of that. I was involved in agritourism. My wife and I created a farm stay on one of our farms and it was a lovely, lovely experience. Families came and participated with us in our farm activities. Mainly we raise beef but we have other animals that kids love. But bad things happened too. And a really bad thing happened next door to us when a – the immediate neighbor decided to make his barn into what I’ll call a party barn, and on two different occasions it was a mess. We had over 100 cars parked on a small parcel. The sheriff came twice. It was chaos, mayhem, and nobody’s gotten over it. Also you’ll see – I can share with you an article from the *Seattle Times* about mayhem in the Sammamish Valley, where a wine party was proposed and hundreds of cars showed up, blocked the roadways. Parking was a mess, and the sheriff in King County couldn’t manage it whatsoever. Wonderfully long article describing mayhem.

Secondly, I’d like to say that as a member of the Agricultural Advisory Board our Advisory Board has written, has deliberated, discussed, investigated, and reported on agritourism on several occasions. I hope you have received our work. It’s formidable. We spent a lot of time working on it in the small – I’m sorry – in the land use committee, in particular. I chair that. We’ve spent hundreds of hours. We have written, we’ve published, we’ve shared with the County and I hope

with you what we think of agritourism. Essentially I'll say generally, broadly supportive of agricultural activity. And this central point: Agritourism activity in the ag lands where it's –

(sound of timer)

Mr. Sapp: – accessory to agriculture only. That's the central point the Agricultural Advisory Board has made.

Thirdly, I'd like to say –

Chair Raschko: Your time's up. If you're the only one, how much longer have you?

Mr. Sapp: I'm halfway. Thirdly, I'd like to say –

Chair Raschko: Go ahead.

Mr. Sapp: – watch the statistical report that you'll be presented carefully. Statistics are a fascinating area of study. But one of them that I take out of it, which I think is most prominent, the percentage number that I found that was the largest of them all – the highest number with the percentage sign behind it was those who said agritourism activities in the ag zone should be accessory to agriculture only. That was 84%. That was the largest percentage number I found in the studies. I think that is central and it supports what the Agricultural Advisory Board believes as well. Accessory to agriculture in the ag zone.

And finally I'll say I've spent a great deal of time studying the Growth Management Act impact on land preservation – rural, agricultural, commercially viable land preservation – and this topic has been very central to one case in particular. Several others but one case in particular I think everybody who wishes to be a decision maker about this topic should read. Growth Management Hearing Board of Central Puget Sound, the *Friends of the Sammamish Valley versus King County* is 55 pages. It's extremely instructive. It describes very clearly a long history of difficulties where wineries, breweries, and distilleries planted themselves in the Sammamish Valley. When the study was all done – pardon me; my voice is cracking – 50 out of 54 of them were found to be illegal. Just weren't noticed until the curtain was raised and there they were. And now what shall they do about it? Ordinances, superior courts, Growth Management hearings – it's not settled yet. It's been going on for two years. We can learn from what has happened elsewhere. Thank you very much.

Chair Raschko: You're welcome. I'd just like to go on record to say that I appreciate your comments. Normally I don't allow people to speak over time because normally there's a number of people and it becomes unwieldy.

Mr. Sapp: I'm not usually a bully but –

Chair Raschko: No, no. I just want to say that. In this instance I thought it was a good thing to let you finish your piece, so thank you.

Commissioner Mitchell: There's another one.

Chair Raschko: Oh, we have another one? Oh, I'm sorry. I wouldn't have let you go on if I had known that!

Andrew Miller: My name is Andrew Miller. I live at 15601 Ovenell Road. I'm a PUD commissioner so I appreciate you running your meeting an hour-and-a-half after ours tonight. I also farm. I grow tulips. But tonight I'm here as a community member and as a father. I've been involved in agritourism and economic development for the last six years. I grew up here in the valley and I came back to raise my family. And I'm excited about the potential for my kids to also run out into the world and then come back and want to have an amazing place to grow up. We have amazing natural beauty here in Skagit Valley. I'm not telling you anything you don't know. I have – I can only applaud the Planning Department for the effort that's gone into this study. I think that it's very important that we also take a step back and really land on what we're trying to accomplish with any policy change. I think, you know, for me, I've come at this from the perspective of quality of life – a lot of the conversations I have. There are policy decisions that will positively affect the quality of life as it pertains to our agricultural heritage and our agricultural economy. And in an effort, there are policy decisions that we can make that will also make that a more diverse and approachable. And agritourism and small holder agriculture is a way that we can do that, and it doesn't actually negatively impact some of the larger – some of the commodity concerns and a lot of the other concerns that you may – that I've seen in the study and whatnot.

And so I guess the two things that I would say on that is I would invite the Commission to also take that perspective of what are the decisions that we can make that will actually improve or enhance or create more pathways to sustainable agriculture in a diversified and approachable way. That's something that's really important to me.

The other is – and I love surveys, but an anonymous survey that drives so much of so many – and again, I will say that the Planning – I've been involved from Day One, it feels like, with that and I know that they've done the very best that they can with what they have, but my concern with this tool is that if we allow an anonymous survey to drive – just really impactful without expert evidence, for lack of a better term, it's talking to the – my approach – and then I will wrap up – but our opportunity – we're 80 miles from six-and-a-half million people; there's projected to be 14 million people in the next 20 years, right? We can do things. We can grow things, we can provide products and services consistent with our values that will allow us to maintain what it is that we love about living and working and enjoying Skagit Valley, and experience is a part of that. And I think if we can – and I know that we can, because other communities have done it – create policy decisions that will make that sustainable and avoid the travesties and the keggers in the barn and all these other messes that go into it – the parts that we *don't* like. I think if we can be intentional about that –

(sound of timer)

Mr. Miller: – we've got a great opportunity. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Thank you. Anybody else?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Jenn, is there anybody online who wishes to speak?

Jenn Rogers: If there is anyone on Zoom that wishes to speak, can you please unmute your mic and indicate that you'd like to speak, please?

(silence)

Ms. Rogers: No one has unmuted as of yet.

Chair Raschko: Nobody?

Ms. Rogers: Nobody has unmuted their microphone.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Thank you. Well, that'll end our Public Remarks. I appreciate your comments. So we'll turn to our Agritourism Study Update.

Sarah Ruether: Hello. Good evening. I'm Sarah Ruether, long range planning manager. So this update is primarily about the survey that we had, to go over the process of where we've been and where we're going.

For the discovery phase, which was this fall and winter with the survey and the smaller meetings and the bigger public forum, which was on December 6th. And we're coming to the survey results. And our next meeting we're going to have Will Honea discuss agriculture income verification system that he developed for building a house – a way to verify agricultural income and see if that's a fit for future agritourism policy. And we hope to have policy options in the February 28th meeting. So that's our tentative schedule, and then spring-ish to hearing deliberations. So that's our plan. It's always – you know, it's iterative, and policy can be iterative. So I'll try to – big picture what the process is.

So the Fall '22 survey had approximately 17,000 postcards sent out to rural Skagit County. It was everywhere in Skagit County where you didn't live in an incorporated town. And we tried to take out duplicates and that kind of a thing, but there may have been duplicates. It was mailed in mid-October and it closed in mid-December and we got 651 responses. And over 90% of people who took the survey lived in Skagit County and about one-third owned or leased farmland, and over 80% support agritourism when it is accessory to the primary agricultural use.

And for the location, most of the results were kind of in the west Mount Vernon area – 26%. But you do see the other areas: Sedro-Woolley, Anacortes, east Mount Vernon, Bow, Burlington, and La Conner were also represented in smaller numbers.

And for weddings: About two-thirds – 68% – thought weddings should not be prohibited but could help farmers keep farming with conditions. They were supportive of allowing weddings as special events limited in size and frequency. And weddings was one of those ones that had a lot of comments, as we all know. There were a lot of comments. There was over 200 comments, so if you want to read through the comments you can get a sense of what that kind of controversy is.

Tasting rooms: Most agreed to allowances for accessory tasting rooms subject to a special use permit with conditions. And a special use permit is the one with a hearing examiner. It's a little bit more involved and it involves notice. It's not just an outright permitted use. So with more intense permitting, they thought that this was an okay use. About two-thirds agreed to having small tasting rooms and about half thought moderate-sized tasting rooms should be okay also. So it's not – it was a little more mixed, but I think those that thought it was a good idea thought with adequate kind of oversight, regulatory oversight, it could be doable.

Farm stands and U-Pick: Most would make no changes to the code, so this was an easy one. And most would like to simplify the permit process and a little over half would update design standards. So this was an easy one.

And bed and breakfasts: Most – 90% – would continue accessory bed and breakfast allowances. This kind of says to me that that permitted use is not being used or abused, at least for those who took the survey.

Temporary farm stays: A little over half – 58% – would allow a temporary farm stay or RVs, including – if the days and number of vehicles were limited. This one was interesting because more support on this item actually came from those who owned or leased farmland versus some of the other ones. There was more support on those who didn't, so we thought that was interesting when we looked at that result.

Festivals and events: Most – 88% – would continue to have the temporary activity regulation special event permits for festivals and events. Most would not limit the number or size of events differently than what we're doing now. So I don't know. This result to me said that our current way that we have festivals and events, people didn't want changes to that. That's how I read it.

Permits and procedures: Most would like to see updated application forms. Most would like to see exemptions for low-use/low-impact activities. And most would like to see an annual self-certification form. Most would like to see a multi-year, programmatic permit. This is kind of a managed permit that you don't – it doesn't automatically get grandfathered into the next property owner. It's something that requires more oversight. And most would like to see more code enforcement.

So generally – I'm summing it up – the support for agritourism seemed that if it was an accessory to the primary agricultural use, people were more supportive of it. More support for agritourism activities when it was temporary in nature and permitted with conditions on the size and frequency and/or a special use permit – which is a permit with a hearing examiner – to notify neighbors and have maybe a more thoughtful way of mitigating impacts. There was also more support for agritourism if the permitting process included an annual certification or programmatic permits that ensured that the use is managed and re-evaluated periodically.

So with these general ideas, we'll work with BERK, who's developed agritourism policies for other places, to try to come up with policy options. So with that, I will take questions. Kathy – or Commissioner Mitchell?

Commissioner Mitchell: You said BERK's – is it okay if I ask her, Chair?

Chair Raschko: Go ahead, and then Jen.

Commissioner Mitchell: Okay. So BERK has worked with other people to do these kinds of things? How many other counties have they done this with where they've had outcomes for new ordinances? Do you know?

Ms. Ruether: I'd have to talk to Lisa about that. I mean, I know it's a consulting firm that's been around a long time, but I couldn't say off the top of my head.

Commissioner Mitchell: Maybe the gist of the question really goes towards, Are we seeing conversions for this in Washington state for doing more ag tourism? And, if so, how much?

Ms. Ruether: I mean, she's given – like in the policy paper, she gave examples of, you know, like Terry was just talking about King County. It's much more urbanized. I think the more urbanized counties probably have had to deal with this in maybe a more intense form because, you know,

urbanization just has – all those more intense uses are just – they’re closer. So I think the more urbanized counties, like King County and Snohomish County, have definitely kind of – they’re ahead of us in terms of dealing with this so they – both of those two counties have done a lot with agritourism. I think Pierce County as well. It’s also pretty urban. It’s got Tacoma and, you know. But, you know, also the east side. You know, think about Yakima and kind of the wine country there. We’re not the only county dealing with this. But it’s all about balance, right? Having people come enjoy your farm but not having, you know, preserving agriculture. So I think that’s the policy, you know, nuance that – and other counties have dealt with that. And I’m sure that the policy actions that are brought forth will be modeled. I mean, the programmatic permit kind of idea has also been modeled off of other counties.

Commissioner Mitchell: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Jen?

Commissioner Jen Hutchison: Thank you, Chair. Hi, Sarah. Your opening slides had something noting income verification to do a policy as an item to explore moving forward? I’m really curious why, how, what measure of income, and what kind of policy would that be leading to?

Ms. Ruether: I think the idea was if we – since, you know, over 80% said they would like to make sure that it’s an accessory to the primary agricultural use as one of the goals to ensure that we don’t have a loss of farmland. That, you know, you don’t buy farmland specifically to do this. It’s just that you have farmland and you’re doing it as an accessory. So Will Honea, our attorney, developed – in 2010 he developed a policy paper about ensuring that housing was an accessory use. So to give development rights, you had to verify income of your farm, and Schedule F is the way the Assessor verifies that you have agricultural income. So it’s a way that’s already been developed so that we don’t have to reinvent the wheel. I mean, there are other ways that you could verify that it’s an accessory use, but since we already have this, it’s already developed, we already have the expertise inhouse, it seems like a good thing to explore.

Commissioner Hutchison: Okay. And so I would assume that anybody trying to engage in agritourism endeavors has been filing a Schedule F to be considered ag use in the first place, so do you know – if somebody’s doing accessory use or earning accessory income to their existing farm, isn’t that also accounted for on their existing Schedule F filing, or are there separate –

Ms. Ruether: These are going to be Will questions!

Commissioner Hutchison: Okay. Okay.

Ms. Ruether: At this point, it’s only used for residential properties. It’s not – this mechanism is not used for agritourism right now. It’s used for, you know, if you’re building a home or other development rights. It’s not used for this policy option. But Will would be able to answer all your questions about the format and the forms and how they do it. It’s not used for agritourism at this point yet, though.

Commissioner Hutchison: Interesting. Okay. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Well, Vince and then Mark.

Commissioner Henley: Yes. I have – I’m not sure if I saw it in the study itself, but have you considered with this study how to avoid what I’ll call “mission creep,” where the tourism part begins

to overshadow the agricultural part and it becomes more important than the fundamental agricultural part/portion of the agritourism expression?

Ms. Ruether: We haven't got that much into the details, but I do think that the indications in the survey that people wanted, like, a programmatic permit where you have a, you know, yearly certification – those kinds of check-ins or – you know, it seemed to be that, like, the more kind of intense kind of permitting to kind of verify these things – that the people that responded to the survey were very open to that. So I think, you know, when we develop like a – either a programmatic permit or a self-certification kind of form, we'll try to build in those kinds of, you know, policy options to capture that. We haven't quite got to those fine details yet, though.

Commissioner Henley: I would ask how self-certification would work without some sort of enforcement or penalty for exceeding the ratio of tourism to agriculture.

Ms. Ruether: That's a fair question. We just haven't – we haven't got there yet.

Commissioner Henley: Okay.

Ms. Ruether: How to give it teeth – right?

Chair Raschko: Okay. Let's see. Just a second, Mark. Mark's next. Did you have something?

Vice Chair Candler: No.

Chair Raschko: Okay, then after Mark we'll have Joe and then Amy. Not Amy – okay. So go ahead, Mark.

Commissioner Mark Knutzen: The income verification question. You said the policy's already been developed. I am familiar with what's called the Current Use Assessment, which, if you have property – it can be agricultural property – you need to provide verification of income to keep it under current use assessment, which is based on current use, versus market value. And you have to send documentation – tax records, leases. But it *is* ag ground. Now do you think that's what this is talking about, or is that something – this income verification?

Ms. Ruether: I think so. I'm not the expert. That's why I'm having – that's why I'm going to have Will come. It's a mechanism that goes through the Assessor.

Commissioner Knutzen: Right, and I know the one I talked about is, but it might not be the one that they're thinking about instituting for this policy.

Ms. Ruether: Okay. Well, save your questions for Will that are detailed, because he actually developed it. But it is a way of ensuring that there is income from agriculture –

Commissioner Knutzen: Okay.

Ms. Ruether: – on the lands. Yeah.

Chair Raschko: Thank you, Mark. Joe?

Commissioner Woodmansee: I'm back on the housing income thing. You mentioned about the ability to build a house. That was tied to the income being produced. Is that what you're saying?

Ms. Ruether: Yeah. I mean, I'm talking about something that I don't know very well about so if it's a technical question I may have to just defer to Will. That's why I do have him coming here! You will be able to quiz him all about it!

Commissioner Woodmansee: What perked my question was, so let's say somebody goes through that process. They build this house and they have this farm and then they move on. And what happens to the house? Who gets to occupy it next?

Ms. Ruether: You mean, is that use kind of a grandfathered in kind of a thing?

Commissioner Woodmansee: Well, once it's there it'd be kind of silly for it to not be able to be lived in. But the reason they got to build the house was because they approved the income they were going to have on the agriculture activity. And let's say I didn't always make money every year that I was in the building – had my own company. We had some pretty down years. And maybe the farm goes under for some reason. So what happens with their living right? You know, their housing right in that circumstance? Because if it had to have this relationship to income to be able to be built, where do we go from there? I don't need an answer! I don't expect an answer! I'm just priming the pump!

Ms. Ruether: Well, write these down and we'll have Will answer all of them. But the reason we're bringing it forward is it felt like, Why should we reinvent the wheel when Will's already developed the system and kind of worked some of these bugs out? So he may have the perfect answer for you.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Yeah. Sure.

Ms. Ruether: I'm not the expert.

Chair Raschko: Mark?

Commissioner Knutzen: I may be able to answer that a bit. On the one that I talked about, it's gross revenue, not net income.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Yeah, but my example is let's say the revenue goes away but the house got built.

Commissioner Knutzen: Oh, right.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Then what do you do now? I mean, I don't think housing's a *bad* thing. I'm sure you all know that. That's why the relationship between the two is what perked my interest, you know. It seems like once the house is there it should be used for a house. And maybe it can be used only by somebody who farms the land, but that's – you know, title conditions and stuff like that to deal with. But it's, you know, something to dive into.

Ms. Ruether: Okay. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Did you have something, Jen?

Commissioner Hutchison: I'm good. Thank you.

Vice Chair Candler: Can I just – I’m speculating, but I think it has more to do, perhaps, with the tax rate on that land whether it can stay in ag or not. But I could be wrong. But that might be something to ask – actually it might have to do with if there’s not a significant income you have to look for a different taxation.

Chair Raschko: Anybody else?

Ms. Ruether: Yeah, I mean if you get verified as open space it is like that, so it might –

Vice Chair Candler: I was just wondering if that’s what it is.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Kathy and then Mark.

Commissioner Mitchell: One of the things that was asked by people in the comments, which came up a few times – and I don’t know if you’ve got the answer for this now, but I’d like it for later – is what was temporary in reference to the different kinds of events and things. And I wouldn’t have the slightest idea. Let’s say for the RV stays: Is temporary three to five days? Two months? Somewhere between or, you know, and the same with other kinds of things. And so I’m hoping when we get a little further along if you guys can give us real specifics on those kinds of things. That’d be helpful.

Ms. Ruether: Yeah. I mean, I don’t think we – those are detailed. This is kind of a big overview, trying not to just inundate people too much with questions. But, you know, it’s a good question of how do you define “temporary,” and that will be a big detail, right?

Commissioner Mitchell: Yeah. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Okay, Mark?

Commissioner Knutzen: Several weeks ago we asked you to send us information on current zoning. You sent out the summary allowances. Weddings: Current regulation, not allowed. If it’s for not-profit of family wedding you can have it, but if you hire a caterer or do any money, it’s not allowed. Well, we all know that they are being held. So essentially they’re out of code? I’m not trying to throw anybody under the bus on this. I’m just trying to get myself clear.

Ms. Ruether: Yeah. I mean, I think you have to have a connection to agriculture. So I suppose you could get – if you’ve got a special use permit and you said you were using the flowers from your farm, maybe you could technically do it. But you’re – you know, there’re a lot –

Commissioner Knutzen: It’s the commercial wedding venues that I’m talking about.

Ms. Ruether: Yeah. It’s not a permitted use. You’re correct.

Commissioner Knutzen: Okay, thank you.

Chair Raschko: Nobody else?

Commissioner Amy Hughes: Chair? When we’re done – this isn’t specific to the survey but it is for information that I would like to have as we go forward – at what point do you want that asked? It might be more for Jenn Rogers because with you it’s more the survey and working with BERK. Or do you do both? Are you going to do both for us? Gather information.

Ms. Ruether: Gather information? I mean, yeah. Like questions about agritourism kind of a thing?

Commissioner Hughes: Well, okay this is what I'm looking for, and I'll just push it down. To go forward I often need to go back and analyze history. How did we get here? And so these are the things I would like. I read at one point the date when the Department of Agriculture for our nation was established and it was, like, in the late 1800s. It was under President Lincoln. I'd like to know the why. Why did they decide at that point that we needed a department of agriculture? Which then takes us into: When did we establish natural resource lands – Ag-NRL – even forestry? When did that pop into our collective history? I'd like to know when the open space act was established and why. And then it would go into the Growth Management Act and why. And those are all national and state acts/dictates. I think that we need to have that information before we work on altering, changing, or including other things.

And then I ask for other counties' summaries. We talked about in Snohomish and King – how's it going? Are you getting complaints from neighborhoods? Is there too much? What's kind of going on down there where they're already doing it? And so I'd just like some summaries to build to my knowledge bank of where we could go from here. What are our commitments to the past, before we decide how we're going to go forward into the future?

Ms. Ruether: Okay, I can talk to Lisa and try to do some research on my own too.

Commissioner Hughes: Okay, thank you. To add, I could do that myself but I thought it might be helpful if I'm asking for everybody else just to see that information too before we go any further. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Anybody else?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay, one thing that's sort of open is I'm deducing that we're going to get some information from Mr. Honea. Will he be at a meeting or will he just be given these questions and he'll give a written answer?

Ms. Ruether: No, he said he's going to come so he'll be –

Chair Raschko: He said what? I'm sorry.

Ms. Ruether: He'll be at a meeting. He'll be here live to answer your questions. That's the beauty of using a system that's already been developed inhouse is you have the expert inhouse! So, yes, he will. You can ask him all your questions. He said he would come.

Chair Raschko: He's also our legal counsel, so that's good.

Ms. Ruether: That's true!

Chair Raschko: Great. Okay, is there anything else? Do you have anything else?

Ms. Ruether: No.

Chair Raschko: Okay, well, thank you very much. Very helpful. And I think those are great questions. And so with that we will turn to the Director's Update. Is that Mr. Moore?

Jack Moore: Yes. Good evening. Thank you, Chair. I don't have a specific update but I just want to say that if the Planning Commission needs anything from the Department or would like any specific heads-up on something we're working on, or where we're at or status of any particular, you know, reviews or efforts that we're doing, I'm happy to answer those and bring those back. And I would like to know if there's any – like an ongoing thing that you're interested in that I could bring back to you. But for tonight I don't have anything specifically prepared to present.

Chair Raschko: Jen?

Commissioner Hutchison: Thank you, Chair. Jack, with ongoing discussion around the wind, we received some information recently that you guys are talking to the Board of County Commissioners about the wind and the docket. And so I'm just curious. In my reading of your shared information I didn't see any perspective that related to my viewpoints with actual community residential properties perhaps having a desire for more than one wind turbine perhaps to touch the rooftops and to integrate with their solar panel systems. I wonder: Is there going to be public hearing with the County Commissioners that perhaps I would be able to put some visions into their minds about that type of perspective? Because nobody's talking about it.

Mr. Moore: Jenn, could you help with that?

Ms. Rogers: So we did provide the recorded motion and everything from the transcript and information on the previous meetings to the Board of County Commissioners. So your information that you provided then is certainly included. If the Board decides to make substantial changes to the docket petition – the code language – then we would have to have a public hearing. If they decide to not have any changes to the petition and to decide to vote up or down on the petition as is, there will not be another public hearing. There will be – before they do any major vote, they always will open up the floor if anyone would like to provide brief comment right before they take the vote. So if there is a public hearing, you could come to deliberations. That would be an option.

Commissioner Hutchison: Do you know when they're scheduled for that?

Ms. Rogers: We haven't scheduled it yet. Our next hearing is on February 6th at 11 a.m. So that will just be about the wind turbine petition. That's for them to decide whether or not they want to make changes. We haven't made any scheduled changes yet after that because we want to know if we need to schedule a public hearing before deliberations.

Commissioner Hutchison: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Any other questions for staff?

Commissioner Mitchell: I do.

Chair Raschko: Go ahead, please.

Commissioner Mitchell: General kind of housekeeping things: We've had quite a bit of turnover and a whole lot of work from the last few years. Two years ago, Jack, we had been working on the bylaws for the Planning Commission – I know, groans from everybody.

(laughter)

Commissioner Mitchell: The Planning Commission bylaws, the last ones that we had that we're operating off of are 2009. A number of things have changed. We had done a lot of good work and we were so close to being done! We were just about ready to get the appendix next. And I don't know what your schedules are going to look like, especially since this is some huge stuff on our plates. But if you do find some holes, could you see about finding ways for us to finish that?

Mr. Moore: Okay. I'll take a look at the status of that and see if I can bring that back to you for any final work.

Commissioner Mitchell: Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Nobody else? Okay, well, thank you.

Mr. Moore: You're welcome.

Chair Raschko: Okay, we'll go to Planning Commissioner Comments and Announcements. Mark, what have you got?

Commissioner Knutzen: I have nothing.

Chair Raschko: Really? Jen?

Commissioner Knutzen: I can come up with something if you'd like!

Commissioner Hutchison: I just want to express how much I appreciate the work that went into that survey for the agritourism. When I was reading through the 200-and-some page report that we received in our email for tonight's meeting, I was just mind-blown by the participation, the types of comments that you allowed for and that we were able to review. And I really appreciate the thought that went into that. So thank you.

Chair Raschko: Martha?

Commissioner Rose: I don't have anything tonight. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Vince?

Commissioner Henley: I have nothing also.

Vice Chair Candler: I don't have anything.

Commissioner Mitchell: Nothing.

Commissioner Hughes: I have nothing.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Well, I'll just say I appreciate the willingness for our commissioners to be our Chair and out Vice Chair. And it's been a really big privilege for me to serve under our Chair and Vice Chair of these years I've been here and I appreciate the good job that gets done. And so thank you for being willing.

Chair Raschko: Well, thank you. That's very nice, kind of you to say.

Commissioner Knutzen: I just have a couple now, if the Chair will allow.

(laughter)

Chair Raschko: You're too late!

(laughter)

Chair Raschko: No, go ahead!

Commissioner Knutzen: How come I'm the only commissioner that you said "really" to when I didn't have a comment to make? I think I know the answer. Mere speculation on my part.

Chair Raschko: No, I was really looking forward to something! Yes, please?

Vice Chair Candler: I'm glad Commissioner Woodmansee thought of it because I didn't think of it and I do want to thank you, Chairman, because you have served for quite a few years and it's a lot of work and I *really* appreciate it. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Thank you.

Vice Chair Candler: Your job is more work than mine.

(applause)

Chair Raschko: You know, I feel a little – a little bit like I'm depriving somebody else of having the chance to do this. No? I will say this: It does take more work.

Commissioner Henley: I see there's a long line ready to take your job.

(laughter)

Chair Raschko: But anyway, a couple things I'll say. Okay, first of all, I think this is a good board. The people are really easy to work with now. And also, you know, there were some years when I was wondering why I was even on this board. And it was difficult. And you know. You were all there – pretty much all of us were there at the times. And I have to say that with the staff support that we have now I kind of look forward to coming to these meetings because we are getting such good support for the last few years. And I do want to voice my appreciation for that. And that really underpins a lot of my willingness to do this. So thank you.

Okay, so with nothing else, we'll call the meeting adjourned. Everybody, have a good night (gavel).