

Snohomish County Agricultural Advisory Board

MEETING SUMMARY February 10, 2009

ATTENDEES

Board Members - Present

Jesse Allen	Brian Bookey	Elizabeth Christianson	Mark Craven
Dan Douglas	Mike Harnden	Gerald Labish	Jackie Macomber
John Postema	Nick Van Dam		

Board Members – Excused

Dave Remlinger

PDS Staff

Allison Bridges	Trace Justice	David Killingstad	Joan Langlais
Tom Niemann			

Office of Economic Development Staff

Ryan Hembree	Linda Neunzig
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County Council

Geoffrey Thomas

WSU Extension

Andrew Corbin

Snohomish Conservation District

Alan Shank

Others

Jason Bartleheimer	Marc Bhend
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1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Brian Bookey called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and asked all present to introduce themselves.

John Postema asked about the agenda-setting process – in terms of getting on the agenda and timelines. He requested that Public Comment be moved to the beginning of the agenda, so people would not have to sit through an entire meeting to speak. The board approved this change with a time slot of 15 minutes. Chair Bookey acknowledged that it would be the chair's

responsibility to keep the remaining agenda items on schedule and, if necessary, ask the speaker to return to a future meeting.

Following discussion, the board agreed:

To notify Brian Bookey of potential agenda items.

That Brian Bookey would explain why agenda items would not be on the agenda.

That PDS staff would e-mail the draft agenda to all board members two weeks prior to the meeting, and board members would return feedback to Brian Bookey within three days.

To add 15 minutes at the end of the meeting for add-on items.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Alan Shank announced that the Snohomish Conservation District would have an open house on February 12, 2009, from 1 – 4 p.m. and that the Agricultural Advisory Board would be acknowledged at a 2 p.m. ceremony. Brian Bookey and Mark Craven plan to represent the board. All other members are welcome to attend as well.

Drew Corbin, WSU Extension, spoke of a January 27, 2009, meeting regarding biofuel production in support of the dryer/crusher for Snohomish County. Drew and Ryan Hembree invited canola producers. The attendance was not good, so Drew and Ryan are planning a second meeting on February 26, 2009, at 1 p.m. at the Cathcart maintenance facility. The purpose of the meetings is to encourage producers to work together and form a farmer-owned operation to support biofuel for the county.

The primary interest at the January 27 meeting was the price farmers could get for the canola and the feasibility of producing it. Drew and Ryan are inviting farmers to the February meeting to further discuss the feasibility of supplying canola for the county's vehicle fleet. It is important for farmers who are potentially interested in growing canola to attend and begin planning to plant.

3. APPROVAL OF 1/13/09 MEETING SUMMARY

Betsy Christianson noted that Mike Shelby is the Executive Director of the Western Washington Agricultural Association, not just a member (Section 3, page 2, first paragraph).

Betsy requested more comprehensive coverage of Section 5 regarding the oilseed crusher.

The board approved the meeting summary with the exception of the noted edit above and Section 5 and requested that Joan Langlais rewrite that section to better reflect the discussion.

4. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE #08-140 CORRECTING COUNTY CONSTRUCTION CODE PROVISIONS FOR AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS (Alison Bridges, PDS)

In September 2007, Snohomish County adopted amendments to subtitle 30.5 pertaining to the county construction codes. Following adoption of those amendments, staff was notified of corrections that needed to be made, one of which impacted the agricultural community. Appendix C of the International Building Code (IBC), which relates to allowable height and area standards for agricultural buildings, was inadvertently not adopted. An ordinance was

consequently proposed to amend 30.52A.020 to incorporate Appendix C and adopt by reference.

Snohomish County Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff recently briefed the county council on the proposed ordinance. The council scheduled it for a public hearing on February 18, 2009, at 10:30 a.m., after which the council will vote on the ordinance.

Ordinances generally take effect ten days after they have been signed by the county executive. It is anticipated that this ordinance will become effective on or about March 4, 2009. Property owners and contractors will then no longer need to submit written requests to use Appendix C of the IBC as an alternative to Table 503.

Jesse Allen had brought the omission of Appendix C to the board's attention in 2007 when he noticed it while considering a new farm structure on his property. At that time he also learned of discussions regarding possible requirements to have sprinkler systems in hay barns, etc., so he inquired about that.

Jesse was interested in knowing how many other people may have changed their building plans as a result of the omission of Appendix C. Trace Justice, PDS Code Inspection Specialist, and Alison Bridges, PDS Associate Planner, said not many, because once the omission was realized, people were able to use Appendix C as an alternative to Table 503 by submitting a written request to Trace Justice.

In answer to Jesse's concerns regarding sprinkler system requirements, Trace Justice explained that the sprinkler requirement does not apply to ag buildings. If a building is to be used for a public use or a business, however, a sprinkler system could be necessary. The code requires that people inside buildings are protected.

Tom Niemann said that in setting the February 18 county council hearing, the county council asked Alison Bridges to bring the Appendix C issue to the board. The council would like to hear the board's recommendation regarding the addition of Appendix C to the ordinance. Jesse Allen moved that the county council approve the proposed ordinance. John Postema seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ARLINGTON AREA TDR PROGRAM (Noel Higa)

Noel Higa was unable to attend the meeting. Although Max Albert had hoped to share some information regarding Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) – Sending Area – as distributed at the meeting, he also was not present.

John Postema questioned the idea of continuing the TDR program. With current economic conditions, there is no market, and he doesn't see pursuing one.

Brian Bookey and Tom Niemann said that there is an official Arlington pilot program. Over a year ago, there was a proposal to establish a countywide TDR program. The county council did not adopt such a program, but it did direct staff to work with the City of Arlington and stakeholders to make changes to the sending and receiving areas and make that program a success. If there are successes over time, a countywide program could be considered.

The current focus is to work with the city, landowners, and stakeholders in the area to identify potential changes. That is where Max Albert and Noel Higa are involved, and why they want to share their thoughts with the board.

Ryan Hembree indicated that the City of Snohomish City Council recently expressed an interest in moving forward with a TDR program. Cascade Land Conservancy is working with the city on a draft program.

The board then discussed some differences between Snohomish County and Skagit County's PDR programs.

6. UPDATE ON OILSEED CRUSHER PROJECT (Ryan Hembree, Economic Development)

A decision was made to house the oilseed crusher at the Cathcart facility. The crusher is scheduled to be delivered during the week. It will remain on the truck until specific siting, set-up, and electrical requirements have been established.

Ryan Hembree said that one reason for having a producers' meeting on February 26 is to give them an opportunity to see the equipment. Some of the federal dollars received for the biofuel project are intended to help develop a biofuel growers' coop, which many growers have expressed interest in. The county is pursuing that with the help of Drew Corbin, WSU Extension, and the Northwest Cooperative Development Center.

A new Snohomish County ag newsletter designed to be sent out via email contains information about the meeting, which will be held at the Cathcart facility on February 26 from 1 to 3 p.m. Ryan asked the ag board to spread the word to all interested persons. He also asked board members to let him know if they did not receive the newsletter. John Postema suggested putting the information in a news release, and Brian Bookey suggested having the information available at the Conservation District open house as well as putting it on the Focus on Farming website.

Discussion regarding the economic feasibility of growing canola followed. Drew Corbin stated that that discussion was another reason for having the producers' meeting. The growers need to decide how much to charge for the harvested canola.

7. UPDATE ON AG SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT (Linda Neunzig, Economic Development)

Linda has learned that people involved with ag agencies in the county do not know one another or what other agencies are doing. There is therefore a lot of duplication of effort, so she created an ag roundtable last year and invited a representative from each ag agency in the Northwest. About 35 people attended the first roundtable and began sharing information.

The next roundtable is scheduled for February 19, 2009, at the county. Linda asked that the ag board be represented at the meeting. Jerry Labish will represent the ag board and the Cattlemen's Association. Chair Bookey asked Linda to send an e-mail about the roundtable to all board members.

As a carry-over from the last meeting, Dan Douglas had some questions regarding flood damage drop-off sites. Linda brought Deanna Carveth, Snohomish County Solid Waste Division, into the meeting to tell the board about sites that would be open over the weekend.

8. DISCUSS KEY ENHANCEMENTS NEEDED TO THE USE MATRIX FOR THE BENEFIT OF AGRICULTURE (All)

Marc Bhend of Bhend Properties spoke to the board about adding an RV Park use in the Ag 10 zone to the use matrix. A letter that he wrote to Brian Bookey about his proposal was distributed to the board and is part of the record, please refer to it.

Mr. Bhend would like to build an RV park on his property in Monroe. He has talked with the Monroe Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Bureau. Both support the project, because it would bring money into the area.

Mr. Bhend said that he has the ability to build the park and the Heritage Bank would finance it.

Tom Niemann put Mr. Bhend's request in context with the agenda topic and the board's role regarding the use matrix. Over a year ago, the board asked the county to do a comprehensive review of the Ag 10 use matrix. The board identified some uses that were of concern. At that time, County staff were moving toward a comprehensive review through the Unified Development Code process. At the end of the year, PDS Director Craig Ladiser told the board that the county could no longer commit to the comprehensive review; but that did not mean changes could not be made to the matrix. Craig asked the board to identify key uses that should be reviewed and said that those could become work priorities for PDS.

Craig is in the process of working with the county council to set work program priorities; so there is an opportunity to consider the board's suggestions.

This issue was put on the agenda to inform the board of the opportunity to begin identifying uses. Tom would like the board to make a list of uses that would potentially help direct PDS's work priorities.

Betsy noted that Dave Remlinger was particularly interested in the use matrix and felt he should be part of the discussions. The board decided that the use matrix subcommittee should meet and give feedback to the full board.

The board discussed Mr. Bhend's request. John Postema wondered whether the Growth Management Hearings Board had previously ruled on whether an RV park would be an allowed use on agricultural land. The ag board could not make any decisions without knowing that. Tom Niemann did know but said he would look into it.

Following additional discussion, Chair Bookey told Mr. Bhend that the board did not have the authority to honor his request at this time.

9. REFRAMING SUBCOMMITTEES: NO NET LOSS AND TDR/PDR (All)

Drainage/Dredging/Surface Water Issues

John Postema, Chair
Brian Bookey
Elizabeth Christianson
Mike Harnden
Dave Remlinger

A discussion of whether dredging will be allowed as a result of the county's emergency status after the floods should be on the agenda next month.

No Net Loss

The entire board

A discussion of whether the board wants to do more with the policy letter should be an agenda item next month.

Permitting

A chair has not been determined.

Jesse Allen

Brian Bookey

Jerry Labish

Dave Remlinger

Roxanne Pilkenton had requested follow-up letters on the subcommittee's previous work. That remains to be done. Brian Bookey would check with Duke Otter about the status of those letters.

Use Matrix

Mark Craven, Chair

Brian Bookey

Elizabeth Christianson

Jackie Macomber

John Postema

Dave Remlinger

10. FOLLOW UP JOINT ON MEETING WITH SKAGIT AG BOARD (All)

The boards discussed PDR programs. Brian Bookey commented on the fact that the Skagit program is funded.

The Skagit board was under the impression that the Snohomish County board had not given input to the Ruckelhaus Center. Brian Bookey asked whether the board was working on that. Ryan Hembree answered that the meeting he had mentioned wasn't a Ruckelhaus meeting. It was a meeting regarding estuary projects. Ryan has been involved in subsequent discussions and conference calls. He is trying to ensure that people understand that there is ag land in estuaries. Much of the land they are looking at is farmland. Public Works Surface Water Management staff who are regularly involved in these discussions are encouraging people to look at ag land as farmland.

The board would like to have regular updates from the Ruckelhaus Center. Betsy said that Ruckelhaus Executive Director Mike Shelby is one of two finalists for the state's director of agriculture position. If successful, he will no longer be with the center.

Jackie Macomber felt that the Skagit board does not have all of the information it needs to do what it wants to do in ag. She felt the Snohomish County board is more informed. Dan Douglas said the Skagit board is accomplishing things Snohomish County is not.

Betsy said that Skagit has participation from more organizations that are active in the ag community. Skagit County is not the board's main focus. In fact, the board has only one county participant. Dan appreciated the strong support the Snohomish County board gets from county staff.

Overall, the joint meeting went well and was good. The boards plan to meet once every six months.

11. OTHER

John Postema will e-mail information regarding a proposed B & O tax and a potential bill to eliminate all exempt wells.

12. CLOSING: Adjourned.