

Snohomish County Noxious Weed Control Board

Meeting minutes for April 8, 2010

In attendance

Keith Sarkisian, George Ohlsen, Steve Russell, Louis Stangeland, Curt Moulton, Sonny Gohrman, Geraldine Saw, Roy Scalf, Mel Reitz, Gordon Sivley

Approval of minutes from March 11, 2010

The minutes from March 11, 2010 were unanimously approved.

Public Comment

There was no public comment

Coordinators Report

Budget

Sonny referred to the budget sheet handed out before the meeting. \$14,000 was spent year to date from the general fund. Sonny requested that the budget codes be sorted by work group as opposed to more charge codes being lumped into the RM515 general fund code.

(ACTION ITEM) Mel indicated he would look into it.

Coordinators conference

Last month, Sonny attended the Coordinators Association conference. A session on field safety was presented by a safety coordinator for police officers and other people working and contacting people in the field. We will incorporate some of the suggestions for staying safe in the field and contacting property owners. Emergency locator type devices are available when cell phones signals are unavailable. Other approaches include knowing where everyone is in the field. The State Weed Board is still intact, although the travel funds are no longer available. The Board members can still meet by conference calls and net meetings. There is still no agreement on standardizing survey standards and where to assemble mapping data after at least two years of discussion. The NAWMA standards adhere to a scientific standard which, while very good scientifically it is very cumbersome for the data we need to collect. The data we need to collect is simple data such as where the weeds are, and how many. Dr. Tim Miller from the Mount Vernon WSU Experiment Station did a presentation on how to set up test plots and trials.

Giant hogweed

We have the giant hogweed grant, but not the contract. The contract will need to go through the approval process. The grant is good for July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010, so as long as it's signed

before the end of June, we're good. We started spraying for a property owner in Lake Stevens who had contacted us at the Everett Home and Garden Show.

Other weeds

We sprayed reed canarygrass in Marshland to prep the site for planting. Poison Hemlock was sprayed on Eide Road and every year the site looks better. The weeds on Leque Island are much less of a problem as of last weekend when the dike broke and flooded the island. Fortunately, the Spartina is under control and won't infest the island. The Pilchuck Creek restoration site was treated using a cut stump treatment for blackberries. Then we got rain.

Weed article

A meeting was held to discuss putting articles in the paper to explain the Noxious Weed program. Those present were Chris Schwartzen (County PIO), Alison Halpern (Executive Secretary of the WSNWCB), Steve Thomsen (County Public Works Director), and Roy Scaff (County Road Maintenance Director). The outcome is that Alison will write two articles for the paper one about the dangers of giant hogweed and the eradication grant, and a general article about the program and what it does. Roy said that the article should sell the program as a resource to assist the public in meeting the requirements of the weed law.

ECAF

Sonny doesn't know where the ECAF for the Rules and Regulations is in the approval process. Sonny mentioned that he doesn't push non-monetary ECAF's because the money related items usually have strict dates attached.

(ACTION ITEM) Roy thinks that the ECAF is at the executive office because it passed his desk. He will get a better idea after checking with the tracking system.

Open Board Position in District 1 and 3

District 3 position is still open. The vacancies have been announced in the newspaper's legal section and on our web-site. The ECAF and application for Louis Stangeland has been forwarded to the Executive office and we are waiting for confirmation.

Executive session

An executive session was held from 11:10-11:20 am.

Committee report

Gordon presented the proposed ordinance regarding the administration of the Weed Board. RCW17.10.160 deals with right of entry onto private property. A scenario can occur when an owner doesn't want a weed inspector to enter their property. An option is for us to get a warrant after gathering enough information and filing an affidavit. If the owner said no even after a warrant is served, the owner could be charged with a misdemeanor. It is not a violation if

the owner said to leave the first time we enter. The Board needs to address what the policy is if an owner says no to entry.

Curt asked how long it takes to produce a warrant. Gordon said that judges are available 24 hours, and can be fast. Since weed violations are not a threat to life, the warrant could be produced after a few days. A discussion ensued about if Sonny needs to consult the weed board before obtaining a warrant and if we know who the biggest weed offenders are.

MOTION

Keith made a motion that if Board staff is asked to get off the property, staff will leave and the coordinator is to obtain a warrant to enter and return with law enforcement in accordance with RCW 17.10.160. George seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Curt said that the board can delegate somebody within the Board for Sonny to contact or conduct a special board meeting should there be a need to get a warrant.

Steve gave a brief summary on the reason why the committee was set up. The way the Board was put under Public Works 10 years ago was not formalized and since then questions pertaining to administration and other areas have surfaced. The committee looked at how PW and the Board can work together. The committee had contacted Alison Helpert and other counties for feedback. Gordon worked on the legal aspect and had worked on some ordinance changes. Copies of the proposed ordinance changes were handed out. Gordon mentioned that it has been 20 years since the ordinance has been worked upon. In the draft ordinance, some sections were consolidated, text that was added is underlined and text that was deleted is stricken through.

No substantive changes are made in Section 3.42.010, .020 and .030. In section 3.42.040, the required annual election was added and was put into code. New material is in section 3.42.050. The section proposed that all weed board staff are employees of Public Works, are hired, supervised, fired and disciplined by Public Works. The Weed Coordinator would become an exempt employee, rather than a union member. The reasoning behind the change is that the employee can be flexible in his/her work schedule which will make scheduling much easier. Other employees will be classified public works employees designated for noxious weed work. The Board would be consulted and would designate the person Public Works choose as coordinator. Section 6 requires Public Works to provide equipment, payroll and administration. Section 6 explains who can write grants and how grants are approved. Section 7 makes coordinating changes in the exempt employee code. Section 8 makes it clear that the coordinator is selected according to County ordinance. Section 9 proposed July 1, 2010 as a start date for the ordinance, explains the transition from union to exempt status and what needs to be done.

Discussion of the proposal ensued. Keith commented that the Weed Law clearly says that the Weed Board is not under any department. Authority will be taken away from the Weed Board. Gordon and Curt said that the Weed Board still runs the program, but Public Works will need to

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be involved for management and operation. Roy said that he needs to approve the hiring of seasonal employees, but according to existing law, he has no authority. Gordon said that if the Weed Board does not approve the proposal, the county will have to come up with something. It is better to be the proponent than have someone dictate the proposal.

Sonny said that one of the reasons why the Weed Board is separate is because the county is a property owner. If Public Works is put in charge, funding and program emphasis could be at Public Work's guidance instead of the Board's and the tenants of RCW 17.10. Roy commented that Public Works and Road Maintenance has an interest in roadside vegetation management. The Board will find it beneficial and administration will be provided Public Works. Sonny said that it may go along well now, but in 5-10 years things can be different. The Board will define the weed control program and Public Works would supervise Board employees. Gordon said that the County is still obligated to comply with the weed control law. He also added that the Weed Board is a County board and it's not us versus them.

Sonny suggested that the wording in Section 5 be changed. The need to obtain approval for all expenditures seems extreme. The Board has always followed the County purchasing process.

Sonny has been a member of the union for over 10 years and Gerry for 5 or 6 years. Gordon said that there would need to negotiations with the union about the positions since they are currently bargaining unit positions. After the bargaining process is complete, the draft would go to the executive for review. After executive review, the proposal would move to the county council. The Council can approve, reject, change, or return it for revision. Allocations for departmental budgets will take place in July. It would be good if the proposed ordinance be accepted and approved before the budget process begins.

Roy mentioned that changes are needed because there have been questions regarding the Board's organization at the executive level. Steve said that he would like to see progress made before the next meeting and not come back on the following weed board meeting with disagreement. He suggested creating another committee to come up with alternatives. Keith said that he need more time to look through the proposal since he just got it.

MOTION

George made the motion to table the proposal till the next meeting. Keith seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Board members have access to Gordon, Roy, Sonny, and Steve should they have any questions.

New Business

There was no new business.

Meeting adjourned at 12:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by: Geraldine Saw, Sonny Gohrman

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