

Thurston County Agriculture Advisory Committee

September 16, 2021

Meeting Minutes

<https://youtu.be/5e5RTAmAvPU>

ATTENDEES:

Members Present: Richard Mankamyer (Chair); Joe Hanna (Vice Chair); Pat Labine; Robert McIntosh; Kevin Jensen; Jedidiah Haney, Mercy Kariuki-McGee

Members Excused Absent: Gigi McClure (scribe)

Members Absent: Jake Yancey (excused); Tom Watson; Jesse Honiker

Ex Officio Present: Sarah Moorehead (Executive Director, TCD Staff); Stephen Bramwell (WSU)

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Davis (TC Planning Manager); Andrew Boughan (CPED)

Guests Present: Charlene Andre, WA State Dept of Commerce; Maya Teeple, CPED; Andrew Deffobis, CPED; Reni Storm; Michael Ambrogi; Eric Johnson; Loretta Seppanen; Jeff Marryman

Called to Order:

Zoom meeting was called to order at 7:01pm

Attendee Introductions

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes for July (proposed correction in chat) - motion to approve (Joe/Robert) – passed

Approval of Current Agenda – motion to approve (Joe/Robert) -passed

Committee Items Discussed:

Opening Comments – Chair

1. Open Space Tax Program Changes – Memo provided with recommendations from the committee. Memo drafted by the TCAAC sub-committee consisting of the following members (Jake Yancey, Jedidiah Haney, Robert McIntosh, and Pat Labine) with proposed changes the Ag Committee wanted to explore. Jennifer Davis hit on the main points for the Tax Incentive Program.

Discussion followed: Displacing cost to secure viable lands if the focus is on Ag land conservation. Will excessive fees be a barrier to participate in the program? Should the program be community funded as farmland benefits the community. How will joining the program benefit small farmers if not cost effective to participate? Consider bringing down the total acres in the program. What are the considerations if the land is in the program and

the property is sub-divided, if still used for Ag use will there be a penalty to the new or old owner? Reducing fee cost may encourage more participation for smaller farms.

2. The CP-19 - Up Castle Land Use & Rezone Amendment (presented by Andrew Boughan). Upcoming public hearing. Briefing covered re-zoning from rural residential to rural industrial. This would be a proposed code change to be amended to allow code use changes. Property considered to be Nationally significant by the American Farmland Trust. No decision has been made at this time, but open for public comment for consideration. TAAC subcommittee formed to draft letter (Robert, Mercy, and Joe).
3. Broadening the category of Project Notifications (formerly "Green Sheets"): Currently only get sub-division categories. Should the committee also get all types of application.

Discussion: Robert agreed we should receive all types of applications that would result in the loss of Ag land. Who would we make this request to? Notification process should be redefined to ensure permit applications are review appropriately. Work with staff to establish a review process where the committee is not overwhelmed but continue to focus on viable farmland.

4. Rezone of agricultural land and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR): request delaying discussion until after the summit (transfer of development rights). Discuss at the next meeting.
5. **WSU Extension Update** (Stephen Bramwell): Fresh cut processing capacity has been of interest. WSU extension received a grant to put together a pilot for fresh cut produce. Hiring someone with food service expertise to provide fresh cut to restaurants and schools. Also, statewide funding for buckwheat and mullet production, expanding rotational crops. Conservation of grazing work is next round of funding. Seeking to create a group of folks interested in getting involved in expanding grazing education and farming.
6. **Thurston Conservation District Update** (Sarah Moorehead): Links provided in chat for news and 2020 Annual Report. Creating a secondary phase review with the City of Olympia and their No Net Loss Strategy and building a model to map areas of food productions accessibility gaps. Looking at other policy initiatives within Olympia such as farmland preservation, acquisition, city land leasing, funding source of conservation of farmland, tax incentives, availability, and water rights conservation. Also researching a feasibility study with Park Services for sites for urban shared farmland.

Other Business:

Public Comment: Jeff Merryman

Project Notifications: None

are becoming enormous to all property owners regardless of use. High fees are benefitting the county budget more than the farmers.

Levy caps have been voted on and what more can break a person's purse strings?

00:57:16 Loretta Seppanen, She/her: my guess is about 500 farms, larger farms, could participate out of the 1,200 farms in the county (Ag Census)

00:57:32 Eric: I agree Reni

00:57:57 Stephen Bramwell: I echo Loretta's comment as well, I would be willing to share the added burden of farmland preservation. Where does all the revenue from the recent tax increases go? (not trying to poke anyone, but really, that must add up to a lot of money).

00:59:37 Sarah Moorehead, TCD: Good question Stephen - we're talking about \$810K in fees total, which I'm guessing would be minimal spread amongst all parcels? (I don't recall how many parcels are in TC.)

00:59:58 Mercy Kariuki-McGee (Shirros Plate/Haki Farmers Collective): I think any land that is farmable should be and staying as farming regardless of zone should benefit from incentives. Cities are pushing for green spaces within urban areas and it is a good way to attract more green spaces and once way to help our environmental and conservation goals.

01:00:49 Reni Storm: Agreed Mercy

01:00:49 Mercy Kariuki-McGee (Shirros Plate/Haki Farmers Collective): ~one way

01:02:20 Reni Storm: Agreed. High grocery prices, lack of supply chains and encouraging farmers market produce is a great idea to contribute to a community.

01:04:17 Reni Storm: 5 ac 'hobby' vs business? Sounds like IRS rules.

01:04:39 Joe Hanna: and Dept of Ag

01:05:02 Loretta Seppanen, She/her: 444 farms in Farm Census are 9 acres or less - these farmers filled out a complex survey that leads me to believe there is nothing hobby like about them!

01:05:26 Mercy Kariuki-McGee (Shirros Plate/Haki Farmers Collective):

<https://www.sandiego.gov/economic-development/business/starting/urban-agriculture>

01:06:32 Mercy Kariuki-McGee (Shirros Plate/Haki Farmers Collective): That is an example of urban farming incentives

01:08:54 Reni Storm: good point Sarah

01:11:00 Reni Storm: GREAT meeting everyone! Lots of good ideas and fair arguments on both sides. I have another meeting but plan to attend the next. Thank you.

Lots of work on this and I tip my hat at your good work.

01:11:01 Stephen Bramwell: It seems to me that smaller acreages could be made eligible while including other mechanisms than size for sorting out non-farmers seeking tax shelter: the 7-yr penalty, and some options as included like easement, or financial records (Schedule F, or other) of farming activities, other maybe.

01:12:03 Kevin J: Would an option be to have county staff come up with mailing addresses of the 7% eligible landowners for the program and enlist a subcommittee to help mail a committee drafted/county approved FYI letter out?

01:14:37 Sarah Moorehead, TCD: Thank you so much Jennifer and the sub-committee that put this draft together! I appreciate the opportunity to share feedback!

01:14:48 Loretta Seppanen, She/her: leave out forested small acres

01:24:31 Eric: Whats the adress again

01:24:53 Loretta Seppanen, She/her: One of the reasons AFT calls out Nationally Significant Land is the value of this land even as the climate change to produce food. Other farmland can produce food but may not do a good job of that during drought or flooding.

01:25:21 Kevin J: Eric, 5505 & 5641 222nd Avenue SW

01:26:19 Kevin J: It is interesting the county does not look for active or inactive water rights during zoning change considerations.

01:27:14 Loretta Seppanen, She/her: These are soil types that meet the state requirement to code as Long-Term Ag, but they this is not so coded in Thurston County. The current Ag Review could find that these two parcels should be in Long Term Ag.

01:28:13 Jeff Merryman: once it goes industrial it can have cannabis business's since TC allows them and Lewis county doesn't.

01:33:35 Kevin J: Jeff if they put in a USDA beef and pork slaughter plant, I retract my vote for being against!

01:36:41 Loretta Seppanen, She/her: The code change is not necessary to allow the USDA processing plant. The rezone without a code change would allow that kind of industry on the land. The sewer issue would be a problem to overcome.

01:37:38 Joe Hanna: yep, Loretta, that is why the T90 business park is the best fit currently.

01:48:09 Eric: is that meeting open to the public

01:48:23 Eric: if so please share

01:48:39 Joe Hanna: no, it is by invite only

01:49:25 Eric: I would like to attend

02:00:59 Sarah Moorehead, TCD: Latest news & workshops:
Thurston Conservation District September Newsletter (campaign-archive.com)
2020 Annual Report of Accomplishments:
TCD-2020-Annual-Report.pdf (thurstoncd.com)

02:01:20 Sarah Moorehead, TCD: Thurston Conservation District September Newsletter (campaign-archive.com)

02:03:29 Sarah Moorehead, TCD: <https://due-parsons.github.io/methods3-fall2017/projects/new-haven-s-urban-agriculture/>

02:08:26 Joe Hanna: Carpenter Rd Extension

02:12:30 Joe Hanna: Good offline discussion

02:12:41 Kevin J: Have a good night everyone see you next month!

02:16:59 Mercy Kariuki-McGee (Shirros Plate/Haki Farmers Collective): Thank you Jeff! I am delighted to be here with everyone working to preserve farmland and work towards our county conservation goals and land preservation.