

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR COMMITTEE

BY-LAWS

Updated February 18, 2021

Article I - Role

The Committee was established as a result of the 1978 citizen's report: Agriculture in Thurston County. The purpose of the Committee is to advise the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC), the Planning Commission, and various County departments on public decisions and/or emerging issues that would significantly affect agriculture. Additional functions are to review local, state, or federal programs identified by staff that could affect Thurston County agriculture; to conduct a regular review or evaluation of County efforts to protect and support agriculture; to consider and recommend new initiatives; to work closely with Cooperative extension and other groups to help them support agriculture; and to perform any other duties assigned or requested by the BoCC, the Planning Commission, or the County. All duties not specifically assigned to the Chair, Vice-Chair, By-Law Compliance Officer, Scribe, or Administrative Assistant by these By-Laws shall be performed by the Committee.

Article II - Membership

The Committee is composed of eleven members appointed by the BoCC and serving two-year terms. When circumstances permit, the Committee will review potential appointees before their appointment by the BoCC and make recommendations to the BoCC concerning such appointments. The BoCC may appoint any member to one or more additional terms. The term of any member shall be extended beyond the normal two year term until either (1) that member has been removed by the BoCC or (2) a successor member has been appointed by the BoCC. Four members are to be non-farmer members to represent rural residents who may be affected by County efforts to protect farmland. Seven members are to be farmer-members representing a variety of (1) the agriculture commodities produced in Thurston County and (2) geographic areas of the county.

The Committee may establish agriculture commodity contacts for industries not represented on the Committee. These contacts may be invited to meetings as needed to assist the Committee in understanding the needs and concerns of those industries when issues arise that would specifically affect those industries.

Ex-Officio members are appointed by the BoCC. Current ex-officio members are (1) the WSU Thurston County Extension Director and (2) technical staff from the Thurston Conservation District. Ex-officio members participate as other appointed members in discussions and may designate alternates to serve during an absence. The WSU Extension Director's duties include (1) working with the Administrative Assistant to solicit information from County departments about county programs and projects that may affect agriculture; (2) conveying information pertaining to agriculture between the Committee and County divisions such as Long Range Planning and Land Use Planning; (3) communicating annual advisory and specific task requests from the County Manager and Community Planning and Economic Development Department (CPED) Director to the Committee; and (4) facilitating communication between the BoCC and the Committee.

Article III - Officers

Election of Officers

The Committee, after receiving nominations for these positions from its members, will elect a new Chair, Vice-Chair, and By-Law Compliance Officer to serve two year terms, with the election to be held at the first meeting of each even-numbered year. Voting for these three positions shall be by secret ballot; votes shall be counted by an ex-officio member of the Committee. At the first meeting of each year, the Committee will also select a rotating list of member volunteers to serve as Scribe for the remaining meetings of the calendar year and the first meeting of the next calendar year. A County staff-person will serve as Administrative Assistant.

Duties of the Chair include the following:

- The Chair works with staff to set the agenda for each meeting.
- The Chair leads the meetings and facilitates discussions to ensure all agenda items are covered in a timely manner, and that all members are able to participate.
- The Chair ensures that the work of the Committee is consistent with the Committee's purpose statement and any specific direction provided by the BoCC.
- The Chair works with staff in drafting correspondence and signs correspondence on behalf of the Committee.
- The Chair determines which members' absences are to be excused, and which are unexcused.
- The Chair works with staff in organizing the farm tours.
- The Chair may appoint subcommittees on an as-needed basis.

The duty of the Vice-Chair is to fulfill the role of the Chair, when the Chair is unable to do so. However, if the Chair is unable to serve for a period longer than four consecutive months, a special election shall be held to select a new Chair.

The duties of the By-Law Compliance Officer are to advise the Committee on how to conduct its business in compliance with the Committee's By-Laws, and to suggest possible changes to the By-Laws as needed.

The duties of the Scribe are to take action minutes of her or his assigned meeting(s), prepare a draft of such minutes, and send the draft minutes to the Administrative Assistant at least one week in advance of each meeting for distribution to Committee members.

Duties of the Administrative Assistant include the following:

- The Administrative Assistant prepares meeting agendas and additional information as needed, which is sent to Committee members one week in advance of each meeting.
- The Administrative Assistant arranges for meeting rooms and guest briefings.
- The Administrative Assistant works with the Chair to draft correspondence on behalf of the Committee.
- The Administrative Assistant works with the BoCC's Office for the appointment and reappointment of Committee members.

- The Administrative Assistant maintains a Committee roster, mailing list, and a record of Committee actions and events.
- The Administrative Assistant works with the Chair to organize the farm tours.
- The Administrative Assistant solicits information from County departments about County programs and projects that may affect agriculture.
- The Administrative Assistant works with the WSU Director in his/her role as liaison between the Committee and the BoCC and CPED.

Article IV- Conduct of Meetings

Committee meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month except August and December. Meeting times are 7:00pm to no later than 9:00pm. Special meetings may be called at the discretion of the Chair. Regular meetings may be canceled by the Chair in consultation with Committee staff because of inclement weather, inadequate meeting facilities, or insufficient items on the agenda to justify a meeting. Committee members shall be notified of the reasons for such cancellation(s) as far in advance as possible.

Attendance

Absences may be excused by the Chair for work, family, medical, or other valid reasons, which are communicated by the member to the Chair, Administrative Assistant, or the WSU Thurston County Extension Director. A maximum of three unexcused absences are permitted per year. After the fourth unexcused absence the Committee will recommend to the BoCC that the appointment be vacated and a new member be appointed.

Meeting Conduct

Meetings are run by the Chair, who reserves the right to limit the participation of any meeting attendees as needed to stay on schedule, and to ensure discussions are balanced and focused and that all members are able to participate. While the Committee is not subject to the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act because its input to the BoCC is advisory only, the Committee generally welcomes guests and invites their input. However, the Chair may limit guests' attendance, reserve their input for a particular part of the meeting, and/or set time limits on their comments. Guests may not participate in Committee decision making.

Ex-Officio members are professional staff who are valued for their expertise and their commitment to agriculture, and they may fully participate in discussions. In addition, ex-officio members are usually offered time to report on matters of interest to the Committee on each agenda. Advice to the BoCC is intended to represent the views of the citizen Committee members, so ex-officio members may not participate in Committee decisions.

Decision-making

A quorum is attendance by forty five percent or more of currently appointed members, not counting ex-officio members. A quorum is required for the Committee to make decisions or recommendations, but is not required to approve minutes, set agendas or meeting dates, or discuss agenda items.

The Committee has a long tradition of cooperative decision-making. Before voting on any issue, the Committee will try to reach consensus. Most decisions are in the form of recommendations to the BoCC. These recommendations are usually made by a consensus of the members. Disagreements are usually resolved through a discussion process that involves respectful consideration of differing views, information-seeking, and openness to new ideas and creative solutions.

In the event of an unresolvable disagreement about a recommendation to the BoCC, the Committee will issue majority and minority reports to the BoCC, if the minority members wish to make their views known with a minority report. The Administrative Assistant may assist in the drafting of either or both reports.

Article V –By-Laws

Revisions to these By-Laws may be proposed at any Committee meeting, and if a majority of the Committee approves consideration of the proposed change(s), such changes shall be voted on at the next Committee meeting. Such By-Law changes will be adopted only if approved by a 60% or greater majority of Committee members present and voting.

At its February meeting each year, the Committee shall place on the meeting agenda a time to consider any By Law changes proposed by the By-Law Compliance Officer or any other Committee member. If a majority of the Committee approves consideration of any of the proposed changes, such changes shall be voted on at the March meeting in the manner described above.

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