

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes for February 27, 2020

Members Present: Richard Mankamyer (Chair); Joe Hanna (Vice-Chair); Bryan Fisher; Jedidiah Haney; Patricia Labine; Gigi McClure; Robert McIntosh (Scribe)

Members Excused: Kevin Jensen.

Ex Officio Present: Stephen Bramwell; Nicole Ross.

Guests Present: Linda Powell, Tom Watson.

Preliminary Actions: Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and introduction of attendees. The January minutes were approved with the following change: in the eighth line of the first paragraph under “Committee Items”, change “in support of a redo” to “in support of an in depth review”. The meeting agenda was approved with the addition of an item on Committee Processes.

Items Discussed and Actions Taken

Prospective Committee Member Tom Watson. Prospective member Tom Watson introduced himself, summarized his background, and answered questions from Committee members. The Committee decided to recommend his appointment as a non-farmer member.

Revision to By-Laws. Richard presented, and the Committee reviewed and approved, our recent changes to the By-Laws, which are: (1) changing abbreviated references to the Board of County Commissioners from “BOCC” to “BoCC); (2) adding the word “technical” in front of the words “staff from the Thurston Conservation District” in the third paragraph of Article II; and (3) changing the Committee’s meeting date to the third Thursday of every month except August and December.

Letter to the BoCC Supporting an In Depth Review of the Agriculture Section of the County Comprehensive Plan. The Committee approved the letter drafted by Robert on February 10, with the following changes: (1) add WSU Extension’s address as our Committee’s return address; (2) eliminate the “TDR: and “PDR” acronyms from the second paragraph; and (3) add a specific reference to”CPA-16, Community Driven Review of Agriculture”, to the “Subject” line of our letter. The Committee asked Robert to revise the letter and Richard to sign and send or deliver it to the County by the March 4 comment deadline.

Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), 3rd Draft. The Committee discussed the new draft of the HCP and the relationship of the HCP to the Sentinel Landscape process. Members suggested that the Committee organize an information outreach program on the HCP.

Comp Plan Suggestions Developed by Kitsap County Food Policy Council. The Committee discussed this topic. Nicole will send out the recommendations to Committee members.

Possible Corona Virus impacts on Committee Meetings. The Committee discussed the option of conducting meetings on-line if face-to-face meetings need to be canceled.

Property Tax Hikes. Discussion of recent tax increases and possible future increases to fund a new courthouse. Some say their taxes have recently gone up 25%, though it is unclear if these increases are driven by higher rates or higher assessed values. One possible explanation is the County's new computer system, which now allows it to calculate the areas of small patches of higher quality soils and charge the specified higher tax rates for such areas which it used to ignore in the past. As for the courthouse tax, members pointed that its annual impact appears to be small, and that the need for such a tax lies outside our jurisdiction and expertise.

Green Sheets. The Committee decided that it does want to see the County's "Green Sheets" for all projects involving the conversion of five acres or more of existing farmland to non-farmland uses. Stephen has been told that this may involve as few as 18 development applications a year.

Committee Processes. Nicole reported that she has re-done the website, and would welcome input on her changes. She passed out a new Committee roster. She would also like to receive copies of the meeting minutes once they are prepared, and would like the meeting minutes for each month to show changes made to the prior month's minutes in response to member comments. (For an example, see "Preliminary Actions" above.)

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 p.m.