

Thurston County Agriculture Advisory Committee

February 18, 2021

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

Members Present: Richard Mankamyer (Chair); Joe Hanna (Vice Chair); Pat Labine; Robert McIntosh; Tom Watson; Jedidiah Haney; Gigi McClure (Scribe) Kevin Jensen.

Ex Officio Present: Stephen Bramwell, WSU

Guest Speakers: Jennifer Davis (Community Planning Manager with TC) with Andrew Deffobis

Guests Present: Loretta Seppanen; Eric Johnson; Jake Yancey; Liz & Jim Myers: Charissa; Christina Chaput (Conservation Planner); George Brown; Marilyn Sitaker (Evergreen State College); Linda Powell; Michael Ambrogi (TCPC); Miriam Villacian; Nathaniel Jones; R Peggy Smith (Member, League of Women Voters); Reni Storm; Valerie Smith-Commerce.

Called to Order: Zoom meeting called to order at 7:01pm by Richard Mankamyer

Introductions conducted

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes. (Robert/Joe), minutes approved.

Approval of Current Agenda - Addition item added to the agenda 'Solar on Farmland'. (Jedidiah/Robert), agenda approved.

Committee Items Discussed:

1. Jennifer Davis and Andrew Deffobis from Thurston County Community Planning office discussed the following topics: Thurston County Incentive Programs for Agricultural Lands. Open Space Tax Program, Conservation Futures Program, and Transfer of Development Rights Program. Requesting input from farmers, if any changes are needed.

Links provided:

Incentive Programs County Website –

<https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/planning/Pages/incentives-gateway.aspx>

Assessors program for Open Space - <https://www.co.thurston.wa.us/assessor/relief-classifications.html>

Summary of Current Use Classification -

www.co.thurston.wa.us/assessor/doc/currentuse/classification.matrix.pdf

2. Joe Hanna provided an update on WA Senate Bill 5045. The bill was rewritten again. Part of the rewrite included in Section 2, meat and poultry marketing assistance program.

creating a new program and taking out of department of agriculture. Moved away from processing meat to economic development and marketing. Section 3 appears the program will be under conservation rather than agriculture. Discusses conservation districts being able to do mobile slaughter. See more – link: <https://legiscan.com/WA/text/SB5045/id/2225655>

3. TCAAC By-Law final review with motion to approve changes, (Joe/Jedidiah). Motion approved.
4. Letters we sent to the BoCC on support for SB 5045 and exempt buildings.
5. Possible tree farm, livestock farm, and cannabis farm tours for our Committee. Plan to start as weather changes maybe starting with Jake’s place.
6. Potential County Agricultural Coordinator/Liaison – The TCAAC may want to consider making a recommendation to the county commissioner on what the position looks like.

Link provided: <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/3421/Pierce-County-Farming>

7. **Solar on Farmland:** Ag properties going Solar – objective is reserve farmland (crop) use of land for alternative energy. Want to see further discussion on current and future farmland.

Public Comment: Eric – no overtime exemption on any dairy and retroactive pay for the last 3 years. Considered for those dairies who worked employees over 40 hours, this will include time over and missed meals. Many dairies are considering moving away from dairy farming. (labor & compensation issue? Or an issue that may creep over to non-dairy farmers). Eric and one other local farmer have had offers to put Solar Panels on some of their farm land by PSE rep.

Green Sheet - None

Other Business: Robert made a recommendation to move Other Business (WSU and Thurston Conservation District Updates) higher up on the agenda to give members more time to cover important updates

New Committee Members – We still have 2 openings.

WSU Update – Information regarding the grain project, capital budget request at the Port of Chehalis. Food Hub is looking for chicken/beef/eggs for sale and pushing to look for buyer to sell products consistently. Received funding from Port of Olympia, the Port supported purchase of equipment to move the Food Hub forward. Extension has a few proposals: possible funding from Sentinel Landscapes Partnership to support habitat and market development. Other initiatives: Western Coast Restoration and Recovery Initiative – potential to develop livestock producers. Written update will be provided.

Thurston Conservation District Update – None

02:00:10 Jennifer Davis, Thurston County Planning Mgr: <https://www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/agriculture/docs/Working-Lands-Strategic-Plan-2-11-10.pdf>

02:00:34 Valerie Smith-Commerce: I don't work on this program, but it is available at Commerce: <http://choosewashingtonstate.com/why-washington/our-key-sectors/agriculture-food-processing/>

02:00:54 Valerie Smith-Commerce: Evan Wendlandt, Value-Added Agriculture Development Manager, Business Development Team – Phone: (206) 256-6142

02:01:49 Valerie Smith-Commerce: "To help you maximize the potential of your agricultural and food manufacturing business strategies, we have a team of experts on hand to guide you in locating facilities in one of our 39 counties, working your way through permitting, securing a skilled workforce, training new and existing workers, entering into trade or expanding your exports to new markets, performing research and making introductions with local, regional and statewide businesses who may be interested in partnering with you."

02:07:32 Valerie Smith-Commerce: There's a bill addressing solar on ag lands: SB 5206

02:10:34 Valerie Smith-Commerce: Kittitas County has been debating this recently.

02:10:51 Valerie Smith-Commerce: <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2018/apr/27/solar-panels-on-farmland-stir-fight-in-central-was/>

02:11:39 Valerie Smith-Commerce: <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/farmers-guide-going-solar#:~:text=Solar%20can%20be%20installed%20on,current%20or%20projected%20growing%20areas.>

02:14:31 Valerie Smith-Commerce: I believe Commerce would be interested in discussing that, I can make the connection if needed.

02:17:11 Jake Yancey: the lacey warehouse roof is over 45 acres as an example of possible solar capability without effecting ag

02:34:08 Valerie Smith-Commerce: This was a very interesting meeting! Your committee is doing excellent work, and I appreciate the discussion. Thank you for letting me chime-in my two cents, and let me know if I can provide further resources or assistance: valerie.smith@commerce.wa.gov