

Thurston County Agriculture Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes for June 18, 2020

Members Present (Via Zoom Platform) – Richard Mankamy (chair,) Joe Hanna (Vice Chair,) Jedidiah Haney, Patricia Labine, Robert McIntosh, Tom Watson and Kevin Jensen (scribe.)

Members Excused – Bryan Fisher, Gigi McClure

Ex Officio Present – Stephen Bramwell, and Nicole Ross

Guests Present – Linda Powell, Carolina Mejia, and Gabriela Hyre

Preliminary Actions - This was the second Ag committee meeting in history to be held virtually via Zoom platform. Meeting called to order at 7:03 p.m., followed by the introduction of attendees. May meeting minutes were approved. The meeting agenda was approved.

Letter to the BoCC on the county's HCP – Committee approved letter as written by Robert and Kevin to be sent to BoCC recommending several things to the BoCC including the importance of working lands during the HCP draft stages.

Comp Plan Letter – Robert mentioned the comp plan letter, and committee thought it would be best to wait for our next meeting with Thurston County representative to further answer questions of the committee.

Ag Committee Communicating Directly with the BoCC and County Departments – Discussion about the process of sending recommendation letters to the BoCC, and whether or not Josh with CPED should be included in the recipients. Robert mentioned the Ag Committee works for the BoCC therefore it should be up to the BoCC if they want the Ag Committee to include CPED in recommendations. Further discussion on adding public comment directly onto recommendation letters to the BoCC, comment taken from Ag Committee meetings. Committee felt this may be an easy way to get public comments direct to the BoCC.

Speaker coming in July: Chris Chaput with Thurston County, August guest speakers and beyond – Discussion about the committee typically taking August meeting off due to busy season. Group was in favor of having the August meeting if it works for potential guest speakers from agencies such as American Farmland Trust or US Fish.

Tenino Ag Park a reality? - Kevin talked about his time on the Green Ribbon Panel in 2019, attending several meetings and the vision of the park. Water line extension from city was just installed, and the first building plans to be up fall of 2020. Committee questioned what will go on the site, and at this point it is unknown. Possibly commercial kitchen? Meat cutting shop? House Thurston Conservation District? Jed volunteered to reach out to Tenino Mayor Wayne Fournier about status of Ag Park.

Committee Work Topics:

A/B/C – Ag Marketing - All three of these sub items rolled into same conversation, Kevin and Joe again brought up the issues with no local availability in the custom meat cutting shops to

Process animals until at least next year. Joe went over his interpretation of the WSDA's "Green Book" a book to help the public out in food safety including custom meat cutting. It describes Being able to sell meats at 1/8 portion or lower as long as the animal is sold before slaughter. Kevin's interpretation of that is he could sell a single steak, as long as it's sold prior to slaughter. Stephen mentioned a company in Chehalis starting out with a meat processing plant called Dragons Choice, Greg Moir is the owner. Stephen thought this may be another outlet for local Meat processing.

Stephen also mentioned Pack Mountain Resource, a company looking at local food security and Lack of infrastructure to meet that security including meat processing. Stephen asked the Committee if it would be worthwhile for Pack Mountain to hire someone to work on this issue, Committee agreed it would.

Jed recommended moving agenda item 10 up for discussion, it was approved by the committee.

Resolution or Letter Supporting PRIME Act - Item 10 drafts a recommendation from the committee to BoCC and BoCC candidates to support the federal PRIME act being considered in US Congress in allowing more local food production infrastructure. The letter also may address farmland preservation. Tom explained his intent about this PRIME act support letter. Stephen explained more about the gaps in food processing for our area in all foods. Jed volunteered to draft the PRIME act support letter to the BoCC.

County Website Site Information – Tom asked more about the county website information. Richard mentioned that it would be great to have a one stop shop for new or even current farmers, to visit and get information on all county, state, and federal regulations, and assistance programs. Committee is asked to send Tom all of the info that may pertain to this topic. Jed asked about not for profit organizations that work or provide services in agriculture, and the committee unanimously agreed all ag businesses should get the information.

Public Comment – Gabby thanked the committee for their hard work and providing her more information on where her food comes from. Linda mentioned that an FFA representative may be a good fit for the committee. The committee asked what level, student, or FFA advisor and discussion ensued as to whether the individual would be considered a non-ag or ag committee member.

WSU Update – Stephen has been busy with the funding line from the federal government for the food hub that intends to launch in August with online ordering. There is a new hire, an Ag educator named Sierra under Stephen's supervision. Sierra will be tasked to provide farm plan training and work on the easement staircase, a way for Thurston County farmers to sign up for easements protecting the federal listed species.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03pm