

## Thurston County Agriculture Advisory Committee

### Meeting Minutes for May 21, 2020

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

**Members Excused** – Bryan Fisher

**Ex Officio Present** – Stephen Bramwell, and Nicole Ross

**Guests Present** – Linda Powell, and Jeff Swotek

**Preliminary Actions** - This was the first Ag committee meeting in history to be held virtually via Zoom platform. Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and introduction of attendees. There were no March meeting minutes to approve. The meeting agenda was approved.

**Conservation Futures Nomination** – Joe was approved to represent the committee on the conservations futures group. Jed volunteer to be the alternate and was also approved.

**Comp Plan Review** – Discussion about what is long term Ag, additions of long term Ag and the controversial history. Jeff Swotek introduced himself and provided background from the USDA NRCS perspective of conservation easements. It was suggested to invite Mary Root with US Fish and Chris Chaput with Thurston County to our next meeting for further context and discussion. Robert volunteered to write a letter to the BOCC based on the comp plan review.

**Letter to the county on the HCP regarding Ag acreage** – Committee had issues with HCP acres estimated for working lands and for reserves. Kevin volunteered to draft a recommendation letter with the following points: Showcasing benefits of working lands, reserves need to have grazing options, encourage working lands to hold mitigation credits, and all the listed species to protect are compatible with working lands. Discussion of current easement programs including Colvin's on the Grasslands program, ACEP, Wetland Reserve program and ultimately who would hold/manage the conservation easements. Discussion about the collaboration between JBLM and Thurston County. Committee agreed that the 433 acres of working lands to be enrolled in the HCP seemed low, and if mitigation credits were of certain value then it would be easily achieved. Committee had questions about who issues the credits and determines value, and Jeff Swotek answered US Fish will determine that based on work with JBLM. Committee would like update on this process from Mary Root. Committee wants the letter that Kevin will draft to the BOCC to include all the benefits that working lands provide.

**CARES Act Funding for Thurston County** – Stephen stated that Thurston County is supposed to receive over 15 million dollars of the CARES act funding. Pierce County drafted a letter to their BOCC to encourage appropriations of the federal dollars into their Ag communities for things such as PPE and to keep businesses running. The amount of 11 million dollars was requested by the Pierce County Ag committee to be allocated to Ag businesses, or 7% of the appropriation. If Thurston county requested that same 7% it would be approximately 1 million dollars. Stephen stated he would speak more with Pierce County about the process of appropriating the federal funds to agriculture. San Juan county Ag

committee also requested funds be appropriated to their Ag community. No decision was made on whether or not to draft a CARES letter from our committee due to meeting time constraints.

**Green Sheets** – Robert noted issues he saw with the two green sheets the committee reviewed. One issue was the check box for yes or no on the application for Ag impacts is not checked. Committee feels it's an error in review by the county staff for not requiring complete applications. Robert made a motion to encourage the county planning department to make sure applications are filled out completely including checkbox's for Ag impact with a letter, Jed provided second. Robert asked Nicole and Stephen to look into the distribution chain for green sheets. Robert volunteered to draft an email, send to Nicole and Stephen, and they would send along to the appropriate person in the planning department.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.