

**THURSTON COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**McLane Building Conference Room
5033 Harrison Avenue
Olympia, WA 98502**

May 25, 2012

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Pat Labine, Vice Chair
Chery Sullivan
Robert McIntosh
John Lentz
E.J. Zita

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Dave Nygard

STAFF

Lucas Patzek, County Director WSU Extension
Polly Stoker, Community Services, Resource Stewardship

GUESTS

Jeremy Davis, Thurston Planning Department
Scott Clark, Thurston Planning Department
Jim Goche, Market Gardens NW LLC.

CALL TO ORDER – Vice Chair Pat Labine at 7:07pm.

REVIEW AGENDA – n/a

PUBLIC COMMENT – Jim Goche, small farmer and board member of the Thurston County Farm Bureau wanted to make it known that John Stuhlmiller, a representative of the Washington State Farm Bureau does not represent the Thurston County office of the Farm Bureau and asks for more direct communication between this committee and the local Thurston County Farmers. He also submitted a letter and email for review from the Vibrant Farms IX: Property Tax Working Group which will be part of the meeting minutes record (*see attachment*). It is asking the Commissioners to look into tax and regulatory policy which may need to be changed to promote local agriculture and support local farmers.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES – n/a

ANNOUNCEMENTS & OTHER BUSINESS

- Members introduced themselves for Lucas' benefit as this was his first Committee meeting as Director of WSU Thurston County Extension, and he will attend as Ex-Officio and Polly Stoker will attend meetings for minutes and agendas as the Staff contact.
- Fred Colvin will not be renewing his position so now there will be 2 vacant spots on the committee.
- The staff will work on updating the Ag website with more contact information, meeting minutes and upcoming agendas. Further down the road, they would like to have past committee documents scanned and archived for a history available to the public. Please spread the word to those who participated in this committee in the past we would like copies of any old documents that were used or created regarding Ag in Thurston County.

CRITICAL AREA ORDINANCE UPDATE – Scott Clark and Jeremy Davis presented the latest memorandum on Critical Area Ordinance and also brought the proposed Agriculture Review Chart for review. After 10 years, the ordinance is in the final phase of work and public comment is now welcome. Jeremy provided his contact information to anyone who would like to give feedback on this topic. His phone number is 360.754.3355 x7010. His email is davisj@co.thurston.wa.us. Items have been revised in the document which include an adverse market condition clause so that a farmer can come back and farm years later instead of expiring after 5 years as is stated in the current law. They asked if the Ag Committee could review these documents and then forward your feedback to Jeremy or Lucas for the upcoming weekly meetings with the Commissioners that will lead up to the Public Hearing happening on June 23rd at the Superior Courthouse. It would be useful to this committee to testify at the Public Hearing as well. (The above mentioned documents will be included as attachments to the meeting minutes.)

OLYMPIA BEEKEEPERS – A letter was passed around from Mark Emrick, President from the Olympia Beekeeper's Association, asking the Ag Committee to present limits to the Commissioners regarding the use of neonicotinoid insecticides which might impact honeybees and native bees adversely (*see attachment*). It is requested that the Committee learn more about this topic from Tim Lawrence, Director of WSU Island County Extension and a honeybee entomologist, at the next meeting (June 28th) via video conference and after that, the Committee will be able to draft a recommendation on this issue to the Commissioners.

DIRECTOR REPORT: There was no additional report.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: Bee video conference training.

ADJOURN - Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm by Vice Chair Labine.

Polly Stoker, Recording Secretary

Hon. Cathy Wolfe, Chair
Hon. Karen Valenzuela, Vice Chair
Hon. Sandra Romero

May 17, 2012

2000 Lakeridge Drive. SW
Building 1, Room 269
Olympia, WA 98502-6045

Re: Citizens Amendments to "Open Space/Current Use" and "AOD/Agro-Tourism Ordinances

To the Thurston County Commission,

On behalf of our Food Summit "Vibrant Farms Group IX", please consider the following 3 recommended Amendments for inclusion in **SSB 5814 "Current Use Agriculture Program"** and **"AOD/Agri-Tourism Overlay District"** ordinances. Details describing our Citizen group's mission, experience and process related to these issues are noted below.

1. Open Space Current Use/Agriculture Amendments. The Committee supports legislation which clarifies the Open Space/Agriculture laws and directs County Assessors to cease segregating a farm house and house lot from farm property which is classified as Open Space Agriculture. Presently some Assessors assess the farm house and lot at a higher rate. This legislation will require County Assessors statewide to administer the Open Space laws uniformly and direct them to assess the farm house and property underneath or surrounding it in the same manner as the remainder of the classified agricultural property.

2. County AOD/Agritourism Overlay District Ordinance. The Committee recommends that the County Commission immediately amend its "agritourism ordinance" so that a) it applies county-wide, and b) so that it applies to all farms regardless of size and income. At our last meeting, we discussed why these things are important and most of the reasons are summarized in the Thurston Co. Farm Bureau's letter that was circulated to committee members last month. In short, County regulations should be clear, treat all farmers fairly, and apply uniformly.

3. County Fiscal Notes. The Committee supports a mandatory fiscal note process for all ordinances, resolutions, or rules enacted by Thurston County. A "fiscal note" shall include a calculation of the projected cost to the county and the cost to the public, including tax shifts and any increase or reduction in property values. The Committee believes that the County Commission must have this information available to them prior to adopting any ordinances, resolutions and rules in order to make thoughtful decisions and act in a fully informed manner. The Committee also finds that if the County Commission's goal is to support local farmers, encourage local agriculture, and promote vibrant farms, it must understand the fiscal impact of its actions upon them.

Further to the October, 2011 Food Summit, our "Vibrant Farms Citizens 2012 Action Workgroup" formed, to work on Vision Action IX: "Financial Support: Policy Incentives". In tandem with "Justice & Fairness" and "Thriving Economy" groups and visions, our mission is to "Create Living Wages for Farmers, by reducing the Farm House Property Tax", and by reviewing other tax policy issues. Research on current ordinances spilled over into the AOD/Agri-Tourism ordinance, with lengthy discussions, debates and informed consensus.

Our citizen group members have experience in Farming, Law, Revenue, Tourism, Community Gardening, Dietetics/Community Nutrition and Parenting (with most overlapping into several categories).

With gratitude for your astute service, we thank you for this opportunity to participate in Thurston County's support for Farmers, Agriculture and a thriving sustainable economy. If there is anything further we can do to assist the County Commission to revise ordinance language as suggested above, please feel welcome to contact me, on behalf of our group, at (360) 705-2026, or graced@earthlink.net.

Sincerely,



Diane Grace,
Team Leader

Vibrant Farms IX: Property Tax Working Group

May 1, 2012

Thurston County Agricultural Advisory Board

Dear Thurston County Agricultural Advisory Board:

We are writing to ask you assistance in advising the Thurston County Commissioners to put some some limits in place in Thurston County to lessen the exposure of honeybees and other insect pollinators to what we believe is a class of insecticides which are very dangerous to the survival of honeybees.

The class of insecticides known as neonicotinoids are systemic pesticides, meaning that they are taken up by the plants and are present in all parts from roots to sap to pollen. A susceptible insect feeding on any part of the plant including its nectar or pollen (as bees do) is thus exposed to the insecticide

Imidacloprid, the top revenue-generating pesticide for the Bayer Corporation in the world, is the top selling insecticide in the world. There are over 230 products registered with the California Department of Agriculture as containing imidacloprid as an ingredient or the main one. Requirements for labeling by the federal government for insecticides are so variable as to be meaningless. Although there are numerous studies in both laboratory and field conditions documenting effects believed to be linked to Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) including precocious foraging behavior, increased susceptibility to bee diseases and parasites including Nosema and Varroa mites and inability to navigate, these products are still sold with what we consider to be inadequate labeling precautions, and based on junk science (see Wiki Bee leaks link). The central symptom of CCD has been documented to be reproduced by exposure to neonicotinoids alone, even in amounts undetectable by present technology to the investigators who applied the insecticide to the bees they studied.

Although labeling for these 230 plus products touts claims like “kills up to 200 kinds of insects for up to 12 months” the vast majority offer no warnings of toxicity to honeybees, even in the finest print. The few that do have warnings about honeybees say such things as “do not apply when honeybees are foraging. .” In Washington state, that may be every month of the year.

In the last 6 years overwinter losses of honeybee colonies have ranged between 30 and 37%. Over the past year, the experience of members of the Olympia Beekeepers which includes both amateurs and professionals, has risen dramatically to unsustainable and alarming levels of 75-85%. Some of the professionals have been caring for honeybees for over 40 years, and have never seen losses like this.

Therefore, we are asking that you advise the Thurston County County Commissioners to request that the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) require that products containing neonicotinoids, most especially imidacloprid and clothianidin, be limited for sale into, use, distribution or application in Thurston County to individuals or entities which possess a valid pesticide applicator license issued under the WSDA mandates. Per Margaret Tucker, director of pesticide compliance services at Washington State Department of Agriculture, this action is clearly within the mandate of the WSDA.

There is state precedent for such action, in that these products have fine print that says “not for sale into, distribution and/or use in Nassau, Suffolk, Kings, and Queens counties of New York.”

We are asking for this on an emergency basis.

Mark Emrick, President
Olympia Beekeepers' Association