

**THURSTON COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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

June 28, 2012

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Pat Labine, Interim Chair
John O'Brien
John Lentz
Eric Johnson
Erik Hagen
E.J. Zita
Robert McIntosh

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Chery Sullivan

STAFF

Lucas Patzek, Director, WSU Thurston County Extension
Dave Nygard, Resource Specialist, Thurston Conservation District
Polly Stoker, Community Services, Thurston County Resource Stewardship Department

GUESTS

Mark Emrich, Olympia Beekeepers, m.bemrich@juno.com
Speaker: Tim Lawrence via video conference, Director of WSU Island County Extension

CALL TO ORDER – Vice Chair Pat Labine at 7:03 p.m.

REVIEW AGENDA – n/a

ANNOUNCEMENTS & OTHER BUSINESS

- The Ag Advisory webpage has now been set up on the WSU Thurston County Extension website. The link is <http://county.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/ag-advisory-committee/Pages/default.aspx>. The meeting minutes will be posted as well as future educational video presentations.
- With the departure of Fred Colvin from the committee, Pat Labine will move her position to Interim Chair.

PRESENTATION ON: “BEES AND NEONICOTINOIDS” BY TIM LAWRENCE, Ph.D., WSU Island County Extension. A video recording was created from this narrated slideshow presentation which will be posted to the Ag webpage in the near future.

In his presentation to and discussion with the Committee, Dr. Lawrence did not recommend setting limits on the use of neonicotinoid insecticides at this time, based on a lack of scientific evidence that they are harmful to bee colonies. Dr. Lawrence's presentation concluded that mites, viruses, microsporidia (nosema), and poor nutrition have all been identified as major stresses on bee colonies. He also speculated that the management practices of commercial beekeepers contribute to this stress placed on honey bees. Studies have shown that more than 40 other chemicals have been found in larger concentrations in wax, pollen, and bees than have the levels of neonicotinoids.

Dr. Lawrence's presentation concluded that mites, viruses, fungi, poor nutrition, and commercial migration have all been identified as major stresses on bee colonies, and that studies have shown that bees are more sensitive to about 50 other chemicals than to neonicotinoids. Dr. Lawrence's presentation is in disagreement with the position of the Xerces Society, which in its recent report titled "Are Neonicotinoids Killing Bees?" (brought to the attention of the Committee by member John O'Brien) suggests that "legislators, regulators, and municipal leaders across the country...consider banning the use of neonicotinoid insecticides for cosmetic purposes on ornamental and landscape plants (as the ban now in force in Ontario, Canada)."

Interim Chair Labine motioned, and Eric Johnson seconded the motion, to write a letter to the Commissioners expressing a grave concern over the developments with honeybees, and ask that the insecticides be considered as one of the factors behind the recent population decline. Interim Chair Labine will create a draft letter and email it to the group for revisions. A final letter will be approved at the next meeting.

It was also suggested by the Committee that education on this issue be raised by creating a press release, engaging John Dodge of the Olympian newspaper to publish a story on this topic, reaching out to the local community with flyers and other educational opportunities to spread awareness and asking big box stores and nurseries to post information on this danger and ways to help bees in our community.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Mark Emrich, President from the Olympia Beekeeper's Association, stated that he believes the bee problem is at a tipping point between pesticides and natural issues such as disease, nutrition, and climate. On a state level the bee association has not taken an official stand against the neonicotinoid insecticides due to legal issues that may arise without proper scientific backing and opening themselves up for a lawsuit. Everyone agrees that getting this insecticide use down to safe levels will help the situation and it is a step in the right direction.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES – approved by Interim Chair Labine.

DIRECTOR REPORT: There was no additional report.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- Stormwater issue
- PDR topic (previous meeting minutes will be sent out for background on this topic)

ADJOURN - Meeting adjourned at 9:04 pm by Interim Chair Labine.

Polly Stoker, Recording Secretary