

**THURSTON COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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

September 27, 2012

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Erik Hagen
Dave Nygard
Doug Wiseman
E.J. Zita
John Lentz
Robert McIntosh

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Lucas Patzek, Pat Labine, Chery Sullivan

STAFF Polly Stoker, Community Services, Resource Stewardship

GUESTS T.J. Johnson, Sustainable South Sound

CALL TO ORDER – Dave Nygard at 7:03 pm

ADOPTION OF MINUTES – minutes were approved as written.

REVIEW AGENDA – no changes

ANNOUNCEMENTS & OTHER BUSINESS – Pat Labine will stop by the Extension office this week to sign the Bee letter. It will then be inter-officed to the Commissioners.

THURSTON FOOD SYSTEM COUNCIL- TJ Johnson of Sustainable South Sound presented on the newly formed volunteer entity called “The Thurston Food Systems Council”. This council was created by a need that was determined at last year’s Food Summit and the actions items that emerged from it. On the Council 21 different sectors of our local food systems are represented including county commissioners, farmers, food processors, and food retailers. Their “goals and visioning” document was passed around that was completed in August. This document is being taken to local government and officials and asking A) to be acknowledged and B) to gain participation. The next steps for the Council will be creating a work program for 2013. Part of this work program will be the creation of a local food system “hub”, where there will be aggregation of agricultural products and marketing and wholesaling those same products. Also available would be the value-added processing of local sauces, jams, beef jerky, etc. to market and distribute perhaps under a common label. Another action item is creating a business plan/model. USDA is funding these types of food hubs throughout the nation and twice in the past couple years Sustainable South Sound has tried without success to secure grant money. With the formation of this Council the infrastructure should satisfy the USDA’s requirements and financing will be granted. Lastly this Council sees their role as “educator” of the community which will include “celebrations” of

the activities already happening around this topic. As an example, October 24th is “Local Food Day” and everyone is asked to participate in hosting or attending a dinner with primarily locally grown food. For more info, check out the Slow Food website or Facebook page. Overall, the Council’s goal is to determine how local policies are impacting our food system and provide feedback to the community & elected officials on how to do this better. They are not an official committee like the Ag Committee who deals primarily with policy for Thurston County. The Council is not going into “business” but see their role as bringing together people to make connections (people with capital and entrepreneurs who need funding). Another piece of this food hub could be institutional food purchasing “farm to cafeteria” like hospitals, schools, etc. There are institutional buyers on the food system council and are very interested in pursuing this idea. Bottom line, the council can identify opportunities and get people connected to take advantage of these locally.

Robert McIntosh mentioned that there is a huge farmer’s market complex including a food service hub in Snohomish County. It’s sponsored by some sort of immigration program where if you have over one million dollars to invest, will invest in a business and employ so many people you could become an America citizen.

The Ag committee wants to plug in and work with the Council. One idea is the committee working with the Commissioners could make sure the Council get what they need in regard to regulations; both removing barriers and also creating “helpful” regulations when an issue is identified. We could also send letters of support or sponsorship if the need arises. Lucas will be a liaison between these two groups.

Another way the Ag committee could help would be identifying issues that could arise and share with TJ the potential problems and possible solutions. One issue could be the traceability factor in using a food hub. How would you know where food was contaminated if all farms brought their product to the same food hub? There is a difference in consequences as well; for beef issues the actual processor location gets fined but a vegetable farmer’s entire farm is shut down. One more issue might be the high-end restaurant scene not wanting to use a co-op type food hub because would want the credit to go to the individual farms for their menu items.

DIRECTOR REPORT: n/a

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- Scott Clark and Jeremy Davis of Thurston Planning Dept. will be at the Oct 25th Ag Committee Meeting to speak about TDRs.

ADJOURN - Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm by Dave Nygard

Polly Stoker, Recording Secretary