

**THURSTON COUNTY  
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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

**MARCH 28, 2013**

**MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Pat Labine, Chair  
Chery Sullivan  
John Lentz  
Eric Johnson  
Robert McIntosh  
Eric Hagan

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** E.J. Zita

**STAFF:** Lucas Patzek, WSU Thurston County Extension  
Polly Stoker, WSU Thurston County Extension

**GUESTS:** Scott McCormick, Associate Planner, Thurston County

**CALL TO ORDER** – 7:09pm, Chair Pat Labine

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES** – Minutes were approved from February.

**REVIEW AGENDA** – add to agenda: Agritourism Overlay District (A.O.D)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS & OTHER BUSINESS** –

**DIRECTOR REPORT:** n/a

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

**Poultry Update, Scott McCormick:** The AG Committee recommended the following modifications to the Olympia UGA poultry regulations, which currently forbid the keeping of poultry:

- 1 rooster per acre, and no roosters allowed on parcels smaller than one acre in size;
- 20 chicken hens per acre, with hens allowed on smaller parcels in a number consistent with this ratio (e.g. 10 hens on 0.5 acre);
- All current poultry operations will be grandfathered in, regardless of scale, and this language should be explicit in the regulation;
- There should be an allowance for increased poultry densities if a farm management plan, developed with the Thurston Conservation District, is implemented and maintained.

With this input, Scott will draft a new Olympia UGA poultry regulation and present it to the Ag Committee for further discussion before submission to the Commissioners.

**A.O.D., Scott McCormick:** Scott is tasked by the Commissioners with spending one quarter of his time on revisiting and modifying the Agritourism Overlay District boundaries. There are at least three landowners whose properties lay just outside of the A.O.D. boundary who wish to be included in the A.O.D., and Scott would like the Ag Committee to get the word out to other landowners who might wish to be included in the A.O.D. He will come to the next meeting, so an action item is that the Ag Committee should brainstorm ideas to bring to him at that time.

**Honeybee & Neonicotinoids Update, Lucas Patzek:** Following up on the previous meeting held on January 9, 2013, staff met with the Commissioners on March 6, 2013 to discuss the following items:

1. The legality and advisability of the county restricting the distribution and application of products for ornamental (horticultural) use containing neonicotinoid insecticides to those individuals or entities which possess a valid pesticide applicator license.
2. Alternative solutions:
  - a. Forming a consortium of Washington counties concerned with the potential connection between honeybee colony collapse and neonicotinoid insecticides to write a letter expressing this concern to Governor and/or the Director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture.
  - b. Building awareness about misuse of insecticides on honeybee populations through educational events and other outreach.

The Commissioners shared the concerns of the Olympia Beekeeper's Association about declining numbers of honeybees in Thurston County, state-wide, and nationally. The Beekeeper's Association provided available science demonstrating that long-term exposure to neonicotinoids at sub-lethal doses has negative impacts on the ability of honeybees to forage and communicate. County staff communicated to the Commissioners that the current scientific understanding of honeybee colony collapse does not point to a single cause, such neonicotinoid containing insecticides, as many factors appear to be interacting to create this problem including mites, poor nutrition, and exposure to a diverse array of pesticides and other chemicals. The Commissioners chose to take a precautionary approach with home ornamental use of neonicotinoid-containing products, so as to minimize exposure of honeybees to this class of compounds. Because all locally available pesticides are registered by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) the Commissioners decided to draft a letter to the director of the WSDA requesting the agency's assistance in implementing the restriction on the purchase, sale, distribution and application of the neonicotinoid class of insecticides for ornamental use to persons or entities with a valid WSDA pesticide applicator license as noted above. The Commissioners also hope to invite the members of the Washington State Association of Counties to join Thurston County in this request.

There is a major new development at the national level on this issue which might have an impact on local efforts. A coalition of beekeepers and environmental and consumer groups have filed a lawsuit in Federal District Court against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) seeking a suspension of the registrations of two neonicotinoid insecticides, clothianidin and thiamethoxam.

**Strategizing on Fair Educational Activities, Lucas Patzek:** This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), so a special effort will be made by WSU Thurston County Extension to develop educational activities and displays relating to agriculture at the 2013 Thurston County Fair. Lucas requested that the Ag Committee help brainstorm ideas for activities and displays, and he is seeking local farming and food businesses which might have an interest in participating in the Fair. He wants to promote the local farming and food industries at the Fair and create a novel educational program led by these industries.

**Fall Farm Tours, Lucas Patzek:** George Sharp, Executive Director of the local Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB), is organizing a farm tour to occur in conjunction with a dinner event benefitting farmland preservation being held at the Thurston Expo Center on September 21<sup>st</sup>. Lucas requested that the Ag Committee help brainstorm ideas for farm tour stops. He also briefly discussed the VCB's interest in collaborating with the South of the Sound Community Farmland Trust to develop a digital version of their print/web farm map. This digital mapping tool would allow one to search for lodging and activities near particular destinations, including agritourism destinations, around the county.

**ADJOURN** – 8:55pm, Chair Pat Labine