

**THURSTON COUNTY  
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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

**SEPTEMBER 25, 2014**

**MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

E.J. Zita, Co-Chair  
Doug Wiseman  
Eric Johnson  
Bill Wyman  
Kevin Jensen  
Chery Sullivan  
Dave Nygard  
Erik Hagan

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** John Lentz, Robert McIntosh, Pat Labine

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

**GUESTS:** Scott McCormick, County Planning Department

**CALL TO ORDER** – 7:05pm, E.J. Zita, Co-Chair

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES** – The minutes from August were passed out those who requested it and were approved as is.

**REVIEW AGENDA** Add the discussion of the future staff member for the AG committee.

**THE PUBLIC COMMENT**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS & OTHER BUSINESS:**

**DIRECTOR REPORT:** n/a

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:** For the October meeting, invite marijuana industry person (Eric recommends Jim Clovus of NW Growers 360-436-0157). Also discuss uniformity of AG activity ordinances in the urban growth and rural areas of Thurston County. (i.e. chicken regulations).

The committee needs to have a member contact Dawn Peebles (with county Environmental Health) as she does not think she will be able to attend an actual AG meeting but would be available by phone to answer any

questions we had about the marijuana issue and water quality as it pertains to public health. Her phone number is [360-867-2650](tel:360-867-2650).

We would also like to have someone from Ecology come to discuss marijuana operations but we will start with the industry specialist to get the questions in line first for the Ecology department.

### **Marijuana Process / Application Reviews – Scott McCormick**

Scott passed around a spreadsheet showing the permit applications that have been received and approved to date. 34 out of 61 have been approved so far. The green sheets have 3 departments sections that review these applications: Planning, Public Works, and the Health Department. Health deals with the sewage and drinking water issues due to employees they may have, and also the waste water from the grow itself. If they state it will be aquaponics it is fairly small waste water in a 50 gallon barrel and then take it down to LOTT to empty out per month. ORCAA also comments on these applications regarding heavy duty processing. Scott also reassured the committee to keep the concerns and comments coming no matter what the date listed on the applications says. (Most review dates have passed by the time the committee meets at the end of each month.)

The applications that most concern the AG Committee are the ones that state they will be running their operations on AG Lands. The committee concern is that the marijuana farms will take away from current AG lands. Could pot farms drive up prices for other food-producing AG which have desirable infrastructure for pot farms (as in the former dairy farm pot application)? If all of the potential farmers switch to just growing pot, this will leave a gap in other crops. (i.e. If the dairy farm land is now being used for marijuana, where might a future dairy farmer buy land to actually do the dairy farming? Is a marijuana grow better for the environment than an agridairy?)

One of the applications where a concern of this transition of farmlands and that it is not a sustainable practice is the “5<sup>th</sup> House” (project #14105687). It’s in Rochester and below are the concerns specifically:

- Need more information about the volume of organic waste to be produced per time period.
- Need information on the method of tilling and timing of tilling.
- Land base for tillage – how much waste will be applied to how much land, how often.
- What is the nutrient load in the ground.
- What will be grown in the land to uptake the added nutrients.
- How will chemicals used in growing pot impact the tilled land.
- How much land will be impacted.
- On their application they claim no noise will be produced. In a 43,000 s.f. facility with fans and other equipment, there most definitely will be noise produced. The applicant should submit a realistic proposal.

Another application being reviewed today that says it’s on AG Lands is Glasgow (NW Gardens LLC project #14104994). It lists that there is a “violation” of some type. If more details of this violation is available, please share with the committee. (send this question to Sandy Norton)

Power usage is another big question for all of these grows. An opportunity for renewable energy development could be a task for this committee to look into. This industry is targeted to use a lot of energy. How is this going to affect our current power grids? Where is this additional energy going to come from? Could part of the income made from this crop be earmarked to create more solar power to run the operations?

Another concern for all of these grow operations is pesticide use. Currently there is not enough staff to go out and make sure they are using the correct pesticides (which would be any type of product that is approved for organic farming.)

The committee also needs to reach out to Sustainable Thurston on the topic of land preservation for food productions regarding the marijuana topic. Not sure if this is even being addressed yet. There is a state limit of 2 million square feet of grow area. With that there is only 23 more acres that can be developed in pot in Washington State. (That is grow area, not farm area.) With this small amount, pot will be unlikely to out-compete food producers.

**Staffing AG Committee – Going Forward**

The committee is concerned with Lucas leaving there will not be a staff person who will have their ear to the ground of the issues happening with AG at the County level which is a valid concern. The WSU interim director will have a “big picture” responsibility to this committee but will not have the AG background that Lucas does or be attending the meetings. In the past, the planning department staffed this committee (an actual entry level planner) so they had an understanding of the issues with AG and the County. Pat has asked that Lucas request this type of person be the staff for this committee again.

**ADJOURN** – 8:40pm, E.J. Zita, Co-Chair