

# THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

McLane Conference Room  
5033 Harrison Ave. NW, Olympia WA 98502

## Minutes for January 29, 2015

Members Present: Bill Wyman, Chery Sullivan, Doug Wiseman, Chris Groen, Kevin Jensen, Pat Labine, Chair, EJ Zita, Vice-Chair, Eric Johnson, Robert McIntosh

Staff Present: Charissa Waters, and Patt O'Neil

Guests Present: Katie Pruitt, Thurston County Resource Stewardship; and Jim Goche, Friendly Grove Farm

Members Absent: Dave Nygard

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm by Pat and round-table introductions were made due to the fact that this was the first meeting for member Chris and staff members Charissa and Patt.

Minutes from the October 30, 2014 meeting was approved as read. There was no meeting in December 2014 due to inclement weather. The Agenda was approved with the addition of discussion on Alternative Pesticides by Chery Sullivan and a request from the Thurston County Conservation District for a representative from this committee.

There was no one present for Public Comment nor was there a WSU Extension Director report.

Marijuana Regulations and Process: Katie Pruitt, from the Resource Stewardship Office, came to give a follow-up to the presentation made by Scott McCormick last September. She reported that the original timeline mentioned for establishing regulations for approving marijuana related operations has been extended until May in hope of having further input from the State Legislature. Final regulations and standards should be in place by the end of 2015.

Some of the concerns facing the Board of County Commissioners are regulations regarding size in acreage of marijuana farms, water quality, odor, good neighbor relations, parking, etc. All permits are being issued for a 1 year period with the option for renewal.

A discussion followed about what is being asked of the Ag Committee with regards to what might be considered non-Ag issues if there are already professionals reviewing things like Water Quality/Rights and Waste Disposal. It was suggested that a form might be developed that could accompany the "Green Sheets" when they are returned to the Planners for consideration. This could also have not only specific agricultural issues addressed but also recommendations that the Ag Committee feels might have an effect on agricultural related issues. Eric said that he would draft a form to be approved by the committee at the next meeting.

Katie ended her presentation by distributing several pages of graphics showing the distribution of the 50+ Marijuana Project Applications and Permits either being considered or already approved. These indicated the types of operations (production or processing) and zoning areas of the operations (rural 1 in 5, UGA, industrial, etc). The BoCC considers the recommendation of the Ag Committee very important when it comes to marijuana production as a viable agricultural resource in Thurston County. Katie also shared a prioritized list from the BoCC with regards to what they see as large tasks need their attention for the sake of county government operations, of which marijuana regulations was highest on the list. *Note: it was announced that Urban Growth Area farming standards was on the list yet but would probably not be addressed until 2016.*

Voluntary Stewardship Program: Eric introduced Jim Goche to speak about voluntary incentive-based measures that Thurston County is initiating to meet *Growth Management Act* requirements for critical areas in agricultural areas (instead of using critical areas ordinance regulations). The definition for agricultural activities is from the Shoreline Management Act and is intentionally broad in order to incorporate all Ag activities. All five watersheds of the County were nominated to be considered for the VSP by Thurston County when they opted in to the VSP but the watershed work group has since picked the Chehalis Watershed to be the first priority watershed for the Work Plan that is now being developed (deadline is the end of June). It is probable that the Ag Committee will be asked in the future is for input on the outreach plan to farmers. *Note: Patt was asked to find out when the next VSP meeting is and will notify the committee members when she finds out.*

Expanding Urban Farming: Since it was discovered that the BoCC will probably not be addressing this subject until 2016, it was decided that this committee offer suggestions to the BoCC for upgrading and standardizing laws and ordinances. A sub-committee of Robert, Zita, Chery, and Charissa would work on a draft to be brought back to this committee at a future meeting.

Anaerobic Bio-Digester in Thurston County: Washington State University Extension Energy Program, in conjunction with Thurston County, is considering developing a South County Community Digester for agricultural waste processing and harvesting of clean energy. While in support of clean energy, the discussion from the Ag Committee sounded a sense of hesitation as to the feasibility of the proposed project. Charissa was tasked with finding out when the next meeting for discussion of the bio-digester project was scheduled and to let the members of this committee know so that they might attend.

Representatives for the Thurston County Conservation Futures Program: It was moved and seconded that Kevin Jensen be the representative to the committee and Doug Wiseman the alternate. Motion passed.

Election of a new Chair for the Agricultural Advisory Committee: Pat announced that after serving as chair for several years, she was stepping down from the position of chair. Patt reminded the members that according to the by-laws there was no specific plan for filling vacancies but there was a clause that stated that elections would be held every even year for a 2 year term. This meant that any election tonight would be for a 1 year term only.

Zita and Robert were both nominated for the chair position and after submitting written ballots, Zita won the positions of chair which now left a vacancy for her position as vice-chair. Robert was nominated for this position and since there were no other nominations he won with a unanimous vote.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm by Pat Labine.