

# THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

McLane Conference Room

5033 Harrison Ave. NW, Olympia WA 98502

## Minutes for April 30, 2015

Members Present: Chris Groen, Kevin Jensen, Robert McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Dave Nygard, Pat Labine, Doug Wiseman

Staff Present: Charissa Waters, and Patt O'Neil

Guests Present: Lucia Wyss

Members Absent: Chery Sullivan, EJ Zita (Chair) {both excuse absences}

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The meeting was called to order at 7:07 pm by Robert McIntosh followed by round-table introductions. Lucia Wyss explained that she is a student at The Evergreen State College that was interning in Resource Stewardship. She is working closely with Katie Pruit (who is on maternity leave) to update the language and the codes for the Thurston County Urban Growth Area.

Minutes from the March 26, 2015 meeting were read and the grammar was corrected in two paragraphs. It was moved and seconded that the minutes be approved as amended.

With regards to the Agenda for this meeting, Pat Labine asked to discuss the reasons for the former Committee member's resignation in March. Comments were that Chairman Zita had indicated that she would be in communication with him and since she was not at tonight's meeting this might be worth saving until the May meeting. It was moved and seconded that the Agenda be approved as presented.

Ms. Wyss was then allowed to speak more thoroughly with regards to her presence at tonight's meeting. She explained that every two years the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) updated county codes and she had been hired to bring the county's Urban Growth Area codes (UGA) in line with those of the cities of Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater. She hopes to have the new language in place by June. It is planned that when Katie Pruit of the Resource Stewardship Office returns from maternity leave, a Public Hearing will be held in either November or December to approve the change in the UGA codes. By definition an UGA is a portion of county land that is anticipated to be annexed to a city, so the BoCC

wants to update the county codes in an effort to make that transition seamless for citizens living in those areas.

Draft Ordinances for Urban Farming in Thurston County: Upon hearing the purpose for Ms. Wyss's presence, Robert McIntosh was pleased that she had information that possibly could answer questions that he was planning on bringing up in discussion of the UGA ordinances. His first question was regarding the BoCC's desire to have one UGA code for the three different areas or three different codes. Lucia explained that the BoCC had indicated that they were in favor of three different codes with each code reflecting the UGA ordinances of the city the land would annex into. She went on further to explain that the BoCC wanted feedback on two things: (1) "Site Specific Exemptions"; and (2) language recommendations from the Agriculture Advisory Committee as for what should be considered reasonable expectations for land use. "Site Specific Exemptions" are to be considered when the city ordinance is more restrictive than current agricultural uses in that city's UGA or, in other words, what should be considered as a grandfathered land use.

Robert then stated that to do as the BoCC requests the committee needs to become informed of the UGA boundaries to see what known farms and agricultural pursuits are in which UGA area. Charissa Waters said that she could get maps, have them shrunk, and Patt O'Neil can distribute them to the committee members before the next meeting. He also asked if Lucia could provide copies of the UGA codes for the three cities as well.

Robert then provided Lucia with a list of animals and appropriate acreage that the committee had chosen at a previous meeting for consideration in the county's ordinances. They included cows (one per acre), horses (one per 2 acres), goats (one per ½ acre with a 150' buffer), sheep (acreage recommendation unknown), pigs (one per acre with odor reduction language), llamas/alpacas (acreage recommendation unknown), domestic fowl (no acreage recommendation but exclusions of peacocks, turkeys, geese, guinea fowl, and roosters over 4 months of age), and bees. Lucia was appreciative of receiving this list because that was one of the things that she was planning to ask the committee's recommendation for.

Discussion ended with the promise that Lucia would join us again at the May meeting and together, in a work party setting, much of the draft ordinances can be developed. Patt promised to have the large copies of the three UGA maps displayed for discussion.

Discussion of the Green Sheets Presented: Three projects were presented and by mutual discussion there was no comment given regarding any of them.

Working Lands Strategic Plan(WLSP): Dave Nygard explained that on page 13, this document, in the section marked First Priority Level Strategies, states that a “Working Lands Advocate” was to be hired to help facilitate the needs of the farmer when going through the Permitting and Land Use process and dealing with the Resource Stewardship Department. Discussion indicated that the former WSU Thurston County Extension Director/Agriculture Faculty was acting in that role, but that was not his primary role, and since his departure in September there has been no one serving in this capacity. Page 14 of the WLSP gives several options for filling this type of position: (1) placing it in the Board of Commissioners office or the Resource Stewardship office; (2) filling it with someone from technically ‘outside’ the jurisdiction of county government (the Thurston Conservation District or the WSU Extension); or (3) hiring someone who would be centrally located but funded by several sources (part Resources Stewardship part Volunteer Stewardship Program possibly). Regardless of how this person is funded or where they are located, the Committee agreed that this position needs to be filled. Ms. Waters said that she would bring this request up at the next Volunteer Stewardship Program meeting and report back to this Committee.

Support of the Anti-biotic Use Bills: Robert McIntosh explained that he had read both the federal House and Senate bills, along with the resolutions in support from the cities of Seattle and Olympia that have been distributed to the committee members prior to this meeting. He noted a few things:

- 1 – The Senate bill states that there had to be a “valid client/veterinarian relationship established”, meaning that the vet had to have personal contact with the animal being treated at least once in its lifetime.
- 2 – The House bill avoids the veterinarian issue altogether and allows for the preventive treatment of animals to prevent the spread of disease that is already present in the herd or flock.
- 3 – Neither of the cities addressed the veterinarian issue in their resolutions of support.

Robert then distributed a draft of a resolution to be put before the Board of County Commissioners supporting the House bill over the Senate bill. The consensus opinion of the Agriculture Committee was that it is financially and physically unrealistic to expect a farmer to consult with a veterinarian for a physical examination every time an animal is sick or might need treatment.

Chris Groen volunteered to (1) contact the WA sponsors and research the background of these two bills to get a fuller explanation of the veterinarian and other issues and (2) report back to the Committee at its next meeting.

Committee Membership Vacancies: Charissa Waters reported that the notice of the three vacancies had been shared on the Thurston County Facebook page (with many members of the committee sharing it on their personal pages). It was also sent as a PSA to all of the local media outlets, and the Centralia Chronicle wrote an article which The Olympian reprinted. Patt O'Neil explained that she had collected a list of 25 web-addresses for farming-oriented organizations that had business in Thurston County and that the PSA had been sent to them as well. She further explained that the commissioners' office had already received one application for the non-farmer position.

Marijuana Farming: Robert McIntosh reported that he had attended a 6 hour seminar in Seattle for attorneys about the laws regarding marijuana production and sales in Washington State. There he learned that this was becoming a specialty field of law because of the different and conflicting rules at the local, state, and federal levels.

Location of May and June meetings: Patt O'Neil reminded everyone that the next meeting was going to be held in the McLane Kitchen which can be accessed through the courtyard gate (there will be a sign). It was mutually agreed that this would be a dessert potluck with coffee and tea being provided.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm by Robert McIntosh.