

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

McLane Building Kitchen
5033 Harrison Ave NW, Olympia, WA 98502

Minutes for May 28, 2015

Members Present: Chery Sullivan, Chris Groen, Kevin Jensen, Robert McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Eric Johnson, Richard Mankamyer

Staff Present: Dave Nygard, Charissa Waters, and Patt O'Neil

Guests Present: Lucia Wyss

Members Excused: EJ Zita (Chair), Doug Wiseman, Pat Labine, and Mary DiMatteo

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 by Robert McIntosh followed by round-table introductions of the members and staff ending with recognition of the newest committee member Richard Mankamyer. It was noted that the other new committee member had a prior commitment which was made before she was appointed by the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC), but she would be at the next meeting.

The minutes from the April 30th were approved by consensus as was the Agenda for tonight's meeting. It was noted that Doug Wiseman had submitted a report in writing for the Conservation Futures Projects and Charissa Waters said that she would speak on his behalf in explanation of these proposed land purchases.

Discussion of the Green Sheet Presented: There was only one project presented before the committee and by mutual discussion there was no comment to be passed back to the Planning Department.

Draft Ordinances for Urban Growth Areas in Thurston County: Lucia Wyss distributed another version of the comparisons of the three UGA's and the proposed changes stressing that they are meant to affect the Hobby Farmer and Low-Impact Agriculture in what will eventually become a residential zoned area within city limits. Robert McIntosh asked if the proposed UGA codes would actually make it more difficult than it is now to do some types of farming in the UGA's, then he said that this committee should do all it can to keep existing farms in operation. Chery Sullivan agreed that if it can be proved that historically there has been farming activity on a site, the right of that farm activity to continue should be written into the draft of the county code. Robert suggested that this be done in a letter to

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

the BoCC recommending that existing agricultural ventures be 'Grandfathered' into the revised code and allowed to continue.

Poster sized maps of the 3 UGA's and their respective cities were displayed and the committee members marked where known agricultural ventures fell within these boundaries. Lucia then mentioned that Katie Pruitt, the Resource Stewardship Planner tasked with updating the code, was planning on bringing her draft before the Agriculture Advisory Committee for final opinion before she presented it to the BoCC. Robert and Chery then agreed that Katie should be e-mailed with their present recommendation about incorporating existing agriculture into the revised code.

Lucia then asked if the Committee wanted to change any of the permitted or prohibited animals. The Committee reviewed the list of animals that was provided at the last meeting. A discussion followed about (1) the age when chickens are butchered and how that affected the amount of birds allowed on a piece of property (dependent on size of the parcel), and (2) the age when roosters usually began to crow. From this, the agreement was that the amount of chickens allowed should be increased to 20 birds per ½ acre and that roosters should only be allowed up to 3 months of age.

Lucia offered that she would contact Katie for permission to further contact representatives from the 3 cities for their opinions on expanding permitted farming activities in their cities. She also mentioned that she would not be at the June meeting because she is moving to Oregon to work this summer, but she would return in November with Katie to present the revised UGA codes before this committee. The members then thanked her for all of her efforts on behalf of Thurston County and agreed that she would continue to receive information from this committee on its UGA discussions.

Working Lands Strategic Plan (WLSP): Charissa Waters explained that the WLSP had been adopted by the BoCC in 2010 and she was actually using it as a plan for the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). Dave Nygard said that Scott McCormick in the Resource Stewardship Office has been acting as a part time ombudsman or Working Lands Advocate (WLA) for farmers. Robert McIntosh wondered if this role of Scott's was both written and official and could be publicized to the farming community. If yes, Robert suggested this Committee should (1) spread this information and (2) write a letter to the BOCC saying that the farmers of Thurston County appreciate Scott's work but still need a full time WLA..

Charissa offered that the VSP has been discussing this and wants for the WLA to be someone familiar with the county and its regulations but not a county employee. The 3 options the VSP had discussed were:

1. Someone hired by and residing in the either the BoCC or the county's Resource Stewardship office;

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2. Someone from outside of the county government system such as WSU, Thurston Conservation District, or a like organization;
3. Someone funded by several sources, the county included, who could be located anywhere.

The consensus of the committee was that it was more important to have a full time person acting as the WLA than to worry about where he/she is located or who pays her/him, though a show of hands did reveal that a majority of this Committee favored option 3, above.

Proposed Resolution Regarding Antibiotic Use: Chris Groen reported that he had contacted Senator Patty Murray's office about the Senate bill and had explained the Committee's concerns about the cost to farmers of the clause requiring veterinarian involvement. Chris was told that this bill is not yet ready for passage out of committee and will probably be delayed for some time. He was also told that a staffer with more knowledge about the bill would call him back to discuss our Committee's concerns.

Robert McIntosh then presented the revisions he had written for the second page of the proposed BoCC resolution. He express concern that the resolution might alienate Sen. Murray with its refusal to support her Senate Bill 1256 in its present form. The Committee decided to postpone action on recommending a resolution to the BOCC for another month so that Chris can contact Rep. Heck's office and hear back from Sen. Murray's.

Conservation Futures Projects 2015: Charissa Waters, who is also part of the Conservation Futures Project committee and toured all of the 8 sites under consideration, described the projects and some of the observations by the committee. It was encouraged that if any of the Agriculture Advisory Committee had comments or concerns they should e-mail Doug Wiseman soon, before the selection process is completed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm with a reminder that the June 25th meeting would once again be in the McLane Building Kitchen, that there would be no meeting in July, and that the August meeting would be held as scheduled on August 27,

Respectfully submitted by Patt O'Neil

Approved with corrections on 25 June 2015