

# THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

## Minutes for June 25, 2015

Members Present: Chery Sullivan, Kevin Jensen, Robert McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Richard Mankamyer, Mary DiMatteo, EJ Zita (Chair), and Doug Wiseman

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

Members Excused: Pat Labine, Chris Groen, and Eric Johnson

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The meeting was called to order at 7:02 by EJ Zita followed by round-table introductions of the members and staff ending with recognition of the newest committee member Mary DiMatteo.

The minutes from the May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed and corrected with the proper title of the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) along with two spelling errors and approved by consensus. The Agenda was approved by consensus with the correction for VSP in the Other Business section.

Discussion of the Green Sheet Presented: Discussion of the development permits was postponed till the end of the meeting so that everyone present could once again review the documents.

Draft Ordinances for Urban Growth Areas in Thurston County: Robert McIntosh distributed a draft of the e-mail that is to be sent by the Agriculture Advisory Committee to Katie Pruit in Resources Stewardship with the committee's comments about the Urban Growth Areas ordinances proposed changes. Zita mentioned that she had spoken to Commissioner Romero about this and reported back that the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) was eager to act on this program. Zita mentioned that she had send an e-mail with a couple of suggested language changes that did not make the publishing of the document Robert presented. Robert said that he would pick up on these changes and incorporate them into the next draft.

There were a couple of questions for the committee with regards to the language used in this e-mail. First, does the term 'grandfathered' refer to an agricultural activity that had traditionally been located at that property site or does it refer to what is currently being practiced at the time of the ordinance change? The agreement of the committee was that it

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meant what currently exists and is being practiced. Secondly, it was asked if the amount of chickens, and potentially rabbits, was too small a number for a productive agriculture endeavor and could it be increased (and with what procedure) after the code is enacted? The committee agreed that the present number was generous within the three jurisdictions and that a land owner could always petition for a variance as the code pertains to him/her. Richard Mankamyer and Mary DiMatteo will contact Scott McCormick from Resources Stewardship to see what the procedure might be and report back at the next meeting. The consensus was that if variance is an option then there is no need to raise the amount of animals presently requested.

Working Lands Strategic Plan – Charissa Waters asked that she be allowed to incorporate this with her discussion about the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) later in the agenda. Robert then passed out a draft of a letter to the BoCC recommending that they hire a Working Lands Advocate. Charissa also asked that this too be addressed with the VSP.

Food and Water Resolution Report – Robert distributed a copy of an article from the *Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2015, stating that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had become involved with the debate and has already enacted a plan that will go into effect in December. This plan would mandate that all antibiotics that are applicable for use for both humans and animals must be acquired through a prescription. The medication can only be administered if the animal is sick and not be used for growth assistance. This will affect up to 300 medications currently on the market. Dave Nygard stated that he was aware of this through his contacts with the beef industry and that they did not seem to have any qualms with this regulation.

Zita then asked if this FDA ruling could make the local grass roots movement moot or could Congress yet place additional restrictions on the use of antibiotics with livestock? She said that she would speak to her colleagues at The Evergreen State College who are involved with the local movement and it is hoped that Chris Groen would be able to give comment at the next meeting with regards to the Congressional committees working on this issue.

Conservation Futures Projects 2015: Doug Wiseman reviewed the list of eight properties that was shared at the last Agriculture Advisory Committee (AgCom). He said the committee had ranked the candidates and had sent their recommendations to the BoCC for their decision. The BoCC were meeting on July 15<sup>th</sup> to decide the budgeted \$1 million grant awards. It was suggested that the AgCom take a close look at the decision, yet-to-be rendered, and be prepared to make comment if the grant awards run contrary to the recommendations of the Conservation Futures Committee.

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Voluntary Stewardship Program - Charissa explained that she has been working with a set of stakeholders (property owners, state agencies, and agricultural organizations) to develop a Work Plan to protect and improve agricultural activities and land deemed within a critical area. Beginning with definitions set up in RCW 90.58.065 and after several months of discussion the Thurston VSP Discussion of *Potential Incentives to Maintain and Improve Agricultural Viability* was created. Charissa then distributed this list of potential incentives which had 8 points but also asked of the committee to feel free to contact her if they could think of additional items that could encourage land owners to willingly participate.

She then explained that after a land owner has enrolled into the VSP, implementation of the program and monitoring of improvement would be done by the Thurston Conservation District (TCD). It is anticipated that the time involved would incorporate 1 FTE position and that the Working Lands Advocate could help to report the progress with individual land owners.

Some of the incentives that the county is offering would be agritourism recognition and assistance with code enforcement. She also explained that the entire document was on-line at the following web-site:

<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning/vsp/voluntary-stewardship-home.html>

and that she would also make available to the AgCom the VSP committee's workshop notes and monitoring plan. It was then asked how a land owner can sign up with the program? Charissa explained that they can register direct with the TCD or work through a private contractor/advisor to sign-up. She then distributed a flow chart entitled Voluntary Stewardship Program which lists the Strategic Goals, Tactical Objects to Achieve Goals, and lastly, Benchmarks and Metrics. In it, this document mentions an 'Ag liaison' to assist with measuring the benchmarks.

Robert McIntosh then brought up the discussion of the Ag Liaison or Working Lands Advocate and how the job description for the Working Lands Strategic Plan might serve to fill that position. This position would measure and report on progress in the watersheds overall, not just with individual landowners (watershed level (by liaison) and parcel level (by TCD)). He suggested that what must be considered is the committee talking about two people with two job descriptions or one person with two sets of duties.

Charissa then reminded the committee that the Critical Area Ordinances for Thurston County were updated in 2012 but the Agriculture portion was not in anticipation of it being updated with the implementation of the VSP and if the program fails, the codes for Agriculture Activities will have to be update per a mandate of state law. Charissa asked if there were any comments by the committee members that they be sent to her before June 30<sup>th</sup> which is her deadline because grant parameters.

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Discussion of the Green Sheets Presents: There were two projects presented before the committee and by mutual discussion there was no comment to be passed back to the Planning Department for either project.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm with a reminder that there would not be a July meeting and that the August meeting would be held as scheduled on August 27<sup>th</sup> in the McLane Conference Room.

*Respectfully submitted by Patt O'Neil*