

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

Minutes for June 30, 2016

Members Present: EJ Zita (Chair), Robert McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Mary DiMatteo, Pat Labine, Eric Johnson, Chris Groen, and Richard Mankamy, Bryan Fischer, Kevin Jensen.

Staff Present: Robin Buckingham and Stephen Bramwell

Guest Speaker: Kathleen Berger, Thurston Conservation District

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 by EJ Zita.

News sharing – Caleb Zigas brought in by Enterprise for Equity. Encouraging value-adding to agricultural product. Caleb runs the operation like a business, committed to social justice.

Farmers markets. Pat. Talking about local farmers concerned that CSAs and farmers markets reaching saturation. Confirm this on national scale. Coming through news listservs; it is a national phenomenon. The changing of customers preferences. What is happening, Millennials don't cook. Because of this, at farmers markets they go for the food vendors; quick take-away pre-prep food. Veggies are scenery. Value-added folks are doing well, farmers are selling less and less. The big piles of carrots and tomatoes are what they used to be in terms of appeal. Mary: I'd agree; have lost a lot of farmers not through retirement or lowering production but to wholesale and CSA marketing only. FMs require costly transport without pays for labor and fees. \$125 to basically get to the market; labor, time away, driving, loading. On top of fees to be at market. Richard: that's what we're experiencing. Based on costs recuperating, may not be worth it. Capitol Way 222. Kickstarter project called "Pantry", and going to vendors and saying 'we'll sell the product for you'. Next to the Bread Peddler, processing kitchen, cooking classes, specialty items. It is a changing landscape and we're seeing that. It is a new model. Mary: total numbers CSA pickups at the market is at 125 per weekend and has plateaued since 2005; no spikes since then. This represents good data to support assessment of needs. Zita: What are barriers to increased CSA sales: cost and cooking. Double your dollars EBT sales is a way to encourage this tool. Last year Mary asked Port for money for this match. Even when cost issue is overcome, the ease of access can inhibit. And some folks just don't want it. Pat: will market sell marijuana edibles? Mary: spirits, cider, beer and wine has been approved, probably the MJ will be coming down the pike. Not sure about federal rules. Zita; doesn't think it will work; Port will

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

likely say no because the market is on Port property. Stephen: STEDI: buy local presentation and potential for a buy direct agricultural product campaign for Thurston County. Richard: proposing to show a PolyFace Farm DVD; possibly to show a 30 min piece of the film. Airshow at JBLM coming up. Eric: bought old Felicity Farm property. Will put springs, dry cows their, 70 acres with 33,000 sf building. Possible rodeo, barrel racing.

Approval of previous meeting minutes -The minutes from the May 26th meeting were reviewed, corrected and approved.

Approval of agenda – Approval of agenda: make the few changes that were suggested, and with those that Robert sent to Charissa.

Presentation Overview – Chehalis Basin Strategy. Ever since large flood of 2009. Money has been put into Chehalis Basin for solutions to abate flooding and approve habitat for aquatic species, all feeding water bodies. This fall draft EIS to governor's workgroup. Five alternatives and where to go with it. On CBS website. One is flood retention structure, levies, environmental restoration; and then those minus flood retention. Several others to make five. Total restoration of the basin. Fifth is no action. TCD role is to do outreach to community members; what landowners view as problems. Blocked culverts, feedback on what/how flooding has impacted production of Ag products. Who is willing to implement flood abatement techniques? Stabilization, critter pads, escapement routes. Planning series summer community meetings. Skook: July 19th, evening. Asking for help to spread the word. Scattercreek, Black River, and 2 on Chehalis main stem. Then send a survey to get those who couldn't attend. Lewis County is working on theirs. Mason/Greys working together. Money is not for sure; if we get it, who is willing to do what? Money comes from legislature; \$50M originally. Aquatic species habitat restoration pot of money; flood plan authority got money for escapement routes/ag focus; asking for more money for both of those. Project goes into DOE, legislature is doing this. Tey will be in non-regulatory role for this; money will be funneled through other. Floodplains DOE has a Floodplains By Design program, and will take this and apply. FBD is about flood abatement, success in Pierce and Snohomish. Want to expand to this area. What they do up north is reconnecting floodplains; and they will seek to do that here. Allow flooding to happen, with plan for where that water will go. TCD doesn't know long-term role. If CDs get cut out, can utilize own programs for culvert replacement, and other work. Zita is in high groundwater area. Areas that used to drain but don't anymore because blocked culverts or roads that block drainage. Eric: used to have ditching districts, and high water table wasn't because was ditched out, but now ditching is bad, so poor drainage. Possibly use money for fencing. Eric presented the Eric Johnson flood fencing technique. Debris in water destroys fencing. Would recommend this in floodways. Stephen: Possible role to utilize these sessions to gather information about how County can better support farmers in the event of flood events as part of Emergency Preparedness plan (Stephen to connect with Kathleen to add any questions to the sessions and survey).

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Kathleen will send us an email announcement and Ag committee (Charissa), and Charissa will send to the Ag Committee so we can circulate.

South Puget Sound Farms to Market Assessment discussion and EDC Scope of Work.

Robert: are any of the recommendations we should push to BoCC. Since Robert had this idea, Stephen is embarking on effort to assess needs of agriculture in Thurston County. Were some high fruit and low hanging fruit. Appealed to Robert; joint marketing, joint delivery. Getting buyers and producers to get to know each other better. Zita: aggregating project 222 bit from above was along these lines.

Stephen's study – EDC study (Aslan) – Enterprise 4 Equity work – Stedi – all assessing needs and some strategizing possible options

Stephen's Ag Listening sessions – What is – What should be difference between these is the need. Avoid jumping to solutions, which can be expensive and value-based

Dots prioritized primary needs – and how often did it get mentioned. Stephen is compiling data now.

Pat – Working Lands Study by Land Trust in south of state – used to be Cascadia Alliance something?

Working lands for wildlife program – conservation and ag production together

13 in W Olympia, 28-35 in Rochester, 12-14 in Rainier

Stephen will send out results, then spend some time synthesizing and analyzing.

Bigger next steps are more subjective – assess the data – prioritize needs – who participated?

What are causes of needs / priorities? Rephrases causes as solutions.

Use study to justify tackling key needs

Access to water / water rights

Access to land

Access to labor – trained labor –

Regulations and gophers

Need to get an Evergreen intern here at WSU extension to help Stephen type up notes, do analysis and outreach.

Timeline for getting notes out – a couple of months. He has to do the fair too.

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Robert – say you identify some problems and tentative solutions. Then do you send out email with preliminary results to solicit more feedback? Kind of like the political caucus system – who shows up? Who has time? There are many others who don't have time ...

Steve Jobs – I don't want to ask people what they need because you don't know what they need until you present it to them. Maybe you'll come up with some needs that farmers don't know they have. Maybe problems seem like a fact of life but there is another way of looking at it.

Richard – was morning a good time? Jensen – evening is better. Eric prefers 3:00, 5:00.

Encouraging Stephen to describe his sense of the meetings too, not just the data.

Eric – how about water rights? Jensen – is there grant money? Interns? Help for that issue?

Eric – if that comes out as a top issue—what are you going to do about it?

Stephen – safe non-regulatory person to facilitate exchange of water rights

Jenson – Ecology takes care of water rights – my conservation efforts – DOE couldn't help, their website sucks – need someone as a liaison between DOE and farmers. Water is a huge issue. Great Wolf Lodge is a huge competitor for water, and developers – like land grab.

Pat – water rights situation is a mess – Land Trust got into it with Weins farm. Big water rights consultants – nobody seemed to know what was going on. DOE is destroying farmland because as soon as you stop using it, your rights are gone.

Gordon White is helpful – at DOE now. Have him come talk with us. Great

Zita – use it or lose it is a problem for farmers who have enough and for those who don't. Costs energy, money, and wastes water. Jensen – Eric - Farmers worried about when they meter our wells – will only be able to use what you used the most in the past. Eric – a lot of people don't know you can lend out your water right to someone and not lose it. Pat – there are confusing things like water banks.

Robert – how do we get from need to meeting the need – e.g. half time staff person? Zita - how can we help? Pat – it's a bigger game because Ecology is a creature of the Legislature.

Stephen – we could do fact sheets... how does WSUx take steps to meet goals ... Could use an educator for a lot of things – Erik Hagan – builds capacity, needs expertise, special skill set. Erik was hired with Mason CD, could partner a hire with TCD

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wait to make recommendations to BoCC until we have more data. Then decide what's important to us. Then go talk to them.

Conservation Futures Update. Mary. Two days in van to seven sites. One more meeting convene to discuss everything. Who is the we? Twelve sets of criteria to rank off of. Meet program goals and policies. How does it fit objective of plan, is time of essence, does site preserve unique critical habitat. Does preserve natural features and resources. Does preserve unique cultural/historical markers or lands. Preserve unique lands sensitive, wetlands/desirable ag and forestlands? What is certainty of project success? What is amount of leverage? Does project address public access and to what degree is project support?

Seven sites:

1. West Bay Heronry, dumps into West Bay Park. Of "The Heronry", Oly Ecosystems.
2. LBA Woods and Morse Merriman by Olympia High School. (Little Baseball Association). Acquire lands taken over as public access trails. Have a willing seller and nice leverage
3. Oxbow in Nisqually. The Nisqually Whitewater, in a floodplain, not a lot of public access. Nisqually Land Trust
4. Johnson Point Road. Private owned now, bought property with intention to farm it, not realizing it is critical wetland. Purchased, dug a well, but it is undevelopable. Now the couple is in the hole. Is lush and up against property owned by county. County Parks is sponsor. Nobody will build on it anyway.
5. Harmony Farm in Johnson Point adjacent to Stillman Preserve. Capitol LT has easement rights, looking for full acquisition. Tidal saltwater marshland. Not big enough for full-scale farming; only an acre is farmable.
6. Piece of Rye Cove. Small parcel, salmon habitat. Capitol Land Trust.
7. Urban Futures Farm, request from SSCFLT, market-gardened by TJ Johnson. This is for acquisition. On eastside on Yew Street east of Bigelow Park. Under ten acres.

Mary: voice support for Urban Futures as is the only active farm operation on the list of applicants.

Pat: small urban farms create urban markets because of their role in consumer education. This goes back to our earlier discussion in the meeting.

Zita: and the farm is training young farmers.

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Pat: and field trips to these small farms, such as to places like Common Ground Farm, create tremendous educational opportunities.

Summer break: The group discussed if they want one. No, will meet next month in July and will talk about August.

Other business – None

Motion to adjourn - Adopted at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted by *Charissa Waters and Stephen Bramwell*