

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

McLane Building Conference Room

5033 Harrison Ave. NW, Olympia, WA 98502

Minutes for September 29, 2016

Members Present: EJ Zita (Chair), Robert McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Bryan Fisher, Chris Groen, Kevin Jensen, Pat Labine, Richard Mankamy, Scott Von, Robin Buckingham

Staff Present: Stephen Bramwell and Deborah Bordelon (WSU Ext.), Charissa Waters (Thurston County)

Members Excused: Eric Johnson, Mary DiMatteo,

Visitor: Scott Sebring

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 by EJ Zita followed by round-table introductions of the members and staff attending the evening's meeting.

News Sharing – Pat mentioned that a candidate running for Thurston County Commissioner, spoke to the Griffin Neighborhood Association Senior Lunch. Apparently, he is using the County's spending money on Conservation Futures projects as an example of misdirected county policy and misspending of county money that he believes should be spent on policing. Either he doesn't know or is not acknowledging that the conservation futures monies are, by state law, for open areas and spaces including those devoted to agriculture, timber and other productive activities, and others having recreational, social, scenic, or esthetic values. (RCW 84.34.200) There is a concern for this misrepresentation of information. Committee decided to add this to the agenda for discussion.

Richard notified the group that he was just appointed to the board for the Thurston Conservation District.

Robin mentioned that the Thurston Conservation District Board has legislative tours coming up in November. These are tours with elected officials around project sites in the county. As the legislators tour the farms it gives owners the opportunity to showcase the great work that they are doing.

Stephen shared information on upcoming events. WSU and Thurston Conservation District are planning an event on November 18th to address Climate Change Affecting Agriculture in Puget Sound. A panel of Thurston County producers will share their observations, challenges and adaptations related to climate change on the farm. The South Sound Food System Network is going to talk about institutional purchasing next Wednesday. Stephen will be doing another listening session November 9th at the Eastside Urban Farm and Garden. January 6-7 is the Cascadia Grains conference. There is an additional track this year. On Friday the 6th there will be an equipment track at the Scatter Creek Farm. They will bring in a collection of equipment and do a walk and talk. Conversations will include rebuilding a grain economy in this part of western Washington.

Richard advised the committee that all seven Thurston County water systems tested positive for Chromium-6. You can go to <http://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/2016-chromium6-lower-48.php> to find out more information.

Zita mentioned that the letter from this committee in support of the Trans Alta proposal for the Tenino Agricultural Business Park was sent to the Commissioners. The BoCC had some questions and she does not know if they decided to send the letter or not. The committee agreed that it is important to stay involved with this project for reasons that include: protecting the future of other endeavors, good will amongst the agricultural communities, the positive outreach and networking, and the opportunity to provide help and guidance. There is a tour for the Conservation District being planned, Richard will look in to making sure that the committee members get invited to go on this tour. Stephen suggested that committee members as individuals might share their endorsement of this project as well.

Approval of previous meeting minutes- The minutes from the August 25th meeting were reviewed and approved by consensus.

Approval of agenda- Approval of agenda with the addition of Stephen's proposal of a WSU Extension Update and discussion of a possible response to misinformation about the Conservation Futures.

Public Comment – Scott Sebring, Steamboat Cider Orchards, introduced himself. He has an apple tree farm, approximately ten acres and located off of Steamboat Island Rd. Just started the farm about a year ago and focuses on natural and organic processes. He has fifteen varieties of apples. He is working with Dave White in hopes of being able to supply the apples that the Whitewood Cidery needs to produce their ciders.

Green Sheets - No green sheets

Draft proposal to BoCC regarding Ag Advisory Committee applicants- The process for approving new members to this committee appeared to have changed. The committee used to be a part of the process of reviewing applications and interviewing candidates. The committee would then make their recommendation(s) to the BoCC. Lately the committee has been left out of the process altogether. It was determined that this was a result of oversight due to the many changes in positions that have taken place with staff in the extension office. Committee agreed to submit a letter advising the BoCC what has happened and letting them know that the committee looks forward to resuming their role in the process.

Discussion on misunderstanding of Conservation Futures- The committee reviewed Article I of the Bylaws to determine scope of responsibility. Instead of the committee trying to respond officially, it was agreed that a letter to the person who was upset at hearing the misinformation informing them of the correct information might be a more appropriate solution. That individual can then do what they want with that information. Pat will draft and submit the letter to the committee for review before sending it out to that person. The letter will be done on a one-on-one personal basis, not as a letter from the committee.

WSU Extension Update – Stephen reported that there are two funding Initiatives that he is trying to get in to place for 2017. One is a barley variety trial that would be for distilling and brewing. Sandstone Distillery would run some test batches. Stephen is working with a Barley Breeder from WSU, Kevin Murphy. There is a grant proposal due in December. The second one is a result of the ag producer

listening sessions: several small farms brought up the need for sources of manure. While Stephen was visiting Matt Plowman's dairy, Matt suggested the use of available separated dairy solids. Stephen had the solids analyzed as compost feedstock. Both Plowman and vegetable farms are interested in this project/research, as a form of farm nutrient networking.

Motion to Adjourn - Passed at 8:16pm