

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

McLane Building Conference Room

5033 Harrison Ave. NW, Olympia, WA 98502

Minutes for October 27, 2016

Members Present: EJ Zita (Chair), Robert McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Kevin Jensen, Eric Johnson, Mary DiMatteo, Richard Mankamy, Scott Von,

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

Members Excused: Pat Labine

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 by EJ Zita followed by round-table introductions of the members and staff attending the evening's meeting.

News Sharing – Eric shared that his bush bean crop was almost 8 tons an acre. The next best was down in Toledo; they have about 55 acres and they got nine semi loads at 60,000 lbs per load and on the 33 acres on the front field they got 9 loads.

Legislature farm tours begin Friday Oct. 28. These tours are meant to show the legislators why they should support the Conservation District by showcasing the success (es) of local farming.

Zita proposed that the committee members may be interested in tagging along on some of the farm tours as well.

The fourth and final Listening Session will be Wednesday, November 9th at the Eastside Urban Farm and Garden Center.

The Conservation District annual native plant sale will be held March 4th.

Kevin announced that Riverbend Farm in Tenino is getting ready to sell Christmas trees.

Approval of previous meeting minutes- The minutes from the September 26th meeting were reviewed and approved with corrections by consensus.

Approval of agenda- Agenda was approved.

Zita's letter to BoCC regarding Ag Advisory Committee applicants was presented for review. Suggested edits were made and the letter was finalized and ready to be sent.

Term limits for current board members whose terms are up or are going to be up soon addressed. Charissa is already working on this and reappointment letters either are or will be ready to be sent to those members/BoCC.

What new projects would we like to work on? Concern for the leveling off/drop in CSA and Farmer's Market sales was mentioned. What can the committee do to possibly help minimize any drop(s) in participation and sales; how can we help maintain the health of direct market sales? The study meetings of the South Thurston Economic Development Initiative have also included conversations about this. They are addressing strategies for economic challenges for farmers markets and the economic challenges in the small towns. Mary provided more information about how the farmers market works; fees, attendance requirements, fines if you don't show up, etc., when it is already expensive for the farmer just to get to the market. These requirements are part of the farmers changing attitudes towards farmer's markets. There's also a greater availability to purchase goods, which appear to be local/organic because of the labeling, through retailers rather than direct marketing with farmer. As far as WIC and EBT sales go, the farmers market does fairly well. This is a result of partnerships, relationships, state and county organizations and resources. Not all farmers markets accept WIC/EBT. This could be another venue for supporting the market and farmers. This also makes the market available for matching programs. Supposedly in 2017 there will be a matching plan for WIC and senior checks. Other obstacles for families might be transportation. How do you turn it in to an experience for the whole family instead of a routine trip?

Other questions raised: does the rise in CSA's have a negative impact on farmers markets? What happens when a farm is oversubscribed with CSA's and new people can't get in? What information (hard numbers) do we have regarding CSA's in the county?

It's obvious that there is an interest amongst this group of farmers in expanding market outlets. Committee agreed that this is a much broader subject that requires the farming community's support and more information, real numbers. There needs to be a needs assessment in order to be able to answer these questions and begin the process of suggesting/creating feasible solutions that support the farmers, supply the community and promote a cooperative community spirit.

Alpaca Farm Tour – The correct address for the farm is actually SW and not SE, this led to some confusion in finding the farm. The facility is a great place but would need a lot of work to get it in to the shape it needs to be. The facility would need city water/sewer. The cost for this alone would be approximately \$150,000 - \$200,000. There is some office space already but they would need more. There are some buildings that would need to be rebuilt in order to be used. The committee would like to have Aslan come and talk about this project and provide more information. There are a lot of questions that the committee would like to ask. Stephen will invite Aslan to come to the December 8 committee meeting.

Public Comment – None

Green Sheets – Two green sheets were presented: The first one project #2015102840 - The committee reviewed the application and is concerned about the project because it will cause a loss of what looks to be approximately 17 acres of agricultural (timber) land. Comment to be sent to Planning Department.

The second one: Project #2016104978 - after reviewing the application the Committee determined that there was no comment to be passed back to the Planning Department for this project.

WSU Extension Update – Cascadia Grains conference January 6-7, the hands-on session for Friday is coming together. There will be about five grain growers there who will walk through the process from

seeding to growing to harvesting. There will be as much equipment as we can get on site. Friday is meant to be the more hands-on field trip type of activity. Saturday will be all classroom type sessions with discussions, presentations and research. There will also be some baking, a tour of the Olympia brewery, a tour of the Sandstone distillery and the equipment. This will cover the growing/harvesting, baking, brewing and distilling aspects. Friday's session will be held at Scatter Creek and the Saturday session will be held at South Puget Sound Community College.

Motion to Adjourn - Passed at 9:18pm

Respectfully submitted by Deborah Bordelon