

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

McLane Building Conference Room

5033 Harrison Ave. NW, Olympia, WA 98502

Minutes for January 26, 2017

Members Present: Robert McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Kevin Jensen, Eric Johnson, Mary DiMatteo, Chris Groen, Pat Labine, Richard Mankamy, Scott Von, Robin Buckingham

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

Members Excused: E.J. Zita (Chair)

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

News Sharing – Volunteer Stewardship Program is having a seminar Friday, January 27th at the Department of Ecology.

Two new members joined the Board of County Commissioners: John Hutchings, District 1 and Gary Edwards, District 2. Bud Blake is the existing board member for District 3.

It was mentioned that there are only 14 counties out of 39 counties in Washington State that do conservation futures.

Ag Business Hub proposal submitted by Aslan for the Alpaca farm site in Tenino made it to round two. Stephen will get an update on the project, to share at the next committee meeting, when he meets with Aslan in a few weeks.

Robert shared with the board an interesting article from the NY Times regarding vertical farming using aeroponic farming.

Since the last committee meeting the Hirst Decision was passed. This decision could have a significant impact on water rights for agricultural communities, developments and single family homes.

“A recent Washington State Supreme Court decision has changed how counties decide to approve or deny building permits that use wells for a water source.

In the [Whatcom County vs. Hirst, Futurewise, et al. decision](#) (often referred to as the Hirst decision), the court ruled that the county failed to comply with the [Growth Management Act \(GMA\)](#) requirements to protect water resources. The ruling requires the county to make an independent decision about legal water availability.”

Source (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/nwro/hirst.html>)

Approval of previous meeting minutes- The minutes from the October 27th meeting were reviewed and approved by consensus.

Approval of agenda- Agenda was approved.

Letter to BoCC regarding Ag Advisory Committee purpose and support-Motion was approved to have two members of the committee attend a March meeting of the BoCC, each member will give a three minute presentation, hand out materials, express the committees' desire to support the BoCC and ask how the committee can help.

Timing for election of new officers? As per the bylaws, the committee agreed that nominations could be made by the end of 2017 and voting should take place by the beginning of 2018.

Zita's appointment as Ports' designated representative to the Ag Committee-How, or does, this cause a conflict of interest in her position as chair and farmer member of this committee? Committee will seek clarification of this appointment from the Port. Motion to approve sending an email to the Port asking for clarification of the duties/responsibilities of Zita's appointment as the Ports' designated representative was passed. A committee staff member will draft that email for review.

Slaughter tour now has a vacancy if someone would like to go. Committee members who will be going on this tour will inquire about the possibility of another tour for those who cannot make this one.

Letter of support to TCD-the committee agreed that clarification was needed as to what issue the TCD is looking for support. Robin will contact Sarah and then share the information with the committee. This can be done via email, a draft letter of the committees' response would then be circulated via email for review.

Public Comment – There are 122 acres of land over on Waldrick Road that are being pulled out of open space/agricultural production. The property is being sold to an entity that is going to do Biorecycling. This is another loss of farm ground. The seller would have been interested in tying this land up with a conservation easement if there had been a buyer with farming in mind. The land trusts were approached.

Green Sheet – The committee is concerned that this proposal will probably lead to a loss of farmland in a long term agricultural area. Motion was approved to have this concern conveyed to the Planning Department.

WSU Extension Update – On February 15th from 4:00-6:00 pm the VSP subcommittee and the Dean of Agriculture Viability will be holding a working session for farmers who want to comment on the agriculture viabilities component in the work plan for how the VSP will monitor agriculture activity in the county in the coming years if the VSP is implemented. There are six parts to the monitoring plan. The subcommittee is looking to find out what should they be looking at over the coming years to try to sustain and enhance the viability of agriculture. This is the mandate of the subcommittee of VSP.

Stephen handed out information on a grant he is working on with the barley breeder for WSU for doing some barley trials here in mid-February.

Stephen also gave the committee copies of the draft of the needs assessment results that he has been working on and will be completed this year.

There is a meeting on behalf of the Washington Farm Forestry Association on February 9th. Input from this meeting will be included in the needs assessment. Stephen will also try to setup a meeting with the Stockman's Association for their input as well.

Cascadia Grains Conference (January 6-7) was very well attended. The Friday field track at Scatter Creek for grain production equipment brought out a lot of farmers and their equipment. Farmers and producers seemed to really enjoy this addition to the conference.

Stephen has a small farms class (Cultivating Success) that is currently underway. It meets on Wednesdays starting January 11 and goes until March 22nd.

Stephen reminded the committee that the VSP is an opportunity to weigh in on agriculture viability in the county.

Motion to Adjourn - Passed at 9:18 pm

Respectfully submitted by: Deborah Bordelon