

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

McLane Building Conference Room

5033 Harrison Ave. NW, Olympia, WA 98502

Minutes for February 23, 2017

Members Present: E.J. Zita (Chair), Robert McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Bryan Fisher, Kevin Jensen, Eric Johnson, Mary DiMatteo, Chris Groen, Pat Labine, Richard Mankamy, Robin Buckingham

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

Members Excused: Scott Von

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 by E.J. Zita followed by round-table introductions of the members and staff attending the evening's meeting.

News Sharing – Washington State just raised minimum wage from \$9.47 to \$11.00. This will put a burden on farmers, as well as food prices going up.

The state house of representatives just moved a bill out to the full house to remove hemp from the controlled substance list within our state.

(<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=2064&Year=2017>)

There are also a couple of other bills in the house: 1542 and 1544.

(<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1542&Year=2017>)

(<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1544&Year=2017>)

TC Conservation District was originally looking for a letter of support for their legislative base that happened on February 14. It's too late for that but, the TCD will be pursuing a new system of rates and charges instead of renewal of their assessment system which will be going to the County Commissioners. Perhaps this could be an agenda item at some point and maybe support from the committee would be solicited.

There is another bill HB2020 that is tied to agritourism and limits the liability of the Ag owner.

(<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=2020&Year=2017>)

The tour of the mobile slaughter unit was a good one. The unit is clean, animal movement is set up well, their main bottleneck is space. The water they use to spray down the trailer where the cleaning takes place is clean. They are doing things in a smart way. They just need more space to be able to handle more animals and improve productivity. They have an interest in utilizing the Alpaca farm site in Tenino.

Approval of previous meeting minutes- The minutes from the February 23rd meeting were reviewed and approved by consensus.

Approval of agenda- Agenda was approved with addition of Conservation District assessment renewal and Clarification of Zita's new role with the Port Authority.

Determination of individuals to attend March BoCC meeting and presentation: Committees like ours are set up to support our parent organization. Ordinarily our parent organization would give us tasks to do. This has not happened in a while so we haven't really had anything we've needed to do. We should start with a message to the BoCC that says, "we are here to serve you, how can we help?" We should remind them of our mission.

It was thought that at one point the committee was tasked with coming up with guidelines for the Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights for the Working Lands Strategic Plan. Charissa, Stephen and Eric will seek clarification from Resource Stewardship as to the scope of that task.

A request was made to provide a statement to the BoCC as to who/what the Ag Advisory Committee is. Charissa submitted a brief statement to the BoCC describing the purpose and function of the committee to the BoCC to be reviewed at their briefing on Monday, February 27. The request was made in order for the BoCC to understand the difference between the Ag Advisory Committee and the Agritourism Committee. The committee agreed that Zita, Eric, Mary and Stephen would be in attendance at the BoCC's meeting on Tuesday, February 28 at 2:00, as citizens to speak up about their views of the Ag Committee from their respective positions within the Ag committee.

Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Review: Charissa presented an overview of the VSP Work Plan Draft Version 2, updated 2/13/2017 with Partial Technical Review.

"The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) was enacted by the Washington State Legislature in 2011 to create a voluntary process to achieve Growth Management Act (GMA) critical area protection and agricultural viability goals (RCW 36.70A.700-760). In enacting the Voluntary Stewardship Program, the state legislature allowed counties to "opt into" an alternative to the overly litigious and costly regulatory approach of the past by designating local VSP work groups to "focus and maximize voluntary incentive programs to encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship as an alternative to historic approaches used to protect critical areas". Instead of enacting more stringent critical areas regulations for agricultural activities, the incentive-based VSP balances the protection of critical areas on agricultural lands while promoting agricultural viability." (VSP Work Plan Draft SC Draft Version 2 with Technical Review-2.23.2017, pg. 1)

The Agricultural Viability Appendix was reviewed and the committee was able to ask questions. Regulatory reform, outreach to farmers, technical assistance and outreach to policy makers providing support for making policies, are a few of the indicators within this plan that can be monitored.

For protecting critical areas, the baseline is 2011. Maps from 2011 outline the base level of conditions that the protection has to preserve. If this baseline is not preserved, the area would fail out of the program and go back to critical areas regulations.

The Stewardship Plan was then reviewed. It offers farmers opportunities to manage their own land in their own way. It provides options to create new stewardship plans tailored to their individual

operation as opposed to being subject to those one size fits all county regulations for critical areas. It's voluntary, it's an incentive based approach to protect and voluntarily enhance critical areas while maintaining and improving the long term viability of agriculture.

Semantics and intent were discussed and a few edits were suggested for clarification on some points of the Stewardship Plan. The committee agreed that somewhere in the plan it should be communicated what happens if you don't choose to participate in this plan; the importance of participation is fundamental to the success of the program.

2017 Conservation Futures Ranking Committee Representative – It is time to select a representative and alternate for this position. Richard Mankamy, volunteered to be the representative and Robert McIntosh and Mary DiMatteo will serve as alternates.

Letter of support to Conservation District – A motion was passed to provide a basic letter of support for the Thurston County Conservation District, and was signed by the committee.

Public Comment - No public comment

Green Sheet – Two green sheets were presented. No comments to be recorded.

WSU Extension Update – Stephen will address the results of the agriculture needs assessment at the next meeting.

Motion to Adjourn - Passed at 9:18 pm

Respectfully submitted by: Deborah Bordelon