

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

McLane Building Conference Room

5033 Harrison Ave. NW, Olympia, WA 98502

Minutes for June 29, 2017

Members Present: E.J. Zita (Chair), Eric Johnson, Richard Mankamyer, Pat Labine, Robin Buckingham, Kevin Jensen, Robert McIntosh (Vice-Chair), Mary DeMatteo, Scott Von,

Staff Present: Stephen Bramwell and Deborah Bordelon (WSU Ext.),

Members Excused: Chris Groen

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 by E.J. Zita followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and round-table introductions of the members and staff attending the evening's meeting.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – The minutes from the May 28 meeting were reviewed and approved by consensus.

Approval of agenda – Agenda was approved.

Roberts' Presentation on Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) – Robert gave an in-depth overview of the TDR and what it entails. Questions were addressed and discussions were had regarding the complexity of the TDR. The committee addressed what they could do to support the TDR; more research, a better understanding of how the few TDR's that have taken place were actually accomplished, what were the negotiations and politics and how did it all play out. What was actually accomplished by the TDR?

Robert then gave an overview of PDR. He explained how it works and also supplied committee members with written information on PDR. (Attachment B) While reviewing this information the board confirmed that the oversight committee for PDR is in fact the Ag Advisory Committee.

Zita found more information on the Thurston Regional Planning Council's (TRPC) website regarding the establishment of an oversight committee as well as other useful information regarding the functions of the TDR and PDR: <http://www.trpc.org/documentcenter/view/2276>
<http://www.trpc.org/documentcenter/view/2281>

It was determined that as a PDR advisory committee there are some questions that need to be addressed:

1. Is there currently a program administrator?
2. If so, has this individual created procedures, policies, and/or a program manual?
3. Have any PDR applications been filed?
4. Who forms the technical advisory committee that could advise us on technical issues?

5. In the absence of a program administrator, outline of policies and procedures, and program manual; is this committee still obligated to provide an annual review? Promote the program? Provide an annual report to the county commissioners?

The committee agreed to get the information needed to answer the questions and revisit the conversation(s) regarding the duties of this committee as an advisory committee for the PDR.

Conversation with Commissioner Edwards re: Ag Committee- Richard and Robert attended a meeting/presentation with the commissioners. Commissioner Edwards approached Richard and Robert and expressed interest in getting input from the Ag Committee on what farm structures and activities should be exempt from county permitting processes. This seems easy and non-controversial and potentially helpful to farmers. The committee will confirm information on: 1) what are the limitations on agriculture right now? 2) What are the exemptions on agriculture right now? And 3) what are the obstacles? Stephen will find out from the Director of Resource Stewardship who the right person would be to contact for the information the committee is seeking. The committee will then work on the process of putting this information together to address with the Commissioners.

Commissioner Edwards is also interested in the Committee's thoughts on an amnesty program for residents including farmers who have in the past built structures without proper permits. The idea would be to allow them to self-report their violation, then pay the permit fee and a certain number of years of back taxes, without being liable for additional fines, penalties, etc. This could be more complicated as it involves issues of equity with more compliant neighbors and residents. The committee determined that once the questions and concerns from the first issue are identified, the committee would be in a better position to address this issue.

In an effort to learn more about how to deal with these kinds of issues the committee agreed to spend some time learning from those who may have more experience. Mary will reach out to Patrice Barrentine, to come and speak with the Committee. Stephen will extract information from his listening sessions last year that could pertain to these issues.

The committee will continue this discussion at the next meeting.

Zita advised the committee that the Commissioners have agreed to not try and merge the Ag Committee and Agritourism Committee into one.

Public Comment - No public comment

Green Sheet – No green sheets

WSU Update – Stephen shared that a grant pre-proposal was submitted to USDA Sustainable Agriculture and Research Program on July 1st. This proposal is titled: *Ecological and Economic Benefit-Cost Comparison of Grazed and Un-grazed Prairie Land for Critical Species Protection in Western Washington* (Attachment B)

Stephen also shared the upcoming program, Ground to Glass: Evaluation of Barley Varieties for Craft Brewing, Distilling and Malting. This is an on-farm field day, July 18th 4:30-7pm at Hidden River Farms in Montesano, WA. The focus of the program is to learn about grain production in western Washington.

The extension office will be hosting a series of three classes on learning how to can at home. Melissa Davis, a nutrition educator for SNAP-Ed, will be teaching the classes. These classes will be offered at the extension office. For more information on these classes you can go to:

<http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/event/learn-how-to-can-at-home/2017-07-26/>.

Stephen shared that he will be working another grant proposal for a food processing facility analysis. This idea comes out of the needs assessment and has to do with infrastructure gaps in the county, and the ability to access new markets. Economists for St. Martins University, The Olympia Farmers Market, and the EDC have tied in to this and are providing support. This grant opportunity is an AFRI (Agriculture & Food Research Initiative) grant, which is a federal grant and are core research funds.

News Sharing – Mary shared that the Olympia Farmer’s Market is going to be conducting a rapid market assessment in partnership with WSU Small Farms Program, Colleen Donovan with the Washington State Farmers Market Association. There is an open invitation for community partners and members of the committee to help engage with customers and provide a survey. This will take place on July 15th 8:30 AM – 3:00 PM.

Motion to Adjourn: Passed at 9:10 pm.

Submitted by: Deborah Bordelon