

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes for May 31, 2018

Members present: Richard Mankamyer (Chair), Joe Hanna, Bryan Fisher, Mike Moore, Scott Von, Kevin Jensen, Pat Labine, Chris Groen (Scribe)

Ex Officio Present: Stephen Bramwell, WSU Extension Director

Absent: Eric Johnson, Robert McIntosh, Mary DiMatteo (Vice-Chair), Deborah Bordelon (Thurston County Staff), Nicole Warren (Thurston Conservation District)

Guests: None

The meeting was called to order at 7:01pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and then roundtable introductions of the members and staff attending this evening's meeting.

Approval of previous meeting minutes: Approved unanimously as presented.

Approval of current agenda: Approved unanimously as presented.

COMMITTEE ITEMS:

(1) Revision of By-Laws. The committee voted on the following changes to the bylaws after discussion on each topic. All changes had unanimous 8-0 vote totals.

April (old) Considerations:

Article II – Add the following sentences after the first sentence: “The BOCC may appoint any member to one or more additional terms. The term of any member shall be extended beyond the normal two year term until either (1) that member has been removed by the BOCC or (2) a successor member has been appointed by the BOCC.” Also, change the names of the departments in the third paragraph to “Community Planning and Development Services”.

Article IV – Add the following sentence after the first sentence under The Duty of the Vice-Chair: “However, if the Chair is unable to serve for a period longer than four consecutive months, a special election shall be held to select a new chair”.

May (new) Considerations proposed by Robert (through e-mail on May 9, 2018). Robert will add specific wording to the appropriate sections of the by-laws on these matters. It is understood by committee members in attendance that an additional vote at a later meeting is not necessary after Robert makes the edits to the by-laws.

1. Officer Election Voting: After discussion about transparency, a decision was made to vote on officers through secret ballot (rather than a show of hands) with an ex-officio member of the committee tallying the votes.

2. Screening of Applicants to the Committee: After discussion about necessity, a decision was made to add a provision about the Committee's role in screening of applicants applying to the committee.

3 and 4: Absentee/Proxy/Email/Phone/Alternate Attendance and Voting: After discussion about the value of being in attendance at meetings and the definition of an “alternate”, a decision was made to strike these proposals. The decision was made that all voting members must be in attendance to have their vote tallied that meeting and, additionally, to strike the second paragraph under attendance in Article IV.

(2) Comprehensive Plan. Stephen shared the plan for the upcoming public comment period as he understands it. The committee then considered the comments from the May 8, 2018 email sent by Robert McIntosh and believed the “General Comments” section shared by Robert was consistent with the values of the Committee with the following areas of discussion in need of further research or ‘wordsmithing’ before a future vote to become the official position of the Committee.

General Comment #1: There was a discussion on how we can get accurate current acreage data and what is defined as farmland. Also an edit is needed to replace a period with a comma in the “100.000” number in the second sentence.

General Comment #2: The committee was in agreement that the committee’s position would be edited to “Once the Comp Plan contains an estimate of projected farmland loss, we believe the Plan should contain detailed strategies for reducing the net loss of farm production acreage to non-farming usage as close to zero as absolutely possible. We believe that conversions of farmland to other uses should be kept to an absolute minimum and alternative resources should be available to owners considering conversion.”

General Comment #3: The Committee agrees with this comment (Conservation Futures) as written.

General Comment #4: The committee believes this comment (addressing the issue of aging farmer population) is consistent with the Committee’s values, but would need recrafting to note what the County can do to address this topic.

General Comment: #5: The committee suggests the language be changed to “We believe the Comp Plan should contain detailed strategies for expanding local markets for local agriculture, such as partnerships with regional entities” like the Bountiful Byway, Port of Olympia, Tenino Ag Park, etc.

General Comment #6: The discussion on this topic was in favor of the comment as written with small edits to add the percentage of all county land to the numerical figures and to add that the Committee supports the position of the South Sound Community Farmland Trust on this issue.

The committee did not address the “Specific Comments” of Robert’s email.

The committee decided after edits would be made to the six points listed above, the committee would consider any other comments and then vote to draft a letter or position paper to be submitted to the County as the position of the Committee on the agricultural-related sections of the Comprehensive Plan.

(3) Public Comment: None

(4) Green Sheet(s): None

OTHER BUSINESS

(1) WSU Update: Stephen updated the committee on the SARE prairie grazing project and a planned market assessment for grain products. The assessment is measuring the possible potential for both grain storage and malting opportunities in the County. Stephen also updated the committee on the barley trials.

Last, the Extension is assessing the market for value-added fruits and vegetable products and shared about the upcoming Rapid Market Assessment at the Olympia Farmers' Market.

(2) Thurston Conservation District Update: None

(3) News Sharing: There was a short discussion on the future of the proposed farm bill in the U.S. Congress.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.