

## **Thurston County Agriculture Advisory Committee**

7:00-9:00 PM

Benoschek Building

3054 Carpenter Rd SE, Olympia, WA 98503

### **Minutes for January 31, 2019**

Members Present: Eric Johnson, Mike Moore, Joe Hanna, Richard Mankamyer (chair,) Pat Labine, Robert McIntosh, Kevin Jensen, Gigi McClure.

Ex Officio Present: Stephen Bramwell, WSU Extension, Deborah Bordelon (Administrative Assistant.)

Members Excused: Scott Vaughn, Nicole Warren (Thurston Conservation District,) Bryan Fisher

3 members of the public present including guest speaker Doreena Baird, Senior Property Control Analyst with Thurston County Office of the Assessor.

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The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Richard Mankamyer.

Pledge of allegiance, optional for all attendees of the meeting.

A round table of introductions followed including members, staff, and guests.

Approval of previous meeting minutes (December 6, 2018): Minutes were approved unanimous.

Approval of current agenda: Agenda was approved unanimous.

### **Committee Items**

#### **Thurston County property tax discussion**

The issue of open space land rates changing was brought forth by Thurston County farmer Fred Colvin with Colvin Ranch. Fred asked the Ag committee in 2018 for information on why rates have changed. Doreena presented on the 4 current use classifications in Thurston County: Designated Forest Land, Open Space Agriculture Land, Open Space Timberland, and Open Space Open Space. Two parts of calculating the taxes paid by landowners with land in a current use classification are taxes set by levy/bond rates and current use rate. The current use rate is recommended by farm committee (FC) comprised of Rick Nelsen (Chair,) Richard Mankamyer, and Eric Johnson. The FC meets annually and provides their recommendation, with Doreena, to the county assessor. In 14 years of Doreena working with land use classifications the assessor always has agreed with the FC.

Doreena explained that there are 8 soil classifications by the USDA: 1 being the most productive (taxed the highest,) and 8 being least productive (taxed the lowest.) Doreena stated that her assessor team had been using a soils mapping book from 1957, and overlaying a plastic grid to calculate soil types for all parcels in Thurston County. In 2010 Doreena switched to Web Soil Survey, developed by the USDA, which provided more accurate information on soil types per parcel. Now Doreena has a county GIS specialist overlay GIS mapping onto the Web Soil Survey to match landowner information to soil types.

Because of the more precise mapping technology many parcels may have changed their soil class types on their property.

In Fred Colvin's example, most of his ranch was designated in soil class 5. Recently when Doreena re-evaluated Fred's property, it was determined that some acres are actually soil class 3 and soil class 4. Because of this change, Fred now is paying higher taxes on that property because it is considered more productive. The on ground soil identification has not changed, the aerial and parcel identification has changed.

Open space timber is calculated similar however that land is valued based on a state applied rate. It was explained to the group by Doreena that the timber is not valued, or taxed on property taxes, just land under the timber. The tax is taken from the timber at harvest, in a timber excise tax. There was also discussion about the back taxes owed, and penalties when landowners pull their land out of one of the four use classifications. The assessor's office is to review all parcels in the county at least 1 time every 6 years. Doreena mentioned that many parcels have applied to be removed in 2018, the committee was interested in the total acres that were pulled out of a use classification for 2018 as it could be correlated to loss of agriculture production land. Open space agriculture has to show income at least 3 of 5 years to be eligible for the program.

### **Comp plan**

Committee is looking for the timeline on when public comment is due for chapter 3. Stephen offered to look up that information and provide it back to the committee. Robert drafted comments for the comp plan revision, however there is a new comp plan draft and likely new comments should be submitted. Robert will prepare draft comments for discussion at our February meeting.

### **Scribes for the year of 2019**

(Kevin – January and February,) (Robert – March and April,) (Stephen – May,) (Joe – June,) (Gigi – July and September,) (Pat – October and December,) (Joe – January 2020.)

### **VSP**

TCD to host a VSP 101 meeting for public on February 28, 2019 at the Brighton Park Grange Hall in Tumwater. Same night as committee February meeting, Joe made motion to move February meeting to February 27 (Wednesday) in light of committee members wanting to attend the VSP Meeting, Robert second, approved unanimous.

### **Vice-Chair Vacancy**

Robert made motion to elect vice chair at February committee meeting, Pat Second, 1 nay and 1 abstained.

### **Green Sheet Review**

1 permit application, comments were due on January 24, 2019. Deborah requested individual comments from committee members in light of the deadline prior to the January meeting, Joe and Robert submitted comments. Committee explained the purpose of the "green sheet" or permit application review and potential impact on agriculture land.

### **Action Item Setting**

February was determined to have meeting action item of labor. Kevin invited the program manager of an internship program administered by the state department of L and I to come present to the committee. Presentation was confirmed prior to January meeting, however with the February meeting date changed Kevin will work out details with L and I. Kevin volunteered to draft a short synopsis of Doreena's presentation, to provide back out to the public through social media platforms. Committee agreed that infrastructure would be the action item for March, Stephen would reach out to Port of Chehalis for guest speaker.

### **WSU Update**

Stephen developed a new bulletin that covers field to post harvest for small and medium size grain growers. The Port of Chehalis asked for 2 million dollars from this legislative session to build a grain handling and storage facility. Eric suggest that in the plans there is a way to offload into trucks. Eric also stated that representative DeBolt was very supportive of the grain handling and storage proposed project. Stephen gave update on the SARE grazing study progress.

### **Adjournment**

It was moved and seconded to adjourn the committee meeting at 9:07pm.

### **Scribe**

Kevin Jensen, Farmer Member