

SUMMARY

PDR Oversight Committee Meeting 6975 Hannegan Rd. Bellingham, WA

November 2, 2005

Members present: Rod Erickson, Doug Dostal, Jim Dykstra, Veronica Wisniewski; Staff: Kraig Olason, Jessica Buer.

1. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

2. Review of Minutes

The minutes for the 09/07/05 meeting were reviewed. Rod motioned to approve the minutes. Veronica seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as written.

3. PDR Oversight Committee Member Terms and Open Positions

As of December 31, 2005 three committee member's terms will expire. Those members are Jim Dykstra and Rod Erickson. Term renewal applications have been mailed for those members interested in reapplying.

Kraig suggested filling the committee's vacant position with one citizen (non-farmer) from an incorporated city, i.e. Bellingham. His suggestion was met with approval by the committee.

4. Parks Plan Update

A copy of the Whatcom County Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan Survey was made available by Kraig to the committee. The survey revealed a county-wide interest in preserving open space and an overall willingness by citizens to pay for the preservation of open space.

Kraig stated the importance of these findings in reference to the future of the PDR program and suggested a follow-up with the Parks Department regarding the survey.

Kraig stated that the Parks Department and Whatcom Land Trust are in fact competitors for the same open space funding, i.e. Conservation Futures Fund. The PDR program committee expressed the need to broaden support within the community of the PDR program and to seek new partnering opportunities.

Rod raised the issue of the Whatcom Land Trust's (WLT) involvement in the PDR program. Kraig stated that the WLT is primarily concerned with habitat protection and has not been actively working on preserving ag land other than assisting the county with the PDR program. This is primarily due to the ag communities lack of interest in the program and/or representation on the WLT board.

Kraig suggested the committee consider morphing the PDR program into a broader open space program where the focus will shift to preserving "working landscapes". The committee raised their concerns regarding Whatcom County's rapid growth and rising property values. The committee agreed that a working landscape approach may be suitable for gathering community interest and support.

The committee suggested hosting a community forum after upcoming elections regarding the preservation of open space in Whatcom County. All members were in favor of this suggestion. Veronica and Kraig stated the importance of including the Whatcom Land Trust in the forum process.

5. Update on Status of Applicants

Kraig stated that the Pauls Dairy is in the process of County Council approval. NRCS has signed off on the purchase and the budget has been submitted. Kraig hopes to close on the property in December.

Kraig stated his concern regarding an error in the appraisal on the Alamwalla property. The original appraisal was too low (\$270,000), which prompted a second appraisal, which included the additional water rights valued at \$270,000. The second appraisal came in at \$540,000. The property owners have agreed to the second appraisal. However, new information revealed that a lot certification review was never completed on the property at the time of the second appraisal. Kraig stated that the lot certification review uncovered an additional six development rights. With the six additional development rights a third appraisal will likely come to \$810,000 or more.

Kraig asked the committee whether they want to pay more than \$540,00 for the Alamwalla property. The committee is in agreement that the third appraisal is valid due to current property values, water rights and raspberry soils.

Doug stated the purchase of Alamwalla's development rights at this appraised value could bolster competition and interest in the PDR program. Veronica expressed her interest in permanently preserving this piece of ag land at a time when rapid growth threatens ag land preservation.

Kraig stated his concerns regarding whether the council will approve the purchase at \$810,000 or greater. Veronica suggested a price negotiation with Alamwalla where some of the development rights could be gifted to ease tax burdens.

Rod motioned to accept the \$810,000 appraisal and move through with the purchase of the Pauls property. Doug seconded and all members approved.

Kraig stated that Tom Fenton's property is currently in the process of appraisal and will provide further information when available.

6. Round IV Applications – Stein Road Area

Kraig suggested starting round four PDR applications. Barbara expressed her approval of round four applications via an email sent to Kraig and received November 1, 2005. Rod, Doug and Veronica were also in favor of round four applications while Jim partially approved. The committee will proceed with round four.

The next meeting will be December 7, 2005 at 8:30 a.m. at the Conservation District Office.

Signed,

Rod Erickson, Chair

PDR Oversight Committee

