

Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting

Approved meeting notes for December 9, 2010

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ There were 18 people in attendance (4 guests; 11 of the 13 voting members; and 3 ex-officio, contributing, or staff members). The guests were Dean Martin, Cathy Lehman (FutureWise Whatcom), Allison Aurand (Purchase of Development Rights Oversight Committee), and Calvin Bratt (Lynden Tribune)
- ◆ Staff presented and the committee discussed a preliminary draft of an agricultural strategic plan.

MEETING NOTES

Quorum

A quorum was present with 11 of the 13 voting members in attendance (see sign in sheet at the end of the meeting notes). Lesa Boxx, Chair, called to the meeting order at 3:00 P.M., at the county Planning and Development Services Department, Northwest Annex Conference Room at 5280 Northwest Road.

Meeting Notes Approved

Wesley Kentch pointed out a needed correction in the October 14 meeting minutes – Dave Buys' name is mentioned under 'Subcommittee Reports' when he was absent from the meeting; Dave concurred and asked that his name be removed. **Debbie VanderVeen moved to approve the meeting notes from October 14 as corrected (with Dave's name removed); Wesley Kentch seconded, and the corrected meeting notes were approved by all voting.**

Open Session for Public Comments

There were 4 members of the public in attendance. No members of the public spoke during the open session.

John Bayer expressed concerns about the committee's work load and the reduced number of staff-supported meetings possible; he does not want the committee to be expected to 'rubber-stamp' and not be given adequate time for deliberations.

Reports, Presentations, and Deliberations

Subcommittee Reports

No subcommittee reports were available.

Staff Presentation/Report

Samya Lutz, Planning staff, presented a PowerPoint (also available as a hand-out at the meeting) on the preliminary draft of the agricultural strategic plan. Both Samya and Peter Gill provided more detail about the plan and context.

Discussion

Debbie reported back on work she had done to research costs related to staff support for committee meetings. At the last Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting, the group voted to ask Debbie to speak

on their behalf with County Council members to request additional funding. Debbie found out from conversations with staff that last years' staff support for meetings amounted to over \$1,000 per meeting. She didn't feel that the past two months were a good time to speak with council members about additional funding because of the budget pressures and cut-backs. Debbie is willing to go back to talk with council members if the committee requests her to.

Peter Gill noted that meeting time would be needed on implementation of the strategic plan next fall, and that should be kept in mind when thinking about resources. Henry Bierlink suggested that it might be appropriate to develop a budget to go along with implementation of the plan once it is complete, and present that to the council members.

Mike Finger moved to table a response to Debbie's question at this time; Vicki Hawley seconded. The motion was approved by all voting.

The committee discussed the preliminary draft of the strategic plan. Most of the discussion centered on defining agriculture. The committee agreed that the words "commercial" and "noncommercial" agriculture were preferred to "industrial" and "nonindustrial" agriculture. There was general agreement that all are in support of those who farm, but not as their primary source of income, and value the lifestyle of rural living. There were questions about the need for a definition of commercial agriculture; what would be the implementation repercussions of such a definition? How would it be ultimately used? Could staff come up with a hypothetical list?

Most agreed that county staff and other resources targeted to support agriculture should center on farmers and farmland engaged in commercial agriculture; but what the cutoff should be that defines commercial agriculture was not clear. Some suggested gross farm receipts (Henry noted that according to the NASS census of Ag 2007, there are somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 farmers who have over \$40,000 in annual gross receipts in Whatcom County). Mike noted that the gross income definition of a cutoff between commercial and noncommercial would include many market farmers on the commercial side, who can easily have that scale of business. Others suggested ideas such as acreage, or animal units, to define commercial ag operations. Dave expressed concerns about those just starting out in ag who may take years to show that kind of gross; perhaps business plans could be substituted for gross income in certain circumstances. Debbie noted that anyone can create a business plan. Some suggested a list of criteria, where a farmer could qualify as 'commercial ag' if they met 2 out of 3 of the criterion, for example. Henry offered that everyone wants to see small farms exist, but it's about prioritizing county resources; where should we put our energy toward supporting incentives, tools, breaks, and alternative regulatory pathways? Who should benefit the most? He offered Farm Friends support for an additional meeting for those who would like to continue this discussion of a definition at the Farm Friends office on January 6 from 3-5 pm.

Next Meeting

The Agricultural Advisory Committee will meet again on February 17th at 3 PM at the Planning & Development Services, Northwest Annex Conference Room

Future Agenda Topics

Continuing discussion of definition of agriculture in this county; and draft strategic plan

Adjourn

Lesia Boxx, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:46 P.M. (Motion made by Richard Yoder; passed.)

Included in the meeting packet December 9, 2010 (or provided at the meeting):

- ◆ AAC December 9, 2010 Agenda
- ◆ Draft meeting notes from October 14, 2010 meeting
- ◆ Preliminary draft (dated 11/23) of Whatcom County Agricultural Strategic Plan
- ◆ PowerPoint presentation slides on preliminary draft of Ag Strategic Plan
- ◆ Announcement of Purchase of Development Rights round opening for new applicants
- ◆ Blank application for county boards, committees, and commissions

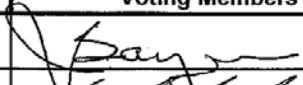

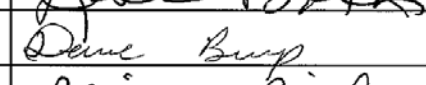
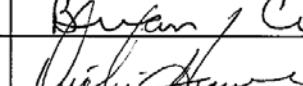
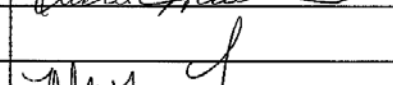

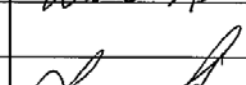
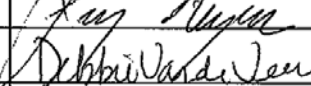
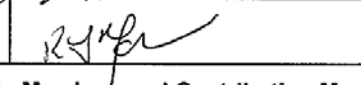
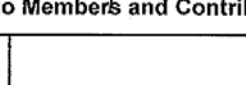
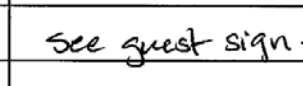
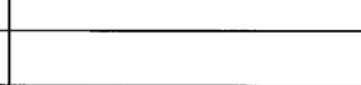
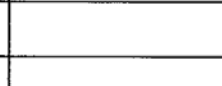
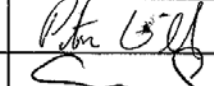
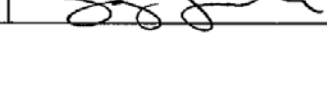
Relevant documents from previous meetings:

- ◆ "Agriculture and Whatcom County Planning – Chronology of Significant Events" March 2010.
- ◆ Accessory use of agricultural land, what might interfere with - and what might support continuing agriculture.
- ◆ Washington Administrative Code related to Agricultural Resource Lands (365-190-040, -050; 365-196-480, -815), and Revised Code of Washington (RCW 36.70A.130).
- ◆ Examples of Section 36.70A.177 provisions for discussion: *Shall be located, designed, and operated so as to not interfere with, and to support the continuation of, the overall agricultural use of the property and neighboring properties, and shall comply with the requirements of this chapter.*

Lesia Boxx, Chair, Agricultural Advisory Committee

Date

Agricultural Advisory Committee - Sign in Sheet - December 9, 2010

NAME		Voting Members SIGNATURE	Affiliation
Bayer	John		Farmer
Blok	Ed		Whatcom Farm Friends
Boxx	Lesa		Consumer
Buys	Dave		Farmer
Cieslar	Brian		Expertise in Farm Programs
Hawley	Vicki		Processor
Helm	Larry		Farmer
Finger	Mike		Farmer
Kentch	Wesley		Farmer
Jones	Todd		Farmer
Plagerman	Leroy		Farmer
Vander Veen	Debbie		Farmer
Yoder	Richard		Conservation Distict Board
Ex-officio Members and Contributing Members			
Antholt	Charles		Chair Emeritus
Bierlink	Henry	see guest sign-in sheet	Whatcom Farm Friends
Boggs	George		Conservation Distirct
Gilles	John		Farm Expertise
Gliva	Carly		FFA Youth
Hall	Alex		NRCS
McConnell	Craig		WSU Extension
Gill	Peter		Whatcom County staff
Lutz	Samya		Whatcom County staff

