

# Agricultural Advisory Committee

Approved meeting notes for April 1, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 P.M. by Charles Antholt.

- **Topics Discussed**

- Meeting Notes from 3/18/09 (approved)
  - Legacy Project Public Survey of Whatcom County Residents
  - Whatcom Conservation District grant for Livestock Waste Management Project
  - Land Disturbance Ordinance discussion
  - Approval of letter to County Council regarding tools to conserve agricultural land
  - Concerns regarding a sheep-carried disease affecting cattle
  - May 6 – next meeting
- A **quorum** was present with 13 of the 13 voting members at the meeting; see attached list at the end of the meeting notes.
  - **Comments from the public** –
    - The Committee recognized Debbie Vander Veen for her presentation yesterday (3-31-09) to the County Council. It was well-received. Some of the discussion was in regard to the onerous regulations impacting farmers. Part of the follow-up to that discussion is that farmers and this committee need to provide specifics about problems with the regulations to the county for their consideration.
    - Todd Jones provided an overview of the Legacy Project survey results for Whatcom County. This is a project that asked people to look out 50 to 100 years and asked them to envision Whatcom County's future for their children and grandchildren. The County worked with the Legacy project and provided support for the survey. In a nutshell, we (agriculture) figure very prominently. Agriculture has the highest priority after protecting clean water. Given one choice for the highest conservation value, agriculture was selected by 41% of the people; rural open space was 23% and foothills forest land was 20%. About half of the people indicated that what they like about Whatcom County, and one of the main reasons they are here, is the open space and scenery. The survey results are available on the county's web page.  
<http://www.whatcomcounty.us/executive/news/2009/03/index.jsp>
  - **Meeting Notes – March 18, 2009 approved.** A request was made to have the meeting notes made available to the members sooner. It was agreed by staff that this will be done. Debbie Vander Veen moved to approve the March 18 meeting notes, seconded by Lesa Boxx; approved with unanimous consent.
  - **Whatcom CD grant – Dr. Nichole Embertson, Ph.D.** gave a brief presentation regarding the CARE grant that the district has applied for from EPA. The district, through this grant and other activities, is trying to get

involved deleting some language the committee thought was not necessary for this letter.

The clustering provision was discussed in general, and its inclusion as a tool was discussed. It is described in the draft letter as badly broken and in need of repair. One member stated that if clustering is to occur, the building sites need to be minimized. Good Ag land has been divided into five acre parcels; if clustering could be better developed, it could possibly help protect Ag land.

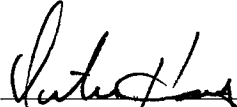
The discussion on right-to-farm revolved around the changes that occur in agriculture and being able to keep up with those changes using generally accepted practices, as required in the right-to-farm provisions. There was also concern that the right-to-farm provisions could become less meaningful if they were perceived as a protection for poor farming practices.

- **Other topics of discussion** – The meeting time was coming to an end. The following topics were briefly discussed.
  - Malignant Catarrhal Fever is a sheep disease that is asymptomatic in sheep, but is fatal for cattle. This disease killed seven Whatcom County cattle last year that were shown at the Puyallup Fair. There is concern again this year for the Northwest Washington Fair and other venues.
  - The Bellingham City Council adopted a population projection and also made recommendations to the County Council for consideration to reduce rural and agricultural conversions to residential.  
[bellingham-pop.doc](#)
- **Next meeting – May 6.** The next meeting was scheduled for May 6 - location to be determined.

*NOTE: Since the Land Disturbance Ordinance will not be moving forward until fall, the May 6 meeting was deferred until later. Some members of the AAC attended the Growth Management Coordinating Council meeting on May 6. Part of the GMCC discussion was about how to protect Whatcom County's agricultural viability.*

  
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Chuck Antholt, Chair

1/26/09  
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Date

  
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Vicki Hawley, vice chair

10/26/07  
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Date

