

**Skagit County Conservation Futures Program Advisory Committee
(CFAC)**

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 25, 2013

Members in Attendance:

Keith Wiggers Scott DeGraw
Alan Merritt Mike Hulbert

Staff in Attendance:

Kendra Smith, Program Director
Linda Christensen, Skagit County

Others in Attendance:

Allen Rozema, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland (SPF)

Open

Meeting opened at 7:10 a.m.

Agenda Review

Mike Hulbert announced that he would need to leave the meeting by 8:30 a.m. Keith Wiggers amended the agenda by asking for a Miller update.

Member Update

Keith Wiggers showed the group the newspaper advertisement for the Knutzen Brothers equipment auction.

Scott DeGraw spoke about conservation easement amendments recently discussed by the National Land Trust Alliance. He said that the county needs to be careful with amendment requests and a policy/procedure needs to be developed.

Mike Hulbert attended a recent TDR project meeting. He said that the county GIS department presented maps to the group showing different areas in the county currently under discussion as sending and receiving areas. Mike requested GIS to define the 39/1 conservation easements on a map for future reference. He also mentioned how agriculture relates in general for a TDR program.

Allen Rozema said that Shell Oil refinery is speaking to the agriculture community to gain interest and approval to use approximately 200 acres near Farm to Market and Bayview Edison

Roads as a railroad loop to drop off crude oil. There will be two drop offs per day. SPF does not support this railroad loop. Shell Oil is looking for input from interested parties before July, which is when the comprehensive plan amendments are due. Additionally, Allen mentioned that the Western Washington Agriculture Association does not support the railroad loop.

Allen also said that SPF held their strategic plan meeting last Saturday and the board wants to reaffirm their support to the FLP by suggesting bi-annual joint board meetings with the CFAC and signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the county to show partner support for each other. SPF desires to be a strong advocate in order to bring more private funding for the FLP.

Kendra Smith noted that her contract is currently being changed to reduce her time spent on the FLP by about 20%, which is total of 30% over this last year. She noted that funds from Conservation Futures will not be used to subsidize any other portion of her contract. This change is requested by the Board of County Commissioners. Kendra is looking to the CFAC to get their input on the program's priorities for her involvement to ensure the best results for farmland protection. She suggested a few things that could be dropped such as participation in the TDR, legislative work and limiting some grant submittals. More will be discussed at a future meeting.

Meeting Minutes

Keith has changes to the February meeting minutes and will submit to Linda. Approval of the minutes will occur at the next CFAC meeting.

Financial Update

Kendra updated the group on the yearly budget and mentioned that her Washington D.C. trip is not reflected on this report. Keith is requesting a transaction breakdown for costs other than salaries for future meetings.

Old Business

Miller Update

Kendra had been told by USDA that easements closed under previous farm bills will not be granted waiver requests to partition separate legal lots. She has sent correspondence to USDA regarding the waiver request for the 2012 properties and through this effort she was told that they will not allow the county a waiver for properties where funds have already-been obligated. Allen stated it is critical for the CFAC to realize the county's position on this matter before any further discussion is conducted. If needed, there was a suggestion that outside legal counsel be

sought after the county has given their legal position; however, some felt this may not be necessary.

Impervious Surface

This discussion will be continued at special scheduled meeting where all CFAC members will be in attendance and separate from the April 9 agenda, which is dedicated to the USDA state representative, Monica Hoover.

Washington D.C. Trip/USDA Discussion

Kendra shared the reason(s) for her trip to Washington D.C. in March and the accomplishments. She gave a historical overview of the legal lot waiver requests, which was the primary reason for the meeting. She participated in a meeting with the USDA national representative, Skagit County Commissioner Ron Wesen and Ken Dahlstedt, Congressman Rick Larsen's office, and others. Unbeknownst to Skagit County staff, the waiver requests were not received by the USDA national staff; however, the final decision is made by the state. Upon Kendra's return from this trip, she re-sent correspondence requesting the waivers.

Additionally, Kendra discussed with the USDA national group other topics, i.e. farmstead envelope, flood studies, and other language issues contained in the county easement. National has their own technical committees, the Commissioners and Larson's office and mentioned that it would be advantageous to have local groups participate as well.

USDA

There was some discussion about the properties wanting a waiver to allow the partitioning of separate legal parcels with USDA.

A discussion ensued regarding a 2012 applicant who has requested a waiver. Presently the applicant desires to pull the waiver request and proceed with closing with county and USDA funding.

Kendra expressed her concern for the properties eligible for USDA funding who are not requesting waivers. These should be moving forward; however, USDA continues to have concerns with the county's General Investigation Study that might conflict with all easements and the Chinook NEPA requirement.

New Business

USDA Visit

Scott is organizing questions to compile for Monica prior to her visit on April 9th. Allen suggested main topics and Carolyn will be the designated one to e-mail Monica the final questions.

Monitoring

Kendra reported that USDA is requesting all 2013 monitoring to be completed by August 2013 to comply with their fiscal reporting. It is our hope that we can comply with their reporting schedule by 2014. Currently we have submitted all of 2012 monitoring reports and some 2013 reports will be ready by that date.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

Submitted by: _____
Linda Christensen

Approved by the CFAC Board on: May 14, 2013

Vice Chair Scott DeGraw