

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

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 9, 2012

Members in Attendance:

Carolyn Kelly, Chair

Keith Wiggers

Andrea Xaver

Mike Hulbert

Members not in Attendance:

Alan Merritt

Staff in Attendance:

Kendra Smith, Program Director

Linda Christensen, Skagit County

Guests:

Allen Rozema, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland

Open

Meeting opened at 7:00 AM

There were no changes to the agenda.

Member Update

Transfer of Development Right Study

Mike Hulbert gave an update on the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) study. Mike attended his first meeting, held on September 19th. The TDR Advisory Committee consists of a diverse group – realtor, land trust, building industry, banking, city and town planning officials, forestry, and others. The discussion so far has been positive with an open public process. The study will determine if a TDR program could be successful in Skagit County.

Allen Rozema said that the TDR work plan is encouraging and respectful of the county's successful Farmland Legacy Program (FLP). The market economic analysis, which will be performed by a consultant is an important part of the study and will determine the feasibility of sending and receiving areas in the Skagit County market place. Currently the city of Mount Vernon has a TDR program and it stays within its own jurisdictional boundaries.

Kendra noted that there are possible funding opportunities for TDR programs when cities and counties combine their efforts to transfer development rights. There is a 2006 TDR study that can be accessed from the Skagit County Planning Department website and Kendra encouraged the CFAC to read it. If the county decides to move forward with a TDR program, it is important to remember that this type of program could be helpful as a tool to meet the goals of the Farmland Legacy Program.

State Funding

Carolyn provide updates on work regarding the FRPP ranking process at the state level with NRCS, as well as ideas for potential legislation regarding phasing state farmland preservation dollars to the Office of Farmland Preservation to fulfill previous legislative intent.

SEPA Bill Update

Allen Rozema has been serving on the SEPA Rule Making Advisory Committee that is advising the Department of Ecology's rule making process that is under a legislative directive to streamline SEPA and expand the current categorical exemptions. The committee has recommended the exemption for agricultural buildings be increased from 4,000 sq. ft to 40,000 sq. feet. Allen reported that the interests of local government, the development community and the environmental community were balanced out so that agricultural interests were protected. The Department of Ecology will be publishing a draft rule for public review and comment in the next several weeks to meet the Legislatures mandate to have this first round of SEPA amendments before the end of the year. In 2013, Ecology will convene the Advisory Committee again to amend the SEPA checklist, in part, to add questions about impacts to agriculture. Allen reported this was a major victory for agriculture as this starts to address the parity issue between our agricultural lands and other critical areas and will require projects proposed on farmland to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate impacts to farmland.

Meeting Minutes Approval

Andrea moved to approve the August 14th meeting minutes. Keith seconded and the motion passed.

Financial Update

Kendra gave an update of the budget amount left through the end of the year. She also distributed and discussed the color spreadsheet showing the cash flow schedule for pending property payouts and the strategy to get all pending properties funded by mid 2013.

Old Business

Monitoring Update

The monitoring contractor, Eric Nelson, is moving along nicely and completed the 2010 property monitoring. He has sent letters to additional 20 landowners and hopes to begin monitoring on those in the next few weeks.

New Business

Land Trust Alliance Rally 2012

Keith recently attended the 2012 Land Trust Alliance Rally and highlighted some of the workshops he attended. Some of the subjects he discussed included: the benefit of good record keeping and preparing records for archival purposes; county's record retention policy; possibly having State Attorney General review and approve any amendments to an easement; and NRCS certification. Overall it was an excellent rally with good information. An interesting factoid is that there has been \$7 Billion in tax money invested in conservation easements nationwide in the last 30 years.

Skagitonians Auction Report

Kendra announced at the recent Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland Auction that \$56K was raised to support future conservation easements.

Submitted by: Linda Christensen
Linda Christensen

Approved by the CFAC Board on:

Carolyn Kelly 11/00/12
Chair Carolyn Kelly