

**Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)**  
**Minutes – May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

Members in attendance:

Oscar Lagerlund (Chair)  
Dave Boon (Vice-Chair)  
Randy Good  
Bill McMoran  
Lyle Wesen  
Annie Lohman  
John Vendeland  
Murray Benjamin  
Mike Hulbert  
Kraig Knutzen (for Roger Knutzen)

Members not in attendance:

Kim Mower  
Bob Hughes

Others in attendance

Kenny Johnson  
Holly Freishtat  
David Bauermeister  
Don McMoran  
Carly Ruacho  
Allison Deets

1. Call to order & introductions:

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 7.05 pm. He welcomed members and guests Kenny Johnson (Nookachamps area farmer), Holly Freishtat (SPF/EDASC Ag Marketing Program), and David Bauermeister (Northwest Agriculture Business Center) to the meeting.

2. Minutes:

Staff reported that minutes will be available at the next meeting.

3. Northwest Agriculture Business Centers – David Bauermeister

David Bauermeister, Director of the new Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC), said he's new in town, having only been here since the first of April. The purpose of the NABC is to work on the development and marketing of value-added agricultural products in the five Northwest Washington counties of Whatcom, San Juan, Skagit, Island, and Snohomish. There are 16 members of the Board, three from each of the five counties, and one representative from Washington State University. At a recent strategic planning retreat, the Board developed a mission statement for the NABC:

“NABC will improve the economic vitality of the agricultural industry within the Northwest Washington counties of Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom by providing business resources and hands-on guidance to new or existing businesses that produce value-added or innovative agricultural products and services.”

NABC staff will work with individual clients on individual projects to launch new products and services. A big part of the NABC's role will be to refer people to the appropriate resources within the community for various needs of agricultural business. NABC has a close partnership with WSU to provide extension and research resources; David Bauermeister is meeting with WSU Extension agents next week, and then with the area Extension Director.

NABC staff will also work on regional marketing initiatives, finding new ways to connect producers to buyers. The organization will work on ways to coordinate marketing handling and transportation services, and is determining how we can find processing capacity that's here that can be utilized or create new processing facilities. NABC is aware that much is already happening in the area of marketing, and the organization wants to avoid duplication of services because the resources locally are already so limited. Ideally, the organization will provide regional collaboration – identifying resources and putting those resources to good use.

Skagit County representatives are Jeanne Youngquist, Gary Tollefson (Skagit Valley College), Don Wick (EDASC), and Allison Deets (ex-officio).

Oscar Lagerlund asked about David Bauermeister's background; he reported that he grew up on a wheat farm in Franklin County. After graduating from WSU, he spent time in Columbia basin, before going to Idaho to work in seed production & processing. He has worked in the pea industry and also spent four years working for a seed company working to make straw into particleboard. Most recently, he has been working for the Spokane Chamber of Commerce.

AAB member Dave Boon asked if NABC would be charging any fees for its services. David Bauermeister said there would probably be a fee schedule after the organization gets on its feet. The NABC has hired a communications person, and is now in the process of hiring a client services technician, and will begin the process of forming an RC&D through USDA after that in order to bring more people on board.

AAB member Lyle Wesen said it appears that most of the ag community is already in value-added production. David Bauermeister said that is true, that a lot of people have already figured out how to get access to direct market and are doing value-added development as part of their business plans.

Oscar Lagerlund asked what the timeline is for getting the program off the ground. David Bauermeister stated that the timeline is set by the legislature, and that NABC needs to have an initial story to tell by January 2007. NABC staff is putting together an evaluation process and criteria for applicants, as the organization will not be able to serve everyone at once. Holly Freishtat asked how the counties would be prioritized. David Bauermeister said the prioritization schedule would be by project, not county. Oscar Lagerlund asked how the organization picks projects and/or what kinds of restraints are on the Center. David Bauermeister said the NABC is currently restricted to \$750,000 in gross receipts – that is, the most an ag business that comes to the Center for help can gross is \$750,000 annually; if it grosses beyond that, the NABC cannot assist the farmer with the project.

#### 4. Comprehensive Plan Update – Carly Ruacho

Carly Ruacho, from Planning & Development Services (PDS), provided an update on the Comprehensive Plan process. She said that an internal working group has been established to look at all the code revision proposals to determine the County's ability to implement those revisions. Questions include whether or not a code revision proposal can be administered – is there a way to determine the terms of a special use permit are being met?

Carly Ruacho reported that the internal working group needs some assistance from the AAB in clarifying the habitat special use permit proposal to help better define for staff what and how they will evaluate permit applications. In particular, the County is interested in what the "adverse impacts" to adjoining agricultural property would include. After some discussion, a list of adverse impacts emerged, by consensus:

- flood control/protection – removal of flood storage capacity, inhibition of flood flow, integrity of flood control structures
- shade
- noxious weeds
- surficial water
- run-off from adjacent properties
- crop contaminants
- salt intrusion
- erosion

5. Skagit Environmental Bank (Wetland Mitigation Banking) Update

Kenny Johnson said that he was a neighbor of the proposed “Skagit Environmental Bank,” and that he appreciated the AAB’s efforts on behalf of ag lands and Nookachamps farmers. He reported that he had met the previous day, May 16<sup>th</sup>, with officials from the Department of Ecology Mitigation Banking Program, along with AAB staff Allison Deets, Carolyn Kelly (Skagit Conservation District), Bob Rose (Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland), Mike Rundlett (Western Washington Agricultural Association), and Larry Gadbois, another Nookachamps farmer. The Department of Ecology was surprisingly open to what the group had to say, and learned quite a bit about the broader concerns regarding this bank, which they said they would take into consideration. Kenny Johnson noted that Carolyn Kelly had pointed out in that meeting that the County has the ultimate veto power over this project, which the Department of Ecology confirmed.

After further discussion, Lyle Wesen offered a motion to send a letter directly to the County Commissioners opposing the project as presented, and copying interested parties. Murray Benjamin seconded the motion. Motion carried.

6. Committee Update

Allison Deets reported that she is working with Holly Freishtat, Don McMoran, and Ryan Patrick (EDASC), to put together an ag business conference that will look at farm transition, business planning, estate planning, etc. She has proposed bringing in Steve Richards, the Director of New York FarmLink, which is based at Cornell University. She is requesting assistance from the AAB in developing and hosting this conference. Lyle Wesen, Chair of the Economic Development Committee, proposed scheduling a joint meeting on June 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss the conference and needs related to that and other projects. Mike Hulbert agreed, and the meeting was set for June 14<sup>th</sup> at noon at Bob’s Burgers & Brew in Burlington.

7. Miscellaneous

Randy Good reported on the progress of the Critical Areas Ordinance Update Citizen Advisory Committee. Jean Shea is on the Committee, as well as Andrea Xaver. A consultant is assisting Planning & Development Services in putting the updated ordinance together, but PDS and the consultant are relying only on best available science provided by the Department of Fish & Wildlife, and ignoring what is in the record from the appeals process, including the Cattlemen’s science. The next meeting is on May 24<sup>th</sup> at 6.30pm, and Randy Good urges anyone from the AAB who is interested to attend. He also suggested that the AAB write a letter in support of the existing Critical Areas Ordinance and urging the County to include all the science in the County record, including the Cattlemen’s science. Dave

Boon moved, and Mike Hulbert seconded sending a letter to PDS, and including a portion of the Cattlemen's data as an attachment. Motion carried.

Kraig Knutzen reported that he understand the BCC is close to making a decision on Bayview Ridge. He said the message needs to go back to the Commissioners that the Districts need to be satisfied before this goes forward. Staff will request information from Public Works.

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called for adjournment of the meeting.

**Adjourn regular session 9.09pm.**