

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

September 9th, '09 meeting Minutes

Members in attendance

Kim Mower Murray Benjamin Bill McMoran Nels Lagerlund Lyle Wesen
Randy Good Mike Hulbert Greg Lee Kraig Knutzen Bob Hughes

Others in attendance

Carolyn Kelly – Skagit Soil conservation

Dan Berentson – Public Works

Gary Sorenson – Public Works

Annie Lohman

Michele, Seaver

Gary Jones

Carly Ruacho – Planning and Development Services

Call to order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Kim Mower. Introductions all around commenced. While the board waited for information folders to be delivered approval of the August Minutes was tabled until all members had a copy. Lyle motioned to postpone the approval and it was seconded (not recorded) to set aside August Minutes.

Guest Speaker

Michele Seaver and Gary Jones presented the plan for an equine facility in the Ag NRL zone. The board stressed this issue has never been addressed by its members. There is argument between Planning and the developer as to interpretation of the code. The board was asked by Planning to help with the Ag's interpretation of the code as to whether it was allowed or not. Discussion all around about the proposed facility and code language. Carly gave options to consider.

Dan Berentson spoke on the County Clean Water Program and how it protects shellfish in districts in the county. Dan gave a history of the program. In 1994 BoCC created the project in concerns of water quality. In 2004 the County started working with other agencies, i.e.;

Conservation District, Health Department, etc. In 2005 the County started an assessment in a 4 year time frame. Also the program was passed to support lake management, salmon habitat restoration, septic tank inspections. By this time they were working with Watershed Council, fish enhancement projects and ag practices, and public education. A meeting scheduled for September 15th will examine two options: a. re-authorize existing assessment, b. increase assessment. Increased rates would fully fund agencies they work with. The main expenditure would bring a new more aggressive PIC Program for water quality. A closer identification of point source pollution and solutions involving Farm Plans or Health Department (septic tanks). Gary Sorensen spoke on monitoring at 40 + sites, habitat conditions, whether getting better or worse. He stressed the Samish is a high priority and promised closer scrutiny for indentifying the problems. He talked about how the actual costs were much less than was listed. Said a more comprehensive annual report of the activities they do will be forth coming. Discussed how areas are scrutinized for performance. Discussed how monies were directed for activities and projects. Extra money is to work the Samish Basin. Focusing on resources for the Samish. Nels commented on how dairies get blamed for high fecal counts. Dan said they will be looking to solve the problem regardless of the source. The County will not do DNA testing. Doe will be doing that. He stressed there will be more comprehensive reports this fall, with clarification of how funds are spent.

Jones and Seaver returned to the meeting with a more comprehensive presentation with a map of the project. Discussion of what the definitions were and what was allowed in the code. Lyle motioned and Kraig seconded to refer more discussion to the Land Use Committee. Motion passed.

Annie Lohman submitted maps for discussion about Blanchard properties in the Ag Zone. These should be taken out of Ag and put in Rural Village. Carly stated the County's position of how difficult it is to change designation, too many issues associated with changes. Carly also commented on how there are several places in the County with this situation – very problematic. Annie stressed the lots were not farmed and the land around the area was too wet to farm. Carly discussed options. County could offer solutions depending on what was needed for a fix. Land Use Committee will start a process for involvement in this issue.

Committee Reports

- a. Land Use – Mike reported on the Accessory to Ag Use business. Carly said it will be appealed. Mike reported on the involvement of the committee members and others with the Code Amendment Proposals. There were several meetings and Carly spoke of the technical aspects of the outcome.
- b. Drainage and Irrigation – Kraig reported that the Thomas Creek may be cleaned if you remove the fish at a cost of \$8000.00 per quarter mile.

- c. Flood – Bob talked about progress is coming along in the Flood Control meetings. He spoke of a 3 bridge project on Fir Island.
- d. CAO – no report
- e. Open Spaces – No report

Old Business

Time constraint prevented any discussion.

New Business

Time constraint prevented any discussion.

Extra Discussion

At this time the Minutes from the August meeting were motioned for approval as amended (need to include Greg Lee as not in attendance) by Bill and seconded by Murray. Motion passed.

Lyle motioned, and Kim seconded, to send a letter of thanks to Mary Heinrich, as she is moving away. Motion passed.

Annie commented on the actions of the Sunshine Committee, and how they were trying to get made public certain private information about some farm activities.

Bill asked about the BoCC acceptance of Nate Younquist as a new board member. Carolyn reported he was accepted.

Kim stated she had been in contact with a person who showed interest in becoming a member of the board to fill the vacancy left by John Vendalund.

Next Meeting

Was not discussed

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM. Minutes taken by Murray, prepared by Kim

Work items

- a. Land Use Committee to set up a meeting with Jones/Seaver
- b. Letter of thanks to Mary Heinrich