

# Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Summary – October 12, 2022 Commissioners Hearing Room/MS Teams

## Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes      Terry Sapp      Michael Trafton      Justin Hayton  
Kraig Knutzen      Murray Benjamin      Steve Omdal      Steve Wright  
Tim Van Hofwegen

## Proxy Designations

Murray Benjamin for Nels Lagerlund

## Members Absent

John Morrison      Rachael Ward Sparwasser

## Others in Attendance

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner  
Sarah Ruether, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)  
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)  
Don McMoran, WSU Extension

## Call to Order, Introductions

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

## Approval of Meeting Summary

Murray Benjamin moved to accept the September 14, 2022, Meeting Minutes, Terry Sapp seconded. Motion carried.

## Guest Speaker

### **Sarah Ruether, Long Range Planning Manager, Skagit County Planning & Development Services**

Sarah Ruether gave a brief update on Agritourism

- Agritourism Survey
  - We have Redone the survey; it is now much shorter and better to understand by everyone
  - We are hoping to get public input and more involvement
  - PDS and Berk Consulting have broadened the outreach and involvement-sent out cards to over 16,000 Unincorporated Skagit Residents.
  - Will add more knowledge and history to webpage:
    - We will add a two page document on the current zoning and history
  - Postcard will have a QR code to do the survey online
  - We will be having outreach events and have paper copies available for anyone who wants to take the survey in person

- We expect a 4-5% return rate of people who take the survey
- Old survey was found to be bias- hope the new shortened version that has been addressed, Terry Sapp
  - Tried to make it unbiased, asked what we should be allowing
- Kept the zip code question
- WSU could possibly be a location for dropping off paper surveys
- Can't stop Agritourism, we just need to try and limit it, and enforce the rules
- There is now a box to explain your answer on the survey
- Peter Browning stated we need to hear from more people, what would dismantle Ag in Skagit, what will make it better
- We need to protect the farmland, it is in State Law to do that-GMA
  - Support and preserve Ag Land, need to balance and make it fair
  - Maximum of 24 events in a year helps keep it to where you can't make a living

## New Business

### 2022 Docket Update

Michael Hughes gave an update on the Docket Process:

- Ag Worker Housing has been rescinded
- Moving forward include:
  - LR22-01 Small Scale Recreation and Tourism Rezone: rezone four parcels from Rural Reserve to Small Scale Recreation and Tourism zone.
  - C22-1 Wind Turbine Use Amendment: add wind turbines as an allowed use accessory to residential structures.
  - C22-2 Critical Areas Ordinance Correction: Code correction in SCC 14.24.080(4)(c)(vi). Reference to subsection (6) should be a reference to (5)(b).
  - C22-3 Guemes Island Overlay Side Setback Amendment: remove preferential side setback requirements for the Guemes Island Overlay to be consistent with other areas of the County.
  - C22-4 Economic Development Plan Amendment: add a new goal to the Economic Development Chapter (Chapter 11) of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan to ensure public facilities are eligible for state economic development grants.
  - C22-5 Seawater Intrusion Areas Amendment: change the requirement for a County Hydrogeologist to review proposed new wells in a seawater intrusion area to instead allow for a licensed hydrogeologist employed or engaged with the County to perform the review.
- Presenting to the Planning Commission at their October
- Steve Omdal- Ag Luncheon
  - David Molina put together a letter with good points for Ag. Should we look, read, or amend the letter and pass along? Don read the letter to the Board.
    - Michael Hughes suggested we wait and see how it progresses. The AAB doesn't need to be involved now.
    - Steve Omdal thinks if a letter wants to move forward should we be a part of it? Kraig Knutzen thinks we need more information, this should be more for Legislative and the AAB is more County Driven, not really our position. More likely would be Western Washington Ag's place.
    - Individual farmers can sign on, just not the AAB

### **Don McMoran WSU Update**

- Funding level is good at this time- Budget has been submitted to the County
- WSU is currently hiring back staff
- Usual Grants- three going smoothly-Puget Sound Partnerships, Agribility, & Farm Stress Suicide
- Ag Summit is scheduled for February 10<sup>th</sup>, may or may not happen
- Pizza for Producers October 27<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm
  - Free pizza for farmers at the WSU Bread Lab
- Upcoming Workshops:
  - W. WA. Seed Workshop January 13<sup>th</sup>
  - Skagit Ag Summit February 10<sup>th</sup>
  - W. WA. Potato Workshop February 24<sup>th</sup>
  - W. WA. Berry Workshop March 10<sup>th</sup>

### Committee Reports

#### **Economic Development-** Don McMoran

- IGFC Slaughter Facility at the Port moving forward.
- Amazon is not occupied yet.
- Car/Springs Mill addition
- Farmer Grass Seed mill in Arlington
- Potato Storage-LaConner Whitney Road
- New Hangers at the Port

#### **Critical Areas** – Nels Lagerlund

Nothing at this time.

#### **Land Use** – Terry Sapp (Chair), Kraig Knutzen, Murray Benjamin, Michael Trafton, Steve Omdal

Terry Sapp reported that the Seattle Times front page was about Restoring Salmon Estuary Land, big restoration project in the Everett area. Skagit Delta is the biggest.

#### **Flood, Drainage & Irrigation** – Kraig Knutzen (Chair), Nels Lagerlund, Steve Wright

Kraig Knutzen reported the river is low. Ditches are dry, flood awareness month was good because things are soon going to change.

### Old Business

Nothing at this time.

### Adjourn

Justin Hayton moved to adjourn; Murray Benjamin seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Next meeting is November 9, 2022, at 6 pm.