

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

Meeting Summary – February 8, 2023

Commissioners Hearing Room/MS Teams

Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes Terry Sapp Michael Trafton Nels Lagerlund
Murray Benjamin Steve Omdal Justin Hayton

Proxy Designations

Nels Lagerlund for Tim Van Hofwegen Murray Benjamin for Kraig Knutzen
Nels Lagerlund for Steve Wright

Members Absent

John Morrison

Others in Attendance

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner
Jack Moore, Assistant Director Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Sarah Ruether, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Don McMoran, WSU Extension
Aileen Good, Community Member
Randy Good, Community Member

Call to Order, Introductions

Terry Sapp called the meeting to order at 6:02.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Minutes amended to include Change in 6th bullet on page one “AAB recommended \$10,000 total per operation per farm”
Murray Benjamin moved to accept the January 11, 2023, Meeting Minutes as amended, Justin Hayton seconded. Motion carried.

Guest Speaker

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

Sarah gave an update on Agritourism

- Joint Meeting with the Planning Commission
 - Planning Commission would like to have a joint meeting to discuss Agritourism and Policy Options, Proposed Meeting February 28th
 - Will be a public Meeting and televised
- Survey Results from the Fall Survey
 - Approx. 17,000 Postcards sent out
 - Mailed Mid October, closed Mid December
 - 651 Responses to Survey
 - Over 90% live in Skagit County
 - About 1/3 own or lease farmland
 - Over 80% Support Agritourism when it an accessory to the primary agricultural use
 - Weddings

- About 2/3 (68%) thought weddings should not be prohibited, but could help farmers keep farming (with conditions)
 - Most (68%) supportive of allowing weddings as special events, limited in size and frequency
- Tasting Rooms
 - Most agreed to allowances for accessory tasting rooms (subject to a special use permit with conditions)
 - 68% agreed with having small tasting rooms
 - About half (50%) thought moderate sized tasting rooms should be allowed
- Farm Stand & U-Pick
 - Most (85%) would make no changes to the code for u-pick and farm stands
 - Most (81%) would simplify the permit process for these activities
 - A little over half (57%) would update design standards
- Bed & Breakfast
 - Most (90%) would continue accessory bed and breakfast allowances
- Temporary Farm Stays
 - A little over half (58%) would allow temporary farm stays (RVs) including limiting days/vehicles
 - More support on this came from those who owned or leased farmland
- Festivals and events
 - Most (88%) would continue to have temporary activity regulations (special event permits) for festival and events
 - Most would not limit the number or size of events differently than what the code currently permits
 - Most 66% would keep the same size of events
 - Most 77% keep the same number of events
- Permits & Procedures
 - Most (83%) would like to see updated application forms
 - Most (72%) would like to see exemptions for low-use/low-impact activities
 - Most (77%) would like to see an annual self-certification form
 - Most (79%) would like to see a multi-year programmatic permit
 - Most (64%) would like to see more Code Enforcement
- Support for Agritourism when it is accessory to a primary agricultural use
- More Support for agritourism activities when temporary in nature and permitted with conditions on size, frequency, or special use permit to notify neighbors and mitigate impact
- More support for agritourism when permitting process includes annual certification and or programmatic permits that ensure the use is managed and is re-evaluated periodically

Committee Reports

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

Michael Trafton gave an update on the January 24th Work session with the Planning Commission. Terry Sapp spoke during the public comment period and was able to say what was needed. There were no questions or dialog. Seemed like the Planning Commission was not knowledgeable about the Agritourism topic. The land Use Committee met after that meeting. Six-Seven people spoke at the Planning Commission Meeting regarding Agritourism. The Message was to protect/preserve the g land and it was not getting through to the PC. One member of the PC did not have enough information to make a decision. They would like to have a joint meeting with the AAB to have a discussion with dialog. Need to discuss consequences/impacts with Agritourism define things. The Planning Commission wants guidance from the Agricultural Advisory Board to talk about critical points. Terry Sapp spoke on the City of Sedro Woolley has a proposal that would significantly change rules/regulations with wineries, breweries, and distilleries. Changing the code to incorporate

retail with manufacturing. Zoning district where these things may happen, they need to be in the cities. Sedro Woolley out of the cities need to have sewer/water and septic needs to get tested all the time, but in the city, they would be hooked up to PUD/City water. Other Businesses in the City would benefit as well. Steve Omdal noted that Code Enforcement needs to be a part of the discussion with the Planning Commission.

- Need to create a focus for the joint meeting, what do you think the AAB should support?
- Point will be made at a PC Meeting- this is the first major change to AG Code in 40 years.
- How should the AAB prepare the focus points? Call each member of Planning Commission and ask them how they feel about Agritourism?
- Randy Good commented that AAB needs to give accurate information to the PC, the AAB helped develop the code before it went to the Planning Commission in the past. The Consultant should work with the AAB for policy recommendations prior to moving it to the Planning Commission.
- Things to talk about:
 - We do not want Weddings, restaurants, tasting rooms
 - Cost vs. benefits
 - What are the downsides
- Terry suggested to write down your points and send them to the land use committee to discuss.
- Michael prepared a letter previously that was sent in that could be used to build on.
- Terry passed out a paper that had some main points. Need to be more specific to what you want and don't want with the Planning Commission.
- There was a Motion to have the land use Committee take comments from the meeting this evening and assemble a response to bring back to the Board next month.
- Jack Moore sent some talking points to Michael and Terry for the Land Use Committee.
- Will get more time for a joint meeting with the Planning Commission- March Meeting-Sarah to schedule with PC

Economic Development- Don McMoran

No movement at the Amazon Facility. Remi Contreau purchased Westland Distillery.

Critical Areas – Nels Lagerlund

Bill regarding Voluntary Buffers, Governor may veto. The Dairy Federation is in support.

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

Nothing at this time.

Old Business

BESS Update:

- Jack Moore updated regarding the Battery Storage- Minkler Road Property has been deemed a Major Utility Development and now opens the door for the application for a Special Use Permit.
- Targeted AG-NRL Land
 - 10 acres needed of 14-acre site. Needs to be close to the Substation that is storing the power
 - Energy imbalance market
 - Power stations keep being bogged down

New Business

Don McMoran WSU Update

- Ag Summit this Friday at 9 am- Catering a potato bar, and a social afterwards
- Usual Grants- three going smoothly-Puget Sound Partnerships, Agrability, & Farm Stress Suicide
- Potato Workshop February 24th

- Berry Workshop March 10th
- Finally, fully staffed at WSU Extension

Next Meeting: Discussion regarding Agritourism Talking Points for a joint meeting with the Planning Commission.

Adjourn

Nels Lagerlund moved to adjourn; Murray Benjamin seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

Next meeting is March 8, 2023, at 6 pm.