

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

Meeting Summary – August 9, 2023

Commissioners Hearing Room/MS Teams

Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes	Terry Sapp	Michael Trafton	Nels Lagerlund
Steve Omdal	Justin Hayton	Kraig Knutzen	Steve Wright

Proxy Designations

Kraig Knutzen for Tim Van Hofwegen Terry Sapp for Murray Benjamin
Michael Hughes for Steve Skrinde

Members Absent

John Morrison

Others in Attendance

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner
Jack Moore, Assistant Director Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Don McMoran, WSU Extension
Kas Church, Skagit County Public Health
Kristen Ekstran, Skagit County Public Health
Quinn Estep, Community Member
Madeline McGonagle, Community Member

Call to Order, Introductions

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Justin Hayton moved to accept the July Meeting Minutes, Steve Wright seconded, Motion carried.

Guest Speaker

Kristen Ekstran, Population Health Trust's Food Security Workgroup

Kristen spoke about the Population Health Trust Food Security Workgroup that includes County Commissioners & Public Health. They are looking for strategies for gaps with food security

- Joint Meeting with the Planning Commission
 - Not a problem with Farming, more an issue with distribution
 - Local Markets to pay costs are not enough for processing
 - Getting more farmers engaged
 - Food banks, schools, meals on wheels, & hospitals
 - Need more collaboration with understanding the food system
 - Foster relationships to learn more about all the working parts
 - There is not enough information regarding processing, cold, & dry storage.
- Current goals include how can the food system work together to make sure no one is hungry:
 - Expand in markets locally
 - Better coordination-food co-op work with their farmers to know what to plant for the year
 - Support Service access to all, resources to help

- The members of the AAB may not be any help with this, most are large scale farmers
- Food Hub expansion is a goal
 - Who is relevant for good goals? Look at Ralphs Greenhouse and what he has done, he has done some great things.
 - Jacob Slosberg is also doing a great job.
- Possibly a good topic for discussion at the Skagit Ag Summit this next year
- VIVA Farms/WSU Contributors
- Last year Meals on Wheels did \$15,202- need conversations on storage and bigger kitchen space.
- Storage Distribution and capacity-what are the needs for smaller farms?
- Main gap for social services- ability to hold and pick ups & deliveries. Skagit is lacking the ability and logistically it is not there.
- Would building community wide cold storage help?
 - Arlington has a good foodbank, see if Skagit can do that.
 - Trying to find more efficiency.
 - Would crating a Food Policy Council/Food Bank Collation help? Bring everyone to the table to talk about policy moving forward?

Committee Reports

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

Agritourism- there was a Seattle Times article and the reporting was not fair or accurate. There is a group that is meeting three times a week to try and submit a counter proposal to the Planning Commission regarding Agritourism. They have more than 2,000 signatures on an online petition. Notes published from the meeting of the group are on the Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland website. Any major changes would have to go through the same process, SEPA, Public Notice, and the Public Comment period. Need people to come into compliance. This may not come back to the AAB, but we all need to stay involved and informed. Comment on whatever the AAB needs to comment on. Terry will be submitting a comment personally to the PC.

There is a new vacancy on the Planning Commission in District 1.

King 5 did a story on Saltbox Farms today. The main goal is to preserve soil-based food production.

Economic Development- *Don McMoran*

EPA Vulnerable Species Pilot happening, the protection of the checker spot butterfly. The EPA is currently accepting comments regarding what the PULA (Pesticide Use Limited Area) Zones are and the impact for Skagit. Currently 1,000 feet off of any water way.

Stanwood-Twin City Foods has been bought out by a no meat facility. The company that purchased TWF has recently took a 30% dive and there is no use of the facility as of yet.

Island Grown Food Cooperative has the permits for a new facility and hope to start building soon.

No Bankruptcy filed for Skagit County Malting as of yet.

No movement still at the new Amazon Facility.

Critical Areas – Nels Lagerlund

Nothing at this time.

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

Seattle City Light is getting close to an agreement regarding the flood water storage.

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

- Budget is due to the Commissioners on August 14th with a zero percent increase
- Usual Grants- Puget Sound Partnerships, Agrability, Farm Stress Suicide, & Viva Farms
- Upcoming Workshops- Seed, Potato, Berry, and the Ag Summit

Adjourn

Justin Hayton moved to adjourn; Kraig Knutzen seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Next meeting is September 13, 2023, at 7 pm.