

**Skagit County Conservation Futures Program Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Summary**  
November 10, 2020

**Members in Attendance**

Steve Sakuma	Scott DeGraw	Margery Hite
Jim Glackin	Andrea Xaver	Owen Peth

**Members Absent**

Keith Morrison

**Staff and Others in Attendance**

Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works  
Allen Rozema, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland  
Kai Ottesen, Belle Bean Services

Scott called the meeting to order at 7:00 AM

**Members Update**

Andrea shared there are a lot people leaving California and this will increase pressures of development locally as well as in other states. The group discussed the Amazon development coming to the Port. Allen shared that Drainage District 19 and Consortium are working with the County on assessing the impacts of the development. He added that SEPA closed and building permit was issued and hopefully drainage will be addressed.

**October Meeting Summary**

Andrea noted missing the word “from” on the first page and Kara will correct it. Allen noted that SPF is not a political organization and asked that at the bottom on page 2 that characterization is changed to a 501 c 3 organization. Kara will make the change.

Jim made a motion to approve the summary as modified, second. All were in favor.

**Marketing/Application Process**

The group continued a discussion that began in October. Scott was conversing with a member of the Agriculture Advisory Committee; they were wishing they were more proactive on issues, and Scott wants that for this group as well. He used Pierson as an example. Allen gave a quick update on that property; the family’s attorney is putting together the offer letter for Trillium, including terms and conditions, i.e. the proposal to extinguish the development rights and placing the conservation easement. Then that starts the 90 day clock.

Scott discussed that to be proactive, it would be good to have an advocate for the CFAC program out on the landscape. He’d like to use an advocate to represent the interests of the FLP, promote the program,

and do the exploratory research with the landowners to prepare them to bring in an application. Kara would work on administration after the application. He sees this as three parts: first, advertising and marketing the program, second, developing applications with landowners, and third, implementation. This strategy would get us ahead of applications, as opposed to just reacting.

Margery added that she's discussed that with Bill Blake. They are getting a new ACEP person that will be housed at the Conservation District. This person can be added to the mix. Andrea added that the Program needs more publicity when a property closes, with pictures, quotes, and stories. It would be ideal to put an ad in the paper with the Program accomplishments.

The group discussed how this strategy could be implemented, such as existing contracts, new agreements, or volunteers. Scott would like a subcommittee to work on marketing. Testimonials, for example, might make other property owners interested. A first order of business would be getting information out in the tax statements. Margery reminded the group that contracts would have to go through the county procurement process.

Allen shared that he'd like SPF to be an advocate to strengthen the program, as they have with existing properties in the queue and reminded the group that the Program used to be directed with a full time employee. He added that the County's comprehensive plan contemplates the creation of a Department of Agriculture, with a director, to oversee CFAC, AAB, Natural Lands Database, tracking agricultural impacts, planning doing ag permits, to ensure consistency with changes in the Board of County Commissioners. Snohomish County has an Agricultural Coordinator.

Kai and Kara have discussed what they can move on right away, acknowledging there's a bigger picture movement on the horizon. Kai is wrapping up monitoring files, then can move on the brochure, pamphlet, and inserts. The group discussed how we'd need to use different messaging for the various audiences. Jim advocated for a web presence and using tools to get the algorithms to support distribution of the information. Andrea again noted that press releases after a closing would help tell the story and helps marketing. Kai will bring some mark ups to the next CFAC.

Owen shared that we might want to be searching for a business that does all this work, either through a contract or piecemeal program to produce and distribute content. He will get a couple resources that can encompass all these things under discussion and reach out to those businesses.

Kara shared a couple of notes on marketing that will piggyback on another County program, the Voluntary Stewardship Program. There will be a mailing this year to all residential addresses within Ag-NRL zoning that outlines programs available to them as rural landowners, including the FLP, Natural Resources Stewardship Program, and CD Programs such as CREP and Farm Planning. In addition, the Communications Coordinator is putting together a type of Agricultural Yearbook, which is also part of VSP, and will include information about the FLP as well as all other major components of the agricultural sector. This report will also serve as the Agricultural Lands Status Report that is outlined in the County's comprehensive plan.

## **Review Mission/Objectives**

The topic of reviewing Ordinance 16380 (levying the property tax fund), Resolution 16475 (conservation futures program advisory committee), and Resolution 16766 (initiating PDR program for farmland preservation, including criteria) was introduced. This will be an ongoing discussion and added to future meetings.

## **Proposed Project**

Kara shared a potential critical area buyout within the Town of Lyman. More of the river has been occupying Lyman Slough and the County purchased and demolished three homes already, under a FEMA funding agreement. However, there is a fourth home at risk now, and although the County is in the queue for FEMA funding, that's been the status for over a year. The group did not see that as a good fit for Conservation Futures dollars.

Kara also shared that she recently attended a meeting with Department of Natural Resources and Skagit County Parks, Public Works, and the Commissioner's Office. The meeting covered a project that DNR did jointly with the PDR program in Whatcom County and they were exploring a project like this in Skagit County, between Lake McMurray and Big Lake. They were interested in Conservation Futures funding availability to purchase development rights on Forestry lands, to help offset the costs of acquisition. Andrea will research as she is aware of a purchase of development rights program already within the DNR.

## **Property Update/Financial Summary**

Kara reviewed the status of all applications in process and the revenues and expenses thus far for 2020. The group discussed putting in an advertisement to the paper to celebrate 2020, which could include a map.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 AM