

Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Board
Meeting Summary
November 14, 2023

Members in Attendance

Scott DeGraw Jim Glackin Audrey Gravley Margery Hite
Andrea Xaver Sarah Stoner (ex-officio)

Members Absent

Keith Morrison Owen Peth

Staff and Others in Attendance

Grace Kane, Skagit County Public Works
Jenn Johnson, Skagit County Public Works

Scott called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

Review Agenda

Agenda approved.

September 12 Meeting Summary

Andrea made a motion to approve minutes with minor grammatical edits; Jim seconded. All in favor.

Property Updates

The group discussed updates on the properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 850 acres and 16 development rights.

For 2023:

- Closed or expected to close/record: 425 acres by year-end 2023, with eight development rights extinguished on these protected acres.
- Planning and Development Services may have additional protected acres via land divisions using the Ag Lands Preservation Code, though there have been no notifications so far of ALP acres.
- 25-year total, projected by close of 2023: 14,745 acres protected; 273 residential housing development rights extinguished.

Application Review & Scoring

FLP 228

The group reviewed and scored FLP property #228 who resubmitted their application with only the east parcel of 25 acres in the greater Bow area, with one development right to extinguish; the west parcel of 25 acres is no longer included as the applicants plan to exercise the development right.

The property scored as follows: *Core Criteria 49, Edge Criteria 34*. The property scored highest in Core Criteria, which correlates to criteria developed to emphasize a property's role in the preservation of a critical mass of farmland.

FLP 252

The group reviewed and scored FLP property #252, comprising of 80.8 acres and 2 development rights in the greater Burlington area.

The property scored as follows: *Core Criteria 45, Edge Criteria 64*. The property scored highest in Edge Criteria, which emphasizes threat of conversion of farmland to other uses.

Subcommittee Reports

Tabled due to time constraints.

Monitoring Report

Tabled due to time constraints.

Marketing & Application Process

Farmland Legacy Awarded \$100,000 Land Transfer Navigator Grant

Sarah reports that, through Farmland Legacy, she applied for and was awarded a [\\$100,000 grant over a 4-year period](#) starting this fall, from American Farmland Trust. The funds and grant are for the purpose of supporting the land transfer process from the current generation of farmers to the new generation of farmers. The funding can be used for hosting networking events and includes ongoing staff training.

In connection to the farm transition conversation, Sarah shared she was recently made aware of a Farm Transition Planning tool developed by the Washington State Conservation Commission. The website link and information on how to request a hard copy: <https://www.scc.wa.gov/ofp/transition-planning>

City of Burlington Ag Heritage Credit Program

This fall, in early and mid-October, an interlocal agreement was drafted by Skagit County legal counsel, which was reviewed and approved by Burlington legal counsel, then put forward to their city council. The city code as written limits FLP/Skagit County use of the funds to a specified area of Burlington, though the specified area map is not available. Also, the code is written as a TDR (transfer of development rights), which doesn't interface with FLP which is a PDR/PACE (purchase of development rights/purchase of agricultural easement) program. The 2023 interlocal clarifies that FLP can use the funds at its discretion, regardless of location.

Three Ag Heritage Program checks have now been deposited to Skagit County Conservation Futures Fund 122, totaling \$137,500. Total amount 2012 to-date from the Burlington Ag Heritage Program to Skagit County Fund 122 totals \$174,000.

Utility-Scale Solar: Solar-Leasing Information

Because solar has the potential to impact hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland, American Farmland Trust recently hosted a [Solar Leasing Workshop](#). According to AFT, agricultural land is often seen as a prime location for solar development, as it is typically undeveloped, flat, treeless, and close to transmission infrastructure. AFT has created a guidebook specific to our region ([Solar Leasing: A Guidebook for Agricultural Landowners in the Pacific Northwest](#)) not to advocate for how farmers and ranchers use their land, but to support what is a complex decision and different for each landowner.

Member Updates

Sarah reported that a Conservation Futures [Ordinance](#) from Planning & Development Services was approved by Skagit County Board of Commissioners on September 12, 2023. This ordinance adopted amendments to Skagit County Code 3. 18. 050, changing the Non-Voting, Ex-Officio Members of the Conservation Futures Program Advisory Board.

Ex-officios are a standing membership position with no voting rights. The staff coordinator position for Farmland Legacy is now the one ex-officio position on the Conservation Futures Program Advisory Board.

Financial Summary

The financial summary is updated for 2023.

Administrative

CFAC 2023 Meeting Dates

December 12

CFAC 2024 Meeting Dates

January 9

May 14

September 10

February 13

June 11

October 8 (tbd)

March 12

July 9

November 12

April 9

August 13 (tbd)

December 10

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM
