

**Skagit County Board of County Commissioners
Discussion, Public Comment, Possible Action:
Resolution Remanding Proposed Agritourism Code Changes to
Skagit County Planning Commission
June 24, 2024**

Commissioners: Commissioner Peter Browning, Chair (District 2)
Commissioner Ron Wesen (District 1)
Commissioner Lisa Janicki (District 3)

Planning Staff: Jack Moore, Planning Director
Robby Eckroth, Senior Planner
Tara Satushek, Senior Planner

Prosecutor's Office: Will Honea, Civil Deputy Prosecutor

Public Commenters: Jessica Nguyen
Mark Knutzen
Derrill Fussell
Kim Rubenstein, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland
Glen Johnson
Larry Jensen
Amy Frye, Boldly Grown Farm
Tina Champeaux

Chair Peter Browning: (gavel) Good afternoon. Welcome to the Board of County Commissioners, Monday, June 24th, 2024. It's now 2:30 p.m. and we're here to discuss and have public comment and possible action to consider a resolution remanding proposed agritourism code changes to the Skagit County Planning Commission. Representing this from the beginning is Jack Moore and Will Honea, so I'm going to go to Jack Moore.

Jack Moore: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate everyone being here today. I think you all know pretty – have a background in all the work we've done on ag tourism up to this date. The Planning Department believes there is still more to do to get to the finish line, and to explain and further go over that is Will Honea.

Will Honea: Thank you, Jack. Thank you, Commissioners. Thanks, folks, for coming to listen to what we have to say today. We're here to talk about the ag tourism ordinance, of course, and this has been a long-running saga for many years now that we've been trying to deal with this in a deliberate way. Most recently, a proposed code amendment came before you from the Planning Commission. The genesis of it was the Ag Advisory Board. It was very centrally focused to an extent on event venues and that was definitely a lot of the energy driving this issue.

Last January – I guess it was the end of January? – no, excuse me. In February, the Board adopted a moratorium on any new event of venues, and that moratorium still stands. It will be up for consideration of its continuation later on in July. That is not what's at issue here. That moratorium prohibited essentially new wedding and other venues on agricultural land. And we are

in the process of discussing compliance with the businesses that were existing – there's something less than 20 or so – on ag land.

What this pertains to – the action here today – is the proposed agritourism code changes that came before you. There were a very large number of comments to the Planning Commission expressing concerns. Some of them were just simply opposition to the idea of the ordinance. Others were expressing concerns that various issues hadn't been fully considered and addressed. For example – again some of these came up in the course of discussion with the Planning Department; not all of these are directly related to comments – but, you know, whether the temporary use standards for temporary events are sufficiently detailed. That's one concern, that the proposed new ordinance didn't necessarily sufficiently address that. Another one is – you know, there's a whole list under Skagit County Code 14.16.402 of agritourism uses other than accessory uses.

There were quite a few comments about whether the structure that was proposed that came up by way of a recommended ordinance provided adequate opportunity to participate in the Tulip Festival, the Tulip Festival running more or less for a month. And, you know, another issue that came up is whether there ought to be a discussion in the first place about whether ag tourism in the upper valley ought to be treated differently than effectively on the delta where it's more intensive, commercial agriculture/agribusiness – much more large-scale activity. That's obviously a controversial topic and, you know, the point here is not to make a decision but rather to have some informed discussion about it.

Also there's currently a case pending in front of the Washington Supreme Court. It was argued a few weeks back: *King County v. Friends of Sammamish*. Ultimately that decision could have a significant impact on the legality of the decisions and the code changes that you make. And so it seemed to us to be sensible to send this back and look for a decision on that, as well as any other state level action related to ag tourism. There's various other things going on.

So the idea here is not – you're not making a decision. You're not expressing an opinion on anything. You're asking this to go back to the Planning Commission, with the assistance of the Planning Department, for further fact-finding and deliberation. You'll notice that the resolution also specifically urges that the Ag Advisory Board be involved in this again, that this doesn't just go back to the Planning Department and Commission but the Ad Advisory Board gets to have a bite of this apple as well.

So that's the resolution and, subject to your questions, that's all I have.

Chair Browning: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Honea. Commissioner Wesen, do you have any comments before you start?

Commissioner Ron Wesen: Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Honea, for bringing this forward. You know, as everybody knows that the ag tourism discussion's been going on for quite a while in Skagit County, trying to figure out. And I think the important point is is everybody – the citizens, the property owners, the people trying to run a business – need to understand where the bright light is and what is allowed and what isn't allowed. And I think that's one thing you mentioned before is some of our discussions or our definitions in our code are not very clear and that drives some ambiguity and causes some issues. And so we need to make this clearer and I think this going back to the Planning Commission for more public input and discussion will help make that a little clearer. So we really appreciate the work you did to get this done. Thank you.

Mr. Honea: Thank you.

Chair Browning: Commissioner Janicki?

Commissioner Lisa Janicki: Yeah, just a question. Since part of this body of work is contingent on a lawsuit that we're not participating in but don't have control over. Do we wait for a decision on that before we – there's so much before the Planning Commission with the big Comp – you know, Comprehensive Plan update I'm just trying to figure out how this all fits into the schedule.

Mr. Honea: Yeah, thank you, Commissioner. Normally we wouldn't respond to an individual lawsuit but in this case – people file lawsuits all the time. If we – we would just essentially be hamstrung if we – from doing anything – if we – you can always find a lawsuit where somebody's disagreeing with what you're doing, in other words. But, you know, this case in particular has already – it's up to the Washington Supreme Court. It's *been* argued and there's no further, really, redress beyond the Washington Supreme Court here. It's a state law issue. It – you know, except in some extreme circumstance it wouldn't go to the U.S. Supreme Court. So there would be a lot of finality from this decision, so it is a bit of a unique circumstance.

Commissioner Wesen: Can you give a little thumbnail of what it's about?

Mr. Honea: Yes, it's down in King County, as the case suggests, and it has to do with centrally allowance by code or allowance by the County of venues that are serving alcohol – is really the center of the dispute. But the crux of the issue is the idea of allowing non-farm commercial activities on farmland. I mean, that's the issue central to the case and from which a decision that could be precedential and affect what we do. So that's what the case is. As Commissioner Janicki suggests, we're not directly involved in this case. This is other folks. It's just precedential law comes from appellate courts.

Commissioner Wesen: King County Council changed their code to do a certain thing and then –

Mr. Honea: Right.

Commissioner Wesen: – the other group is suing the Council because they changed the code to allow it. Isn't that basically it?

Mr. Honea: That's it. Yes. They modified their rules down there to make it easier for liquor-serving businesses – event venues essentially – to operate on farmland and that was opposed by a really broad range of environmental and farm advocacy groups and others.

Commissioner Wesen: Thank you.

Chair Browning: And all of you know that state rules supersede ours. We can make a more restrictive rule but not a *less* restrictive rule than the state. And so there're some things that go on in the state – like water availability that is a rule that we can't deal with, we can't change. There's things about fire code. There's things about how many people in a room. Those are things that go on and some similar. Some of those – I'm not sure ___ how many people in a room – but we've got to make sure that we recognize those things that are state rules that we have to adhere to whether we like to or not, and what things are local rules. So we still have – that's the part of the work we have still ahead of us, that as we start looking at what can and cannot be allowed in this county, some of the things we cannot even discuss and some are things that we will be discussing among us to come up with what is the best for both small businesses and businesses

to thrive, but also the rules about, like, fire protection. Very clearly, we can't let the people do less than is safe because ultimately the County – all of us, 135,000 people – share in the risk of one person having a fire that could be really devastating. And so we can't let that one person make a decision that's detrimental to 135,000 people.

That's kind of part of the discussion we have to go through and so we've got a ways to go. And in the end, I hope we'll have an absolutely perfect situation that is better than any other one in the state. We want one that works well for people so we could have businesses. We also can't let ourselves be put in a position where risk is significant.

Mr. Honea: That's right. Thank you, Commissioner. As I mentioned in the, I think some of the last – the prior hearings on this issue, I think what's important – you know, our ag land has been set aside for farming and that is its principal and overriding use. And the question here is how we as a community can allow, you know, additional income related to tourism in a way that's not detrimental to agriculture. That's the center of this discussion and, you know, this has come up, as I mentioned, in various other issues and forms, which is that if, you know, the fate of agricultural land is left to economics because we've reduced the value due to the zoning. If it's left to economics, there's all sorts of other things that – you know, the market will price farmland higher essentially. And so it does come down to the only thing that protects this farmland ultimately is this community, our culture, and our zoning code. And so that's why this is so important to a lot of folks, I think.

Chair Browning: Absolutely. We also need anybody who is online that chooses to speak make sure and please put up your hand now so we can know who you are and we can get a count. So in the next 30 seconds, please put your hand up on the computer code – computer screen – and we will know who you are.

Do you see any?

(silence)

Chair Browning: Okay. We can assume that no one online chooses to speak so right now we only have six people who have chosen to speak. Now is there – did we miss out on anyone? Anyone who did not get a chance to sign up that wants to speak?

Yes?

Unidentified Voice in the Audience: I would like to speak _____.

Chair Browning: What's your name?

Same Unidentified Voice: Jessica.

Chair Browning: Jessica? Great. And your address, Jessica?

Jessica Nguyen: 18095 Burkland.

Chair Browning: Okay, there's one other over here. Yes, please, with your name?

Mark Knutzen: Mark Knutzen.

Chair Browning: Hey, Mark.

Mr. Knutzen: Address (is) 9596 Avon Allen Road, Bow.

Chair Browning: Okay, we now have eight. Anybody else?

Commissioner Janicki: Are we on the three-minute timer?

Chair Browning: With eight, we have a three-minute time limit, yes.

Commissioner Janicki: I just didn't know. We'll be using the –

Chair Browning: Perfect. So as I call your name, you'll come up to this podium, put your feet on the black footprints, and start talking. At two minutes the thing will beep so you know you have one minute so you've got to wrap it up. The most important thing here is we really, really appreciate civility. This is just a good opportunity to share views, but let's be kind. So let's go ahead. Derrill –

Commissioner Wesen: The discussion is going to be on remanding this back to the Planning Commission.

Chair Browning: Yes. Yeah, thank you. Derrill, you are first. Thank you.

Derrill Fussell: Good afternoon. I'm amazed at this group of Commissioners have danced all around talking about King County and never said anything about Skagit County and what's going on in the Supreme Court right now today since June the 5th. It has to do with whether their office has been vacated since January of last year or not, which would mean – now I know that they're going to talk to you about everything that I said doesn't count. But they've already said that this has all been decided in court. If so, then why is it being decided right now in the Washington State Supreme Court whether or not their offices are vacated? Mr. Honea, whether or not he is an assistant prosecuting attorney or not. Because if his boss is ruled his office vacated, then his appointment is null and void. Mr. Moore, his appointment would have been null and void –

Chair Browning: Mr. Fussell, how does this relate to what we're talking about right now?

Mr. Fussell: It has everything to do because if the Supreme Court rules against you, this is an illegal meeting. That's very important for these people to know. Wouldn't you agree, Mr. Browning?

Chair Browning: I'm not quite sure where you're going. What's the Supreme Court have to do with this being a legal meeting and how does that relate to farmland and how does it relate to –

Mr. Fussell: If you are masquerading as a public official –

Chair Browning: I'm not, but that's – now –

Mr. Fussell: We're not here to debate that. If you want to take my time, I didn't come to debate. I came to make a comment. I was under the impression – you won't answer any of my questions so I was here to comment.

Mr. Honea: Well, I can respond to your comments.

Mr. Fussell: I didn't ask for your response. You're taking up my time.

Chair Browning: I asked for him – sorry, I asked for him to respond.

Mr. Fussell: Very good. Look it up.

Chair Browning: Thanks for joining us.

Mr. Fussell: I'll do just like you've done for the last 9 –

(timer beeps)

Mr. Fussell: – to 12 years. You're going to do what you want to do because you're in power. We'll see what the Supreme Court has to say. And you don't think it can go to the Supreme Court? I'm here to tell you different.

Chair Browning: Thank you for joining us.

Mr. Fussell: You bet. _____.

Chair Browning: Next up, Ms. Rubenstein. Kim?

Kim Rubenstein: Hello.

Chair Browning: It's good to see you.

Ms. Rubenstein: My name is Kim ___ Rubenstein. I live at 15188 Channel Drive, La Conner, and I'm currently the president of the Board of Directors for Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland. But also I just noticed outside in the hallway that my great, great uncle Alfred Paulsen, was a Commissioner back in 1911 to 1917, so I was kind of happy to know that he was involved in politics even then.

I'm here today on behalf of Skagitonians to let the County know that we appreciate their continued work on agritourism and in giving the agritourism discussion careful consideration. It's a very important issue to us. We are hopeful that with the careful deliberations we can continue to develop long-term solutions that protect farmland and the agricultural economy. Since 2017, Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland has been convening and collaborating on the topic of agritourism. We've held many open forums in lots of different locations and our discussion groups included farmers, County personnel, and other businesses that were operating in the ag zone. Just this past year we spent a significant amount of time and resources developing a stakeholders working group, and that group discussed and designed possible solutions that would advance agricultural interests while supporting the local tourism operators and event vendors. We would welcome the opportunity to once again to continue those conversations and convening and collaborating as a partner with the County. The preservation of farmland and the ag economy is prime for us and we look forward to working with you all in the future of agriculture and land protection. Thank you.

Chair Browning: Thank you, Kim. Glen Johnson.

Glen Johnson: Sorry for the interruption.

Chair Browning: No problem.

Mr. Johnson: Yeah, I wrote something but then I got to thinking I can just ramble as well as I can write. So I'm here as a farmer and I'm from La Conner and I have lived forever here and have travelled the world extensively to heavily touristed sort of places and agricultural places in New Zealand and Europe and all over. And I understand our super concern. I'm really concerned about the loss of ag land into parking lots of grass myself, and, you know, it's not very good management on your return on investment. Grass, if it isn't being grown for cattle feed you shouldn't be just using as a parking lot. That's my opinion. But in reality, management is what government is about and that's what we need – is what we're doing here. This sort of public opportunity to express our opinions one way or another and come to a *reasoned* and hopefully legal summation to our efforts. But agriculture without people coming or if it's all having to be hauled away, then we've got to pay the truckers and we've got to pay interstate taxes. All right, bring the tourists *here* to eat as much as we can manage effectively! We've been 40 years in the Tulip Festival and – tsh! – there's a half-million people conglomerated into 20,000 acres. Hardly anybody goes up to visit Lisa's neck of the woods during the Tulip Festival –

(timer beeps)

Mr. Johnson: – or Anacortes. And we have opportunity to expand the Tulip Festival from just in April when nothing else is available to a time in the summer when things are coming out of the fields like blueberries and raspberries and strawberries and peas and a hundred different things that we can grow here. Bring a million people at the *right* time and pull the money in! I mean, the little stuff – wedding venues – just manage those tight. But sink a larger – how do we make ag make money? Bring the retail dollar to us rather than get the commodity price from sending it off to the rest of the world.

(timer beeps)

Mr. Johnson: Thank you.

Chair Browning: Thank you, Mr. Johnson. Speaking of tulips, Mr. Jensen. I had a very good time at your farm this year. It was beautiful.

Larry Jensen: Okay. Larry Jensen, 15356 Produce Lane, Mount Vernon. I speak to you on maybe on a couple ways. One is that clearly small and medium-size farmers are having difficulty. And part of that problem is that we lack to have a relationship with the urban public. They make our laws, they tell us how to run our land, when we can spray, what rates we pay for labor, what taxes we pay on our fuel. And if we don't start making a better relationship with the urban public we're going to be doomed, clearly we're going to be doomed. And so that method to do that is through some sort of having them on our land. Teach them about the farm, why it's important to have these wage rates or why it's important that we can grow these crops or we can harvest them in the middle of the night or we can do these other things that may not be really the most popular thing but things that we need to do as farmers.

So if we can't solve that problem, there will be other people who will buy our land and they will be hobby farms or they will be estates or they will be something else and it won't be production agriculture and it won't be a relationship with the urban public. So that's one I would really encourage you to think about. I'm happy that you're remanding this.

And the other part of it is I urge you not to make special deals with people, with one farm or another. You need to look at a policy, whatever that might be, and it needs to be uniform across all segments, and it needs to be in a way that when I look at my neighbor I don't think they got some special deal or when I look at my other neighbor and I think they got shafted. It's not the right way. Otherwise there won't be any sort of harmony in Skagit Valley.

So for those two things I speak, and the last one is for the Farm Bureau – is that I think the Washington State Right-to-Farm Act is a good place to start. Making it more restrictive, I think, is the wrong thing. So you all know, most people know that there's a conflict I have presently with a lawsuit that was started by this Board, and I'm totally in disagreement with that. I think it was started incorrectly. It was based upon some false statement and I would hope that would be reviewed during this process and dropped. I'm through. Thank you.

Chair Browning: Thank you, Larry. Amy Frye?

Amy Frye: Hi there. My name is Amy Frye. I live at 8855 Ershig Road in Bow, and I own and operate Boldly Grown Farm. We're an organic mixed vegetable farm here in Skagit going into our 10th season and we're really happy to be raising our family here in Skagit, farming in Skagit. And I first just want to express an immense amount of gratitude for all the work that's happened so far by the Planning Department, the Planning Commission, you all, and the Ag Advisory Board. It's been an issue that's been a topic of discussion for a long time and I do want to provide my support in remanding it to the Planning Commission. I think – as I'm sure there's some fatigue to this topic, I think there is more work to be done to come to a proposal that doesn't risk throwing the baby out with the bath water, which I think some of the current language *could* be interpreted as such. I think that when the rubber hits the road, it might run into some issues with interpretation and enforceability. And my main interest is in – you know, as a first generation farmer myself – supporting small and first generation farmers and really working to maintain our flexibility to diversify our revenue streams to keep our farms in business. And I think that that middle road kind of got left out of this conversation a little bit, and how do we protect that while achieving our goals of preserving farmland, which is immensely important. So I don't want to see the valley overrun with new event venues popping up here and there, so how do we maintain farmers' right-to-farm and kind of take into account these complexities? So, yeah, I think we have a lot of underlying shared interests in keeping Skagit a great place to live, and I look forward to the continuing discussion. So thanks for your consideration.

Chair Browning: Okay. Thank you, Amy. Tina Champeaux.

Tina Champeaux: Tina Champeaux, 1641 State Route 9, Sedro-Woolley. And I am also very happy you're remanding this back to the Planning Commission in support of the Planning Department. I agree with everything that Mr. Jensen said. I was raised on a farm. My current place was a farm – no longer operating. And I think I'm just as – as I was raised on a dairy farm, it really is very emotional to see that we no longer have the farms we used to have. We don't have a lot of things that we used to have. And I'm kind of a simple person when it comes to math. If a farmer is overregulated, overtaxed, over-fined and they have to make that land work, well, then the only alternative is to have another type of business on it. So that is really the issue. What are you going to do with all of this?

Again, I'm very happy that you're remanding this back. I do think it needs more discussion. And I'm hoping that everybody comes up with the right solutions. Thank you.

Chair Browning: Thank you, Tina. Jessica, and I didn't get your last name so you –

Ms. Nguyen: My name is Jessica Nguyen. My address is 18095 Burkland in Mount Vernon. And I just wanted to give appreciation to the time and effort everyone's put in on this topic. You know, it's been many, many, many years I've watched and I've studied it objectively for a while from the outside looking in. And specifically with it going back to the Planning Commission, two things that I didn't see in the instruction going back to the Planning Commission was the original study done in 2001 that the County had engaged on as an informational study. There was a lot of resource in that original study in terms of code changes, outlets, zonings, things like that, and I feel like a specific aspect was kind of captured in that. That's what was pushed forward. But it was a very comprehensive resource we had on this topic that one could be considered.

A lot of people have talked about the economic viability of farming. In the process and what I've watched and what I've studied, one thing that was missed is we're protecting farmland but there wasn't specifics. How much conversion have we actually had from venues or other activity, like in actual land? Twenty acres? Thirty acres? Fifty? We have 80,000 farm acres in the county. So what does that actually look like? How tangible is it? How impactful is it to the local community? That's not something that was addressed. You know, is there a balance? Are we actually taking away from anything or is that a resource that's supporting our farming?

So that's something that I would ask for greater consideration around, just as far as looking at that aspect of it – is protecting your actual farmer and how are you making these operations viable? We have so many things as on ag land that are going to –

(timer beeps)

Ms. Nguyen: – be challenges here in the future. So it's just extra consideration around that. Thank you.

Chair Browning: Great. Thank you, Jessica. Mr. Knutzen?

Mr. Honea: Commissioners, to respond to that, the Planning Commission is able to consider essentially ____ the authority to consider information and can certainly consider that, but the thought was not to direct any substantive outcome.

Mr. Knutzen: My name is Mark Knutzen. I live at 9596 Avon Allen Road in Bow. I'm here in support of this resolution to remand the proposed agritourism code amendments back to the Planning Commission. There have been a tremendous number of comments that have been submitted to the County since the proposed code amendment was first presented to the Planning Commission that need to be properly addressed by the Planning Commission, in my opinion. The proposed code amendment only received five votes in favor out of the nine-Commissioner potential. In my time on the Planning Commission I was reminded several times that, quote, "We strive for consensus." Unquote. Five votes for is a bare majority. It's not a consensus. This needs to be addressed again. Thank you.

Chair Browning: Thank you, Mark. All right, this is the last chance for anybody online. Please raise your hand. Okay, I would entertain a motion to close the hearing.

Commissioner Wesen: Would anybody else here like to comment?

(silence)

Commissioner Wesen: I move to close the hearing.

(several inaudible comments)

Chair Browning: Any comments, Commissioner Wesen?

Commissioner Wesen: Yeah, thank you very much. I appreciate everybody coming in and ___. I think *everybody* said we need more work on this to come up with something that's usable for the future, and I think that's what all three of us agree with and that's why we want to remand it back to the Planning Commission. And looking for more public input so we have a better product coming out. There definitely is areas where I think we can improve on the program or what is brought forward, and there are several different ideas in here. I don't know if everybody's had a chance to read them, but there's:

Pursuit: Proposed agriculture code are hereby remanded to the Planning Commission for additional work, study, and review, and refinement, including additional public comment and hearing as the following: Whether additional detail is required to describe and describe to regulate agritourism uses other than those considered accessory use, pursuant to Skagit County Code 14.16.400; whether the proposed ag tourism code amendment afford adequate and equitable opportunity for participants in the annual Skagit Valley Tulip Festival; whether Ag-NRL land east of the pipeline crossing should be considered or regulated differently than the dike and drain portions of Skagit below the pipeline crossing, below the portion of Skagit River designated as Wild and Scenic River; and whether the temporary use standards are sufficient in detail; and whether to what extent the proposed agriculture-tourism code and existing codes are consistent with decisions ultimately rendered on this matter from the King County and Friends' lawsuit.

You know, this has gone on for quite a while here in Skagit County and I had a chance a few years ago to talk to Derek Sandison, who is the Director of Agriculture in the State of Washington here. And one of the things I asked him – you know, what are some of the things he's seen across the state? And one of the things that he brought up is some areas they do different in part of the area. It could be this is – along this road or along this section of the county is zoned different than this section is. There are all kinds of different things you can do so you have designated areas or, like we talk about here, maybe potential different upriver as compared to downriver. Just trying to look at all these different ideas, and I just think we need more discussion on all those different options before we come back and change the code. So I really do appreciate the input.

And I want people to think about that. What is it they wanted to see? And I think the other thing is people need to remember we have the 70-, 80,000-dollar acres – 1000 acres of ag land here in Skagit County because generations ago they made the large zoning in Skagit County, which is very unique for Skagit County. You look at Whatcom County and Snohomish County: They didn't do that. And so we have some large parcels of ag land that other parts of the state and the northwest here – they had smaller lots and so they've got more houses scattered in. And so we have to make sure we do what we can to protect that area. And because of our zoning, we have basically forced – reduced the value of that ag ground so you can't build a Walmart out there. It has to be an ag-dependent use. So we need to appreciate those decisions that were made years ago to help going forward in the next generation. So those are some things I think all of us have to look at when we come up with a final plan on this ag zoning and ag tourism. Thank you.

Chair Browning: Commissioner Janicki?

Commissioner Janicki: Yeah, I just want to thank all of you who took the time to put your thoughts together for today. I really do appreciate the support. And I want to thank in advance our Planning Commission for taking this back and being really thoughtful about the comments and

considerations that have been made. You know, Mark, your comment that this was a very split vote is very mindful of the fact that maybe we're not yet at that real point of compromise that we need to be. I loved the comment that Mr. Johnson made about bring the tourists here to eat. I think that should be, like, the t-shirt. And then it's, like, P.S. And send them home. We don't want them building houses on the corner of our beautiful ag land or buying a house and shutting down the apple farm because they think – you know, because they can.

So I think we, collectively – as those who live in Skagit County want that. We want a viable and vibrant agricultural community. I come from the timber industries. It's a struggle. Those same folks that, you know, come up to visit, they don't want to see another tree harvested in the county. And that affects our upriver school district – well, not just upriver. It affects our school districts and all our junior taxing districts, even our EMS service gets money from harvest. And if we're not educating those who are making these laws and supporting those laws being made in Olympia that impact all of us, we're in bad shape.

So we need to really on a local basis take control of the rules here that make sense, that are responsive to keeping agriculture in business but keeping this open space, you know, as open as possible. And two summers ago I had the opportunity to visit – went to a wedding in Italy. And agritourism is a big thing in Italy and as you fly over parts of Europe you see how they've kept the villages, the housing, in very tight quarters so that those hillsides and flatlands are all just still beautiful agriculture. You can see it cultivated from the air space and, you know, we need to be able to keep that look. And so even though sometimes the conflict comes from, you know, a generational family who want – you know, I've been farming this piece my whole – and I want my kids and then my grandkids to daisy-chain houses along the property. And you still eat up that relatively small land base that we have here.

So there is a great deal of work and a great deal of passion around the work that has to be done, so I love the fact that the comments today were really distilled down to actionable pieces and vision-oriented goals of what we want in the end. So the work will continue and the opportunity to comment will continue. And Mr. Honea, thank you for summarizing and bringing a process forward that makes sense.

Mr. Honea: Thank you.

Chair Browning: Yeah, thank you. I was the Commissioner that was assigned to the Ag Advisory Board and it was good because I grew up on a farm and it mattered to me. And I've listened to them and some of their concerns and I did grow up in Whatcom County where they did allow Whatcom to be broken up into much smaller pieces and you get five-acre farms there and young people are going up there and starting little wineries on their five-acre farm but most of the grapes are coming from somewhere else and it really doesn't reflect what's growing in Whatcom County as much. And that's not exactly what we intend to do. And Larry, you're right. We need to take advantage of – for money from the city. People need to come up here and really help us augment our farmland, but at the same time our farmland is absolutely important and it has to be able to produce at full capacity. And so we've got to find that balance. We've have to find a way to make the farmers be absolutely productive but at the same time recognize your very appropriate interest in getting money from people who come here and enjoy our environment. So we've got work ahead of us, but thank you all for joining us. I really appreciate it. It's been a very good – and I appreciated the tone set and the thoughts expressed. So thank you very much.

And with that – and again, thank you, Will. Thank you, Jack. You guys got some work ahead of you! And we will be working with you so thank you very much.

Commissioner Wesen: I would now move to approve the resolution remanding the proposed agritourism code changes to the Skagit County Planning Commission.

Commissioner Janicki: Second.

Chair Browning: It has been moved and seconded. All in favor, say "aye."

All Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Browning: None opposed. It passes. Thank you (gavel). Thank you, Commissioner Wesen. All right. We are off. Thank you very much. We are now adjourned...thank you (gavel).