

**King County Agriculture Commission
Minutes from September 8, 2005
Maple Valley Fire District
Maple Valley WA**

Commissioners Present: George Irwin, Bob Tidball, Ben Kodama, Grant Davidson

Commissioners Absent: Ewing Stringfellow, Nancy Hutto, Judy Duff, Dick Gradwohl, Gaylia Bullock, Roger Calhoun, Michelle Blakely

Staff: Steve Evans, Claire Dyckman, King County (KC) Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) Agriculture Programs.

Guest Agency Staff: Josh Monahan, King Conservation District (KCD); Jeffrey McMorris, Aide to KC Council member Kathy Lambert; Todd Murray, Washington State University Extension (WSU) KC.

Guests: Don Stuart, American Farmland Trust; Wade Bennett, producer.

George Irwin called the meeting to order.

No Approval of Minutes: There was not a quorum. Approval of August meeting minutes will be postponed until the October meeting.

Commission Roundabout:

George Irwin reported on the fairs at Monroe and Puyallup.

Commission Business:

Chair Report: George will contact all Commissioners to attend the next meeting in order to vote on the next Chair and Vice Chair.

Staff Report: Steve reported on four items:

- Sammamish APD rezone: Maxine Keesling sent clarifications on the Sammamish APD rezone of "Rural" Lands discussion at the last meeting. Her comments will be attached to the minutes of this meeting. The Executive will propose to Council that all the properties that are 2.5 acres will be kept in the Agriculture Production District and zoned as A, except two: Gold Creek and the large church. They will be removed from the APD and become part of the Rural zone.

Bob Tidball wanted a clarification on whether this proposal is different than the one presented for the Declaration of Non-Significance. Steve suggested Bob call Paul Reitenbach for any clarifications.

- KCD Presentation: Steve asked Josh if the KCD could make a presentation on the services of the District at the November or December meeting.

- Harvest Celebration: This will occur on Saturday, October 1st.

- Agricultural Drainage Assistance Program (ADAP) Update: All drainage projects discussed with the Commission last month are now underway: the Smith Brothers ditch complex and Litowitz in the lower Green; the Watercress Creek channel up on the Enumclaw Plateau.

The Commissioners were reminded of the upcoming conference on Global Climate Change on October 27th, gave them the agenda and details on how to register. Claire reported that she will become the primary staff to the Commission, though Steve will conduct the October meeting.

Laurie's other work on livestock and livestock enforcement will be picked up by Rick Reinlasoder until there is a new person in Laurie's position. (Laurie cannot be replaced!)

Agency Reports:

King Conservation District (KCD) Josh reported on four items:

- AFO/CAFO: Josh asked the Commissioners to notify owners of livestock operations that dairies have completed the Animal Feeding Operations/Confined Animal Feeding Operations and the State has begun the next phase of the program. A permit is needed for those operations with animals held for more than 45 days in a lot that doesn't have vegetation. The state will identify the farms and assess the cost-share needed. Informational handouts are at the KCD office. Contact WSU Extension if you know of a group that wants a presentation on the program.
- KCD Livestock Classes: The next series have begins at the KCD office in Renton on October 28th.
- Biodiesel on the Farm: A workshop will be held at Saturday November 5, 2005, 9am – Noon Oxbow Farm – 10819 Carnation – Duvall Road NE, Carnation
- The Vim Wright Stewardship Awards Banquet: Josh explained the Farming and the Environment program and that s \$2,500 dollar award will be presented to a farm in the state that has excelled at stewardship.

Contact Josh for more information on the banquet to be held on Saturday October 2, at Central Washington University.

Josh was congratulated on being a new father: daughter Anna Monaghan.

Washington State University (WSU) Extension: Todd invited the Commissioners to meet with urban school students who have field trips to Fall City Farm on Sept 27 and Full Circle Farm on Sept. 29 as part of the Food Sense/CHANGE program. (Cultivating Health and Nutrition Through Gardening Education).

Public Comment:

Wade Bennet, an orchardist and manufacturer, asked the Commission to help in keeping his operations open. Wade obtained a license for making hard ciders from his orchard produce. Code Enforcement was called by a new neighbor. Wade was told he needs a conditional use permit that would cost at least \$15,000. Wade was told that he does not fit the definition of a home occupation or a home industry because those definitions allow up to 4 employees and he employs 35 people and those employees are seasonal employees who do not harden the cider. He requested that the Commission recommend that seasonal employees be removed from the criteria for the definition. A home industry may home up to 4 employees.

George pointed out that most dairies have more than 4 workers. Bob noted the Commission had added flexibility for value-added products in the last update to the Comp Plan, yet obviously hadn't fixed this issue: he can't hire pickers, Wade can't make cider. Bob wanted to know if Burr Moseby had to get a conditional use permit to establish his expanded operations. George confirmed that Burr had to pay a huge amount in permits. Claire pointed out that the CUP was considered valuable because it was a mechanism for flexibility, for activities on ag lands the problem is the cost. The Commission wanted to know why it costs \$15,000.

The Commission decided to write a letter to Ron Sims for signature at the next meeting. The letter would request the Executive:

- to solve this issue in Wade's favor
- to reduce the cost of Conditional Use Permits

- explore changing the criteria regarding seasonal workers
- establish this issue as a priority for the Rural Economic agenda
- deploy a Right to Farm ordinance to help in this context.

George will work with Claire to write this letter.

Presentation on Pioneers in Conservation Grants:

Don Stuart of American Farmland Trust asked the Commission to help get the word out on the new "Pioneers in Conservation" grant program. The program can be used to pay landowners, non-profits, tribes, for projects that improve habitat and water quality on farmland. Seventeen applied for the first round that ended in August. The next deadline for applications is Friday, November 4th. American Farmland Trust and Autumn Salander have been hired to run this program. Claire noted that a meeting had been held in the Snoqualmie to get the word out, to communicate habitat priorities for the Snoqualmie, and to indicate how applicants might obtain, cost share, letters of support, or other match for their grant from the County or the King Conservation District. George brought Don's attention to the economic analysis of agriculture in the WRIA 9 plan. Bob reiterated the Commission's concerns about the need for maintenance when conducting riparian enhancement and the need to insure the project doesn't increase maintenance work for the farmer.

Presentation on Grass Fed Beef:

Alison Lieber, Sales and Marketing Consultant for Cascade Range Grass Fed Beef, described their business and provided printed information. They sell about 3 head a week, with an average slaughter weight of 1200 lb. They are looking at value-added products since most people want to buy only the premier cuts. Alison and George discussed several issues and answered questions regarding antibiotics, growth hormones, distributors, and grades of beef. The key needs for the industry include:

- more than one cut and wrap facility in King County
- a back up slaughter facility to Lampert in Duvall, which is a small operation.
- extending the push for non-graded poultry to include beef.

George encouraged Alison to distribute the information at the fairs.

Old Business

Bob wanted to know what the follow up was to the Smith Dairy issue from last meeting. Steve noted a letter had been sent and was in the packet.

New Business

Bob reported that he had held discussions with both Future Farmers of America and the Grange, who would each like to make a presentation to the Commission.

Meeting adjourned.