

KING COUNTY AGRICULTURE COMMISSION

MEETING NOTICE

THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2016

4:00 – 7:00 P.M. AT THE ISSAQUAH FISH HATCHERY

125 WEST SUNSET WAY, ISSAQUAH

PROPOSED MEETING AGENDA

(AGENDA ITEM TIMES ARE TENTATIVE)

4:00	Call to Order <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Approval of Agenda • Approval of Minutes (February) p. 2-7 • Update on commission voting privileges/Financial Disclosure Forms- Patrice -Mtg Calendar p. 8 	George Irwin, Chair
4:15	Public Comment	George Irwin, Chair
4:20	Commission Strategic Planning Continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's the Role of the Commission • Schedule top ranked activities for agendas p. 9 • Activate Selection Committee p.13 	John Taylor Patrice Barrentine
4:50	Current Health Inspection Challenges for Direct Marketers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Department Fees at Farmers Markets • Changing Juice Regulations at State and Local Level 	Steve Evans Patrice Barrentine
5:20	Farmland Leasing Program p. 9-10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate Farmland Committee p. 16 	Richard Martin, AFI Supervisor
5:25	Local Organization Update (LOU): American Farmland Trust's Newaukum Creek Project and Outreach	Leif Fixen, Conservation Programs Manager, AFT
5:40	Break	
5:50	LOU: King Conservation District Regional Food Grant Launch	Mary Embleton, Regional Food Grant Program Manager, KCD
6:05	LOU: Northwest Ag Business Center's work in King County	Luke Woodward, Project Manager, NABC
6:20	April 14th Commissioner Reception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30p.m., confirmed with many former commissioners, invites to Councilmembers, former staff liaisons, commissioners May 12th Meeting on Vashon Island <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpool from West Seattle to Ferry, Farm Tour, V.I. Land Trust, Vashon Island Growers Association 	Patrice Barrentine
6:40	Updates (approx. 5 min each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm Fish Flood Ag Caucus • King Conservation District • Local Food Initiative • Sammamish Valley Winery Study 	Commissioners KCD Staff Mike Lufkin John Taylor
7:00	Adjourn	George Irwin, Chair

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 14

2016 Meeting Topics Calendar

Complete	Topic	Who	When	Outcomes	
				Letter advising County Executive	Notes
✓	What's Going on with Ag in Other Counties?	Snohomish	Jan		
		Skagit			
		Pierce	May-Fall		
✓	Appoint a commissioner and an Alternate for KCD Advisory Board		Jan		
✓	New Farm King County Website	Mike Lufkin, Patrice Barrentine	Feb		
	Commissioner Service Recognition and Reception		Apr		
	Tour – Vashon; Purpose of Commission, FPP, ADAP, Buffers, Salmon-Recovery, Drip Irrigation, Drought, WID, Reclaimed Water, Keller Ditch, Tall Chief, Ag Regulatory Changes		May		
	Farm Fish Flood Letter for Consideration/Policy		Apr		
	Joint Meeting with Rural Forestry Commission		2016		
	Commission Policies and Procedures: Review and Modify				



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**King County Agriculture Commission
DRAFT Minutes from
Thursday, February 11, 2016
Watershed Science Center, Issaquah**

Commissioners	P	A	Commissioners	P	A
George Irwin, Chair	X		Bob Vos	X	
LeAnn Krainick, Vice Chair	X		Siri Erickson-Brown	X	
Eldon Murray	X		Larry Pickering	X	
Roger Calhoon		X	Shelby Jors	X	
Leigh Newman-Bell	X		Amy Holmes		X
Meredith Molli	X		Anne Becker	X	

P=Present; A=Absent

County Staff Present	
Patrice Barrentine, DNRP	Richard Martin, DNRP
Kathy Creahan, DNRP	Megan Moore, DNRP
Steve Evans, DNRP	Linda Vane, DNRP
John Taylor, DNRP	Mike Lufkin, DNRP
Clint Loper, DNRP	Jeffrey McMorris, KCC
Guests Present	
Dan Calvert, Puget Sound Partnership	

Meeting Action Summary

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2016 & Revised December 2015 Minutes Approved • Farm King County Website Content Reviewed • Kathy Creahan Retirement and Service Recognition • Lower Snoqualmie Flooding & Needs Assessment Report • H & H Study of Snoqualmie Update • Next Meeting: March 10, 2016 at 4:00 pm
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Meeting Called to Order by George Irwin at 4:14 pm

Approval of Meeting Minutes

LeAnn Krainick made a motion to approve the December 10, 2015 minutes, which had needed a small revision. Meredith Molli seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Leigh Newman-Bell made a motion to approve the January 14, 2016 minutes. Shelby Jors seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved unanimously.

New Commissioners Update – Patrice Barrentine

Patrice Barrentine updated on the status of several Commissioner confirmations with the King County Council (KCC). LeAnn Krainick, Roger Calhoon, Anne Becker, Siri Erickson-Brown, Meredith Molli, and Shelby Jors are

fully confirmed; but Bruce Elliott's confirmation remains pending, and Ms. Erickson-Brown must be reappointed after February 28, 2016. She reminded Commissioners that financial disclosure forms are due March 15, 2016.

Ms. Erickson-Brown asked why the delay in confirmations. John Taylor answered it was nothing controversial, that part of it was due to the multiple tiers of government approval needed, and also due to the schedule and large backlog of work at the KCC. Ms. Erickson-Brown expressed a concern that such delays and the degree of paperwork involved with confirmations could deter prospective Commissioners, and asked if there was a way to simplify the process. Ms. Barrentine replied that this amount of time and paperwork was basically standard for government processes.

Public Comment

Linda Vane provided a brief overview of the Rural Forest Commission, which she described as the Agriculture Commission's counterpart in forestry. She expressed hope there could be a joint meeting of both Commissions in the future.

Farm King County Website Launch & Review – Mike Lufkin, Patrice Barrentine

Mike Lufkin overviewed the beta version of the FarmKingCounty.org website, scheduled to launch in March. The site is intended to be a "one-stop" technical resource for the local agricultural community. He said the main focuses at this stage of development were gathering the most pertinent existing online information that addresses the broad spectrum of agricultural issues, and doing so in a way relevant to the King County/Puget Sound region. The development group at King County is assisted by a technical advisory team of several local agricultural partners and contributors, including King Conservation District (KCD), Washington State University (WSU) Extension, and Seattle Tilth, among others.

Mr. Lufkin said the site has been in development since an initial brainstorming and feedback-gathering meeting of stakeholders in the agriculture community in July 2015, which produced the site's general outline. This was followed by a couple of months researching possible content, then drafting more specific structure and content, and gathering/incorporating further feedback.

He explained the structure would consist of a recognizable logo/brand and four major content areas: business of farming, access to farmland, food (farm) production, and marketing/food safety. There will be features such as a contact tab for assistance, as well as news, maps and other data sources, a search function, and resources for non-English-speakers.

Bob Vos asked if there was a way to track site traffic data, expressing a desire for the Commission to be updated on the statistics. Mr. Lufkin said this will be included and a technology team has been brought in to explore it.

LeAnn Krainick inquired on the process to select which financial lenders will be listed on the site. Mr. Lufkin replied this aspect was pending further feedback, and remains a tricky issue as the County cannot "endorse" anyone. Patrice Barrentine added there has been an effort to differentiate between free and paid information.

Meredith Molli asked if all information linked on the site would be contained on the site itself, or if links will open external websites. Mr. Lufkin answered that links to external websites should open a new browser window. Ms. Barrentine said information on this site is not being copied from external websites.

Siri Erickson-Brown raised a concern on whether the site will contain relevant information for new or potential farmers who may not be informed enough to know the questions to ask about what may be allowed in farming. Mr. Lufkin replied this was only the first phase: gathering existing content, then utilizing feedback to determine course of action in the next phase. He said in future phases there was a goal to have different paths available on the site to serve different levels of need. Ms. Barrentine added part of the technical advisory team's plan was to develop new content based on incoming feedback.

Content suggestions were offered from Commissioners and County staff: a glossary of common farming definitions and acronyms, and incorporating video interviews with farmers new to the industry. Ms. Barrentine said Phase 2 of the site would involve incorporating videos, including resource videos for English and Spanish speakers. Mr. Lufkin added that one section, farm production, is still being developed by WSU Extension for Phase 2. He reviewed proposed promotion methods for the site, including social and local media among others.

He explained Phase 1 would involve six months of reviewing and incorporating feedback to implement Phase 2, with that projected date in the fourth quarter of 2016. Ms. Erickson-Brown asked how site visitors will submit feedback. Mr. Lufkin replied that was being developed. One suggestion was a contact form that would email a team of members from the contributing partner entities who would rotate responsibility for answering those emails. Another duty that would likely rotate would be regular site updates. Ms. Erickson-Brown proposed the Commission receive a quarterly report on submitted feedback, which Mr. Lufkin said he believed was possible.

Several other content suggestions were raised by Commissioners, such as a component for those transitioning from the farming industry, and a page about the Commission. Mr. Lufkin said all feedback was welcome.

Announcement – John Taylor

John Taylor announced that Kathy Creahan will retire from DNRP at the end of February. Mr. Taylor praised her extensive work and legacy with agriculture and the Commission, and Ms. Creahan thanked all Commissioners.

BREAK

Lower Snoqualmie Flooding & Needs Assessment – Clint Loper

Clint Loper gave a presentation on flooding history in the Snoqualmie Valley (SV) and steps that have been taken to mitigate the impacts. The Snoqualmie, he said, has a 700 square mile watershed, no major dams, few levees, and has had several significant floods in recent years.

Since 2006, he continued, there have been several courses of action by King County to attempt reduction of flood impacts: constructing farm pads, elevating barns and farm houses, and constructing elevated platforms. He said farm pads, which are berms of earth raised above flood level, have received a lot of positive feedback; however, there is concern about these creating additional flood impacts for downstream properties.

He said several government cost-sharing options were available to help farmers afford to elevate homes. Several questions were raised by Commissioners, including the possibility of "grandfathering" in homes whose owners can't afford to upgrade their older septic systems, or if in some cases it might be cheaper to build a new barn than elevate an existing one. Mr. Loper said the logistics of these ideas were still being considered.

He went on to describe the newest of the County's flood mitigation pilot projects, the elevated platform, the first of which was built in 2012. There would be significant cost-share benefits, and these platforms could also be used where farm pads aren't practical. He added they do not take up space otherwise used for flood storage.

Siri Erickson-Brown asked what the flood district is doing about flood impacts from tree buffers planted on the river. She expressed concern that while construction of farm pads is strictly regulated due to the resulting flood displacement, tree plantings, which also cause displacement, are not similarly regulated. John Taylor replied this had been raised at the last Farm Fish Flood (FFF) meeting, and recommended this was where those in agriculture need to talk with the FFF buffer task force. Larry Pickering suggested collaborating with other Puget Sound counties on this, and stated he believed this could only be resolved at a state regulatory level, not county.

Mr. Loper went on to explain that a large number of SV farms need help with flood mitigation, as many have no high ground, meaning they are at a land elevation below the "100-year" flood level. He noted there is a nearly 90% overlap between the SV's agriculture production district (APD) and floodplain. He further explained, in reply to George Irwin's sidebar query about why the lack of dams on the Snoqualmie, that there are really no identified potential dam sites without significant geotechnical issues. Mr. Taylor said he expected that a recommended action from the County will be to dramatically expedite home elevations and farm pad constructions, then later address concerns about "zero-rise" fallout on downstream flood displacement.

H & H Study of the Snoqualmie Update – Clint Loper

Clint Loper said there is concern among SV residents that floods are becoming more frequent and "behaving" differently than the past. There have been a series of studies and investigations into this matter. One area being looked into is the scale of impact past modifications to river facilities above Snoqualmie Falls may be having on floods downstream. A consultant was hired to conduct an independent evaluation of this, which will also be reviewed by another consultant. Mr. Loper said the full results of these are expected soon, and scheduled to be presented at the March 15th FFF meeting, to be followed by a public meeting in a few weeks.

Mr. Loper continued that another study underway is into stream gauging, to determine if this is still effective as a flood warning system. One way to gather information on this will be to visit SV farms and survey past high-water marks on buildings as well as other flood data collected by residents. Another possibility being discussed is to build a longer-term citizen-based monitoring system/network for the SV, and options are being explored to better disseminate flood updates to affected public.

Several follow-up questions were asked about stream gauging. Larry Pickering asked if certain projects along the river are taken into account when gauging river levels. Mr. Loper answered that the USGS, who operates the gauges on the Snoqualmie, until recently had not taken measurements at the Carnation gauge for over a decade and therefore the accuracy of some of their rating curve data is unfortunately in doubt. Siri Erickson-Brown then asked if there is any correlation between levels measured on stream gauges and on-land water levels, stating that the two seldom match. Mr. Loper said that is something that needs to be investigated.

He concluded by adding that, when projects are done that create flood storage (such as levee removals), those are indeed factored into the County's analysis of allowances to potentially build new farm pads.

Strategic Planning (Continued) – Patrice Barrentine

This was tabled for future discussion. Meredith Molli suggested it be placed at top of the agenda next meeting.

Other Updates – Commissioners, County Staff

George Irwin asked Meredith Molli for an update on FFF. Ms. Molli said the most recent meeting had significant discussion between fish and farm caucuses, on issues such as flood storage and possibly putting a “cap” on the number of acres taken from farming for other purposes. She said she felt the meeting had been very positive and productive.

John Taylor added that there had been consternation last year about quantity and quality of KC FFF outreach to the community. KCD was requested to assist on this issue, he said, and KCD staff convened a series of meetings of agricultural stakeholders in the area and received feedback that highlighted many of the same concerns as FFF. Mr. Taylor said he agreed this last FFF meeting had been positive, but that land-capping remains a significant issue for tribes.

Mr. Taylor continued that he has a clear plan of where the FFF situation will be by May 2016, which includes a detailed “scopes of work” agreement to help County staff determine work funding needs/requests for next year’s County budget. He expressed a goal of more County agricultural staff directly engaging with and assisting property owners instead of facilitating FFF. He added that he believed the lessons from the FFF buffer task force would be significant and broadly applicable to other areas and APDs, that additional FFFs would not be needed.

Mr. Irwin reported that KCD will offer Stream Steward Training on February 27, coordinated by Liz Clark. LeAnn Krainick added that KCD’s Native Plant Sale, including a farmers’ market, will be held March 5.

Patrice Barrentine announced that the County will be scheduling site visits to the Commissioners, and that invites from Mr. Taylor’s office are forthcoming. She advised that the Commissioners’ service reception will be held at the March meeting, March 10th at 3:30 pm. She added that the Commission’s April meeting, along with a short tour, would be held on Vashon Island and all attendees should plan to increase their budgeted travel time.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:58 pm

Next Meeting

Thursday, March 10, 2016 at 4:00 pm

Issaquah Fish Hatchery, Watershed Science Center, Issaquah

Activate Selection Committee for New Commissioners

Commissioner	Position	Term Ends	Reappointment or New Candidate's Term
Shelby Jors	4	2/28/2016	2/28/2016 -2/28/2019
(was Nancy Hutto)	5	2/28/2016	2/28/2014 – 2/28/2017
Bruce Elliott	7	2/28/2016	2/28/2016 -2/28/2019
(was Bob Tidball)	10	9/17/2016	2/28/2014 - 2/28/2017
Siri Erickson-Brown	12	2/28/2016	2/28/2016 - 2/28/2019

2016 Schedule Ag Commission Meetings (occur on the second Thursday of the month):

- January 14
- February 11
- March 10
- April 14
- May 12
- **Jun-Aug off – committees may need to meet during this time**
- September 8
- October 13
- November 10
- December 8

Strategic Planning Brainstorm Topics

Choosing when to cover the issue in 2016 April-May; September-December (6 mtgs remaining in 2016)

Month	<u>Farming Support</u>	Rank Votes	
Every	Standing Agenda Item - Ag Orgs Update Quick Reports		
	Rules and Regulations related to farming	2a	6
	<u>Water (More or Less)</u>		
	Flood control improvements (along with FFF)	3	5
	Drainage, water issues	1a	9
	<u>Consumers</u>		
	Involve general public in supporting farming – political, market purchases, education to consumers, gov, students, voters	2b	6
	<u>Farmland Preservation</u>		
	Weigh in on County land purchases, RFP processes, etc. for future purchases and MOUs with Seattle Tilth and Ku Oh	1b	9
	<u>County and City Councils</u>		
	Getting <u>other</u> County <u>Council</u> members involved with Ag Commission on consistent basis, direct contact and discussion with KCC/County Executive		

ADDITIONS after Initial Ranking

- Amend “Involve general public...” topic to include more emphasis on marketing to and educating a broader population on agriculture
- Strengthen relationships with Seattle Tilth, etc. to bolster representation of the county agricultural community
- Combine “MOUs with Seattle Tilth...” with “Weigh in on County land purchases, RFP...”
- Standing agenda item for more “quick reports” from a few key local agricultural organizations, on a rotating periodic basis
- Emphasis on more consistent/direct contact and discussion with the KCC/County Executive

Status and Options for King County Farmland Leases

Background

The Agricultural Program within the Water and Land Resources Division currently leases eight properties and a total of 170.44 acres of King County-owned farmland. The lease portfolio is diverse in terms of acquisition history, tenants, land cover and production potential. Although many of these properties are extremely important to individual farmers and KC-owned farmland contributes to the local agricultural economy in many ways, the leasing program has developed more out of opportunity than through deliberate, strategic planning. It is important to ensure that any KC-owned farmland and any KC resources directed toward management of those properties are adding value to the larger agricultural community. We are in the process of evaluating a new approach for the management of these lands, which includes development of criteria for assessing whether existing parcels should transition out of KC ownership and whether new parcels should be considered for incorporation into the leasing program. Input and direction from the Agriculture Commission and stakeholders will be solicited as criteria are being developed. Additionally, there are a number of administrative and management issues that need to be reevaluated to ensure that our leasing program is run efficiently and effectively.

KC-owned farmland can play an important role in the larger agricultural economy, but the County should not use its limited resources to compete with private sector farms. Rather, there should be a narrow set of goals for KC farmland ownership that ensure that lands owned and leased by the County add significant value and fill a role not met by the private sector. Thus, **we propose the following criteria for KC farmland ownership.**

1. Provide new and/or beginning farmers and/or graduates of incubator programs term-limited access to affordable farm land (one of top 20 priority action items in LFI) and/or

There are two strong and growing incubator farm programs in King County, which are critical to meeting the LFI goal of 25 new farmers a year. County-owned farmland can be leased to the non-profit organizations that operate the incubator programs to provide them with expansion opportunities and the ability to enlarge their class sizes. Additionally, graduates of incubator programs or new farmers often need access to low cost farmland early in their careers so they have the opportunity to build capital prior to launching their own farms. County-owned farmland could be offered to those graduates and new farmers for a fixed-term (e.g., 5), which would ensure regular beginning farmer turn-over and provide some certainty about affordable farmland availability to the next class of farmers.

2. Provide limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers access to affordable farm land

King County values include a strong commitment to equity and social justice. There is a long-history of supporting immigrant farmers, which has included providing farmland for a large number of Hmong families that have farmed the same County-owned parcels for decades. County support for those families as well as other socially and economically disadvantaged farmers would directly support the County's equity and social justice objectives. Long-term, the goal should be to assist farmers with establishing their own farms (e.g., business planning assistance, access to capital and larger blocks of affordable farmland; strategies to improve water access and management). However, many of those farmers may remain lessees on County-owned land for extended periods due to lack of financial ability to acquire property.

3. Maintain farming and restoration potential of other DNRP lands awaiting initiation of long-term land use strategies (e.g., river/buffer restoration, parks).

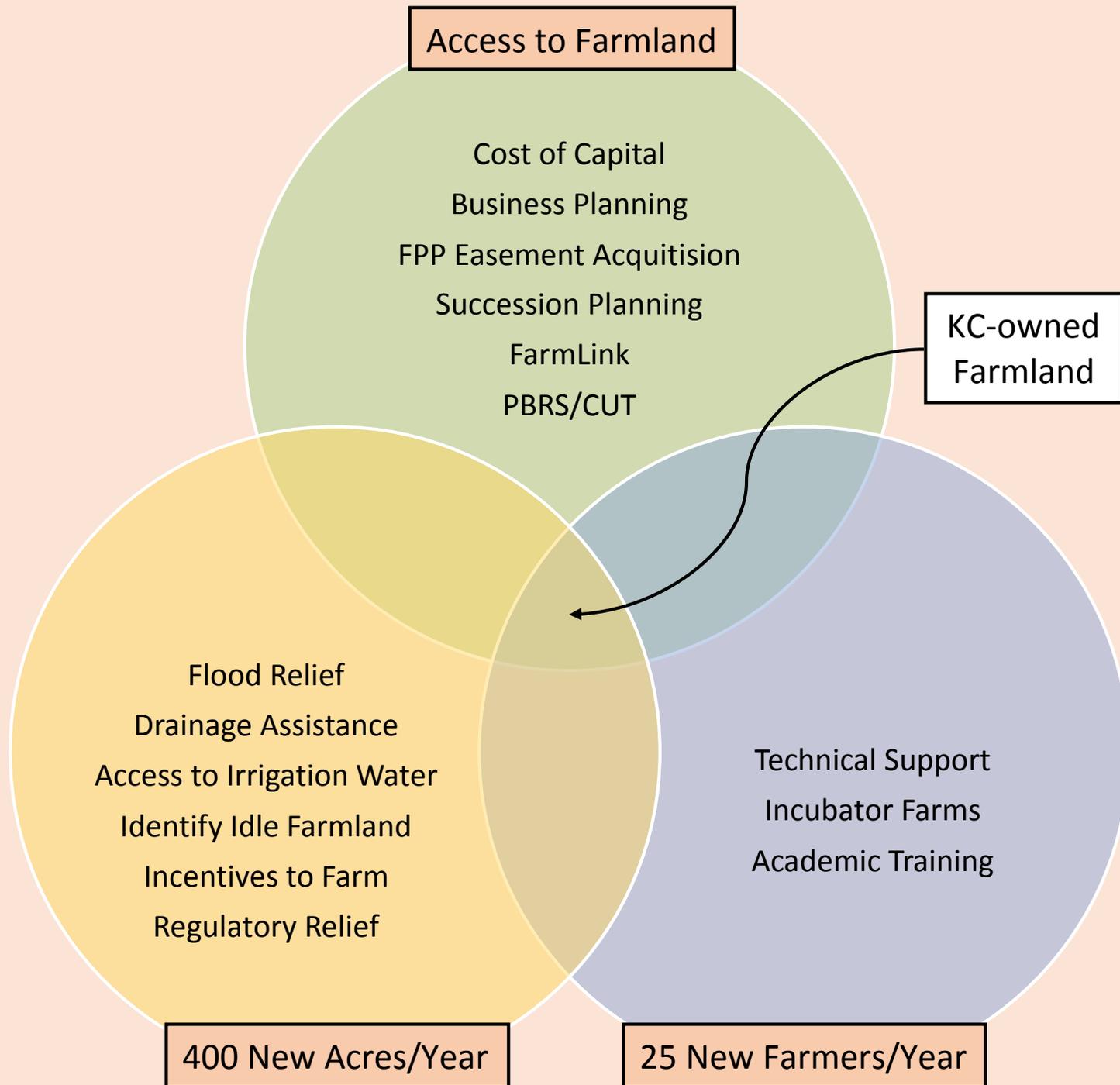
Four of the farm parcels were acquired for restoration or recreation/trail purposes and continue to be farmed until decisions are made on final use of the properties. It is important that agricultural portions of those tracts are actively managed so that their long-term agricultural and restoration values are not diminished due to encroachment by early successional woody plants and invasives.

Land Transition Planning

If lands do not meet at least one of the criteria for KC farmland ownership, they should be considered for transition out of the portfolio with proceeds from any sales used for management of remaining parcels and/or acquisition of additional farmland (options may be limited by initial funding source). Proceeds from sales of non-strategic properties will typically be restricted to acquisition of additional farmlands and/or management of farmland remaining in the portfolio.

Improved Land Management

If King County is going to continue to own and lease farmland, it needs to be committed to running a quality program, with farmlands capable of serving as platforms for farmland education, training and successful farming (e.g., high quality farmland with access to irrigation water, enough land base to enable a farmer to consolidate production, appropriate infrastructure). To ensure that County-owned farmlands are productive and managed in a cost-effective manner, a number of short- and long-term issues need to be addressed. Those issues include language and cultural barriers with Hmong farmers, access to affordable liability insurance for small-acreage farms, and poor farmland productivity, all of which will require increasing the farmland leasing operating budget.



2016 Ag Commission

- Committees

1. Selection
2. Lower Green
3. Regulatory
4. Access to Farmland
 - a) Farmland Preservation Program
 - b) Lease Program
5. Snoqualmie/FFF

1. Selection

- Siri Erickson-Brown
- George Irwin

2. Lower Green

- Bob Vos
- Eldon Murray
- Bruce Elliott

3. Regulatory

- Larry Pickering
- Bob Vos
- Meredith Molli
- Amy Holmes
- Anne Becker
- Leigh Newman-Bell

4. Access to Farmland

1. Farmland Preservation Program
2. Lease Program

- George Irwin
- Bob Vos
- Amy Holmes
- Eldon Murray
- Leann Krainick

5. Snoqualmie/Farm Fish Flood

- Siri Erickson-Brown
- Larry Pickering
- Meredith Molli
- Leigh Newman-Bell