



**King County**

**Water and Land Resources Division**

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**King County Agriculture Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Lake Wilderness Lodge, Maple Valley**

<b>Commissioners</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Commissioners</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Commissioners</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>A</b>
Leann Krainick, Chair Pro-Tem	X		Siri Erickson-Brown	X		Leigh Newman-Bell	X	
Amy Holmes, Vice Chair Pro-Tem	X		Shelby Jors		X	Larry Pickering		X
Roger Calhoon	X		Meredith Molli	X		Bob Vos	X	
Bruce Elliott	X		Eldon Murray	X				

*P=Present; A=Absent*

<b>County Staff Present</b>		
Patrice Barrentine, DNRP	Richard Martin, DNRP	Rey Segui, DOT (Roads)
Leslie Drake, DOT (Roads)	Megan Moore, DNRP	John Taylor, DNRP
Leslie Manning, DOT (Roads)	April Sanders, KCC	

<b>Guests Present</b>
None

**Meeting Action Summary**

- **KCDOT Road Vacations Presentation**
- **Approval of January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Meeting Minutes**
- **County Updates: SWM, FFF, Remlinger Purchase, Ag Program, Land Committee**
- **Other Updates: KCD, Farm Bureau**
- **Next Meeting: March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at Enumclaw Public Library (with tour)**

***Meeting Called to Order at 4:22 pm (no quorum); 4:45 pm (with quorum)***

**Road Vacations – Leslie Drake, Leslie Manning, and Rey Segui, KCDOT**

Leslie Drake, Leslie Manning, and Rey Segui of King County Department of Transportation presented on the road “vacations” process. Ms. Drake explained vacations as when the County gives up interest in a right-of-way (ROW) like a road, returning it to the abutting property. She said many farming area ROWs are used privately, but are County-owned; in these cases, vacation can legalize private use for property owner(s).

Mr. Segui said the vacation process begins with a petition and documentation submitted to the County by property owner(s) of a majority of frontage along a ROW. The process includes: County review of the petition, a public and stakeholders’ hearing and determination, recommendation from a County Roads engineer to approve or deny the vacation, another public hearing based on that recommendation with additional recommendation to the King County Council (KCC) by the hearing examiner, then final review and determination by the KCC. This process usually lasts nine to twelve months. Ms. Drake noted not all ROWs can be vacated, if there is vested public interest (such as water access) or other law restricting it. When a ROW is vacated, it is usually evenly divided between abutting property owners, but this can vary

depending on individual circumstances. There is no deed written for a vacation, but a KCC ordinance declaring it. She added that generally a majority of owners abutting a ROW must consent to a vacation for it to be approved. More information is on the County website, or by contacting her office directly.

### **Approval of Meeting Agenda**

Leann Krainick postponed approval of the agenda and minutes until adequate attendance was reached for quorum. Eldon Murray motioned to approve the agenda but add an item to discuss the County purchase of the Remlinger land near Carnation. Siri Erickson-Brown seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes**

Bob Vos motioned to approve the January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting minutes. Bruce Elliott seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **Stormwater Management (SWM) Fee Update – John Taylor, DNRP**

John Taylor updated on the proposed County SWM rate changes, recently approved with modifications by the KCC. He said the SWM program created \$27 million yearly from 2012-2016, shared among: current asset maintenance, Agriculture Drainage Assistance Program (ADAP) and other agricultural programs, habitat restoration, and NPDES permitting compliance. Further needs identified to address are: more funds for capital programs, increased services for rural property owners, retrofit of antiquated stormwater infrastructure, repair/drainage of damaged roads. He noted \$750 million to \$830 million in County drainage infrastructure is likely to fail in 50 to 100 years, up to \$500 million of that in the next decade.

The SWM rate change for 2017-2018 will create \$8 million more annually; the residential rate (including farms) increases by 40% to \$240.44 per parcel. This revenue is slated for: expanded asset management and agriculture/rural services, \$7.5 million to the Roads division, a new grant program for stormwater retrofits, and a discount rate for low-income property owners. Bob Vos asked why a lack of a proportionate increase in ADAP/agriculture funds from the new revenue. Mr. Taylor said the County sees ADAP as a “reduceable” cost due to being a cost-share program with private property owners; it can be cut with no staff impact. He believes despite the fund reduction, the County can sustain its current rate of completion, about 13,000 linear feet of drainage ditches per year, but a major increase in this rate is unlikely.

Meredith Molli asked if beaver control funds will address devising a control plan, or implementing a plan; Mr. Taylor confirmed it will do both. Siri Erickson-Brown reported a new contract between the Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District (WID) and a beaver trapper: the WID will cover the cost of keeping the trapper on-call, but each instance requiring beaver control will be the individual landowner’s financial responsibility. Mr. Taylor also confirmed that beaver control work funded by SWM should tie into Farm Fish Flood (FFF) efforts. He added that new SWM funds will also support a new full-time regulatory specialist staff position for the County agriculture program. Ms. Molli asked if the SWM budget breakdown information is available online; Mr. Taylor said he will send that to Commissioners. Ms. Molli also asked if there was information available, and a way for the Commission to weigh in, on several developments in Duvall whose drainage systems drain to the Snoqualmie valley floor, where farming occurs. Mr. Taylor and Patrice Barrentine agreed to research this and contact the city of Duvall.

### **Farm Fish Flood (FFF) Next Steps – John Taylor, DNRP**

John Taylor reported the County is trying to convene a meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup> between FFF caucuses to discuss the Commission’s concerns and proposed report changes. He noted interest in reaching agreement, chiefly with local tribes and the fish caucus, whom he sees as crucial to regulatory work. Bob Vos noted the recent meeting of Citizens’ Alliance for Property Rights (CAPR)’s board and DNRP Director Christie True; he believed it led to better understanding between the two agencies. Patrice Barrentine added she is working with Janne Kaje, who oversees salmon recovery management at DNRP, on categorizing the proposed report changes into separate documents; these should be ready for review prior to the meeting.

## **BREAK**

### **Remlinger Property Purchase – John Taylor, DNRP; Commissioners**

Eldon Murray voiced concern that a consensus from a recent Land Committee meeting, that it is not in anyone's best interest for the County to buy property without prior case-by-case Commission review, was not being honored. He cited the County's recent purchase of the Remlinger property near Carnation. This land has been considered for multiple proposals for a new housing addition; the land sits at the boundary of Carnation and the Snoqualmie APD. John Taylor explained the KCC opposed modifying the city's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to rezone the land as urban. KCC also had reservations about a "4:1" proposal, which would mean the portion of land unused by the housing addition being held forever by the County as "open space" and not allowed to be farmed, when its soils are considered prime for farming. KCC's TREE Committee directed County staff to quickly determine a fair solution. The decision was for the County to buy the land as open space directly, divide it between Parks land and farmland, and sell the farmland.

Mr. Taylor addressed concern this could lead to a situation like the complex County sale of Tall Chief. He took responsibility for that complication, but added the County has learned from it and will now simply sell any farmland it buys. Richard Martin said the County will maintain an FPP easement on the land, and possibly buy back one of the temporarily-stripped development rights to allow for addition of a farm house.

Meredith Molli asked if all options were exhausted prior to the purchase. Mr. Taylor answered that KCC strongly opposed moving Carnation's UGB, there was no immediate option to sell the land, and KCC wanted an immediate solution. He also said the County's 4:1 program is being reevaluated, to look at an option of County land acquired in a 4:1 proposal not ending up held in perpetuity. Bob Vos reiterated unease this purchase was not brought to the Commission for prior review. Mr. Taylor admitted that while there was no full briefing, he had notified the Commission at its October 2016 meeting that this purchase was possible.

Mr. Martin noted, in reply to a line of discussion on the Remlinger development rights, that the County is considering affirmative language to actively require farming on FPP land. Mr. Taylor explained this concept came from the County's "Kitchen Cabinet" initiative, but the County is aware this is difficult to enforce. Mr. Martin further stated DPER staff have advised an amendment to the upcoming Comprehensive Plan could be submitted to adjust the Snoqualmie APD to add the Remlinger land. Several Commissioners then expressed concern on possible perceived favoritism in County land sales, Ms. Molli citing Mr. Taylor's earlier statement of perhaps offering the Remlinger land to one of the unsuccessful Tall Chief bidders. Mr. Taylor admitted the County is in a difficult position.

Siri Erickson-Brown asked what the Commission's formal advisory role is in future County land decisions. Roger Calhoon asked if a few Commissioners advising the County on past decisions would have been beneficial; Mr. Taylor agreed, and further suggested bringing these decisions before the existing Land Committee for input. Amy Holmes also noted a recent meeting with DNRP Deputy Director Bob Burns, where she was reassured the County's ultimate land acquisition strategy for farmland would be through easements, not in-fee purchases; that the county's mission is get farmland into the hands of farmers.

Mr. Taylor stressed that, while the County would honor the Commission's advisory role when at all possible, there will be a few cases where the County has to move forward in a land purchase before a Commission review is possible. He cited the upcoming purchase of land from the Burns property; all potential buyers fell through and the Flood Control District saw acquisition of this land as urgent due to a need to protect part of Seattle's water supply. He recommended making County land acquisitions a regular part of Land Committee meetings, as well as adding a standing regular Commission agenda item to address them.

### **Agriculture Commission Strategic Planning 2017**

Leann Krainick briefly touched on the subject of proposed meeting frequency for 2017, that Commissioners need to agree upon how often they want to convene meetings this year. She tabled the full discussion until next meeting due to time constraints.

## Updates

- **King Conservation District:** Amy Holmes reported the EMDS modeling grant project with DNRP is now holding farmer testing meetings to identify suitable buffer planting areas with low impact to farming, as well as use for future agriculture strategic planning; Josh Monaghan and Cynthia Krass have more information. KCD also received \$500,000 from a lawsuit settlement to be invested in agricultural drainage projects; Ben Axt has more information. The Regional Food Grant Program still wants feedback on improving the grant process; feedback should go to Mary Embleton. Ms. Holmes also noted 2016 accomplishment highlights from the Farm Natural Resources Services and Farm Planning program, nearly all of which were well above anticipated levels.
- **Farm Bureau:** Bruce Elliott spoke on his experience at American Farm Bureau's Phoenix meeting last month, which included tours of a large-scale dairy farm and a desert cattle ranch. He also said a recent county Bureau meeting brought up a need to reach out to north KC farmers; it was suggested that Siri Erickson-Brown and Meredith Molli, along with Snoqualmie Valley Tilth, aid with outreach and recruitment. He reported on the annual "Legislative Day" in Olympia, where he heard several Bureau officers give statements for state Senate and House working groups, and also a bill hearing for two rural development bills, one by Larry Springer. He added the Cattlemen's Association is now contracting lobbyist services with the Bureau due to losing their Executive Director.
- **KC Land Advisory Committee:** Leann Krainick said the Committee's final meeting was held January 19<sup>th</sup>, and that a "2.0" version of the Committee will convene in August to continue their work. She said there is still a need to locate additional funding, likely from private investors or voter levees, as well as a need to integrate their process with area cities. She noted two items in their draft document addressing farms: community gardens/pea patches will not be considered farmland, and a vote to remove language requesting funds for old barn preservation. She advised she would email out the final draft of this document when completed.
- **Agriculture Program:** Richard Martin distributed a handout for review, summarizing County Agriculture staff's 2016 accomplishments. He requested any information on farmlands brought into production in 2016, to document progress towards the 400-acre annual County goal. He also asked for information on agricultural lease values on County lands, as part of an analysis to ensure County agriculture lands are being leased at market rates. He also noted that the County is now recruiting for the new agriculture regulatory permitting specialist staff position mentioned earlier by John Taylor; more information can be found on the County website or by contacting him.
- **Commission Details:**
  - Patrice Barrentine asked Commissioners to return Financial Disclosure forms to her tonight, and to give feedback on the proposed meeting calendar for 2017. She is trying to keep the Snoqualmie Public Library as a regular venue. She also requested feedback on two possible farm tours this spring, as well as a tour with KCC members in fall. Ms. Erickson-Brown and Ms. Molli said they are unavailable July to October, and prefer to spend time on meetings rather than tours, suggesting only one tour. Mr. Elliott said ending meetings at 6:30 pm is best for his schedule. Roger Calhoon voiced concern on key issues going unaddressed during Commission hiatuses. Ms. Krainick suggested meeting at the Enumclaw library at 1:30 pm on March 9<sup>th</sup> to conduct her farm tour, then the Commission meeting at the library from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm.
  - Ms. Barrentine reported the Regulatory Committee's changes to the recent Comprehensive Plan have returned from KCC and are being reviewed by County and Executive Office staff. She said the proposed changes will be ready by May for Commission review before returning to KCC.
  - Ms. Krainick requested any additions/revisions to the March meeting agenda be given at least a week in advance of the meeting.

***Meeting Adjourned at 7:16 pm***

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## Next Meeting

Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 3:00 pm

Enumclaw Public Library, Enumclaw (tour to precede meeting at 1:30 pm)