



King County

Water and Land Resources Division

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

King Street Center

201 South Jackson Street, Suite 600

Seattle, WA 98104-3855

206-477-4800 Fax 206-296-0192

TTY Relay: 711

King County Agriculture Commission DRAFT Minutes Thursday, May 12th, 2016 Vashon Public Library, Vashon Island

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
Bruce Elliott	X				

P=Present; A=Absent

County Staff Present	
Patrice Barrentine, DNRP	Megan Moore, DNRP
Steve Evans, DNRP	Alan Painter, DNRP
Mike Lufkin, DNRP	John Taylor, DNRP
Richard Martin, DNRP	Christie True, DNRP
Guests Present	
Caitlin Ames	Josh Monaghan, KCD
Dan Carlson, VIGA	Mark Musick, KCD
Tom Dean, VMLT	Liam Rockwell
Lisa Hasselman, VIGA	Christopher Van Patten
Jen Keller	Beth White
Mr. and Mrs. Collin Mederios	Ben (last name unknown), WSU Professor Emeritus

Meeting Action Summary

- **April 2016 Minutes Approved**
- **Farming on Vashon**
- **Vashon Island Growers Association**
- **Vashon-Maury Land Trust**
- **Farm Fish Flood Update**
- **Next Meeting: July 14th, 2016, Snoqualmie Public Library**

Meeting Called to Order at 4:39 pm

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was passed unanimously.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

LeAnn Krainick motioned to approve the April 14th, 2016 meeting minutes. Bob Vos seconded the motion. Bruce Elliott abstained due to his absence in April; otherwise the motion passed unanimously.

Farming on Vashon – Collin Mederios, Burton Hill Farm

Collin Mederios, who runs a goat/dairy farm on Vashon, gave an overview of the farming community on the island and his ideas to improve it. He described Vashon as a unique destination for agro-tourism, referring to the many types of people, including youth, who travel there to farm and buy its products. He said Vashon, with its many open spaces, has potential to exemplify a sustainable community, one that produces and buys many of its own goods. Many of the island's farms, he said, are small local facilities that produce high-end, value-added "niche" products, like dairy.

Mr. Mederios advocated for incentives and policy leniency for small-scale meat/dairy production, saying that Vashon has much potential for this as well. Currently livestock must be shipped off-island for meat processing due to no USDA-certified slaughter facility on Vashon, and the difficulty in acquiring such a facility. Amy Holmes expressed similar frustration that regulations prevent Vashon farmers selling their meat to local restaurants. Patrice Barrentine of DNRP explained legislative measures for leniency in meat certification have failed twice so far in Washington, and state certification would actually be more costly.

Mr. Mederios spoke in strong favor of micro-production: one product from many smaller farms, instead of a single mass-scale facility. This would, he said, ensure continued production of an item should one farm fail; it would also improve product diversity, enhancing Vashon's draw as a destination for a product. He claimed if products are kept "hyper-local," without need to refrigerate/ship long distances, contamination is less of a safety risk. Larry Pickering praised this perspective, saying animal stress and higher volume/population density of large-scale facilities strongly magnify risk of product contamination. He added that more small producers would mean more farmers directly acquainted with their animal stock and conditions, lessening risk of contamination.

Mr. Mederios also made a case for fabric shelters, saying that better light and ventilation improve animal conditions (and therefore their product), and the structures offer more flexibility for altering/relocation. He concluded that the ultimate objective of Vashon farmers is to create the highest-quality product, not to "squeeze by" in regulatory compliance.

Vashon-Maury Land Trust – Tom Dean, VMLT Executive Director, and Amy Holmes

Tom Dean, Executive Director of Vashon-Maury Land Trust (VMLT), updated on the historic Matsuda strawberry farm, the first agriculture conservation project for the Trust. In March VMLT sold an easement on the farm to the County, taking two development rights off the property and enabling VMLT to pay off the debt on it. He noted that ability to transfer development rights is unusual for a Vashon farm; many lots are too small for easements to make major difference in property value, therefore making land conservation more difficult. He continued that part of VMLT's interest in owning this farm was to prevent its conversion into a horse property, a popular trend with cleared lots on Vashon.

Mr. Dean then spoke of the mission and struggles of VMLT. The Trust is 25 years old and was founded mainly for habitat conservation. In that time, with strong County support, VMLT has preserved about 2000 acres on the island. He wishes for separate dedicated funding sources for habitat preservation vs. farmland

preservation, as currently funding is set up in a way that can force entities like VMLT into an either/or decision on whether to preserve habitat or farmland with said funding. Amy Holmes concurred, adding that Vashon's lack of an APD makes it difficult to qualify for classic preservation programs such as FPP (Farmland Preservation Program). She acknowledged it would also be difficult to thread the many isolated farm lots on the island into a united APD.

Mr. Dean went back to the topic of the Matsuda farm. He described it as unusual among Vashon properties in that it has a legal, adequate water source (a pond); rarity of such water on Vashon to preserve farmland is another obstacle VMLT regularly faces. He further explained that VMLT is struggling to structure a lease for the property: many farmers can't afford the market lease rate on Vashon, and so the Trust is seeking a way to lease the land at below market rate and maybe compensate for the difference through some sort of public benefit.

Another concern Mr. Dean addressed was overall poor soil quality on Vashon. While the island has much cleared land that could be leased and used, he said, many farmers don't want to lease for the three-plus years it can take to "build up" soil quality on a property. He suggested that, through the County's Current Use Taxation (CUT) program, better tax incentives might be created for longer-term landowners.

Vashon Island Growers Association – Dan Carlson, VIGA Co-Chair

Dan Carlson, Co-Chair of Vashon Island Growers Association (VIGA), spoke about the mission and current projects at the association. He said VIGA's goal is to promote agriculture and healthy food access, as well as promote a viable agricultural economy on the island. VIGA is now exploring ways to promote and support small-scale agriculture, through means such as the island's successful farmers' market. Another idea being explored is creation of a "food hub" on the island. He suggested if at least some of the many isolated farm lots on Vashon could be somehow aggregated, there could be a stronger means of competing on- and off-island with their products. Northwest Agricultural Business Center (NABC) has been hired to explore the feasibility of this; their report is expected by August. He also expressed hope that Vashon farmers can someday make a living with their farms, which is currently very difficult to do.

Another project, in cooperation with Seattle Tilth, is a new smartphone application. The app would enable local commuters to order a local product and pick it up at the farmers' market on their way home that same day. The hope is, if this is successful, to apply it on a larger, more urban scale. Mr. Carlson explained this would be similar to Amazon Fresh, but with less cost to consumer and farmer.

Lisa Hasselman, a VIGA volunteer, spoke on lack of affordability with local value-added products produced on a small scale. To address barriers like this, she said, the Food Access Partnership is partnering with Seattle and Washington State Farmers' Market Associations to distribute "Fresh Bucks" to the community. "Fresh Bucks" is a coupon program to help limited-resource consumers afford fresh produce. VIGA has raised funding for a similar program designed to reach a broader consumer base, which she said has been very successful and beneficial to consumers as well as farmers. She then briefly spoke of her own concerns as a local farmer: advocating for rainwater catchment due to the limited aquifer on Vashon, and difficulty in sourcing hay and manure untouched by herbicides/pesticides.

Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Commission Updates – County Staff, Commissioners, and KCD Staff

- I) County Updates:** John Taylor of DNRP reported on the recent outcomes of the Farm Fish Flood (FFF) caucus process. He said an agreement was reached that encompasses multiple potential benefits for Snoqualmie Valley agriculture: more floodplain home elevations, peer review of

hydrologic modeling of projects before and after implementation, more investments and farmer flexibility in controlling drainage, and, perhaps most significantly, the Fish caucus agreeing to a fixed cap on land removed from agricultural production for salmon habitat restoration projects. Also significant, he added, was the unique cooperative dynamic formed between local tribes, the agricultural community, and salmon recovery interests. Siri Erickson-Brown agreed this was the best outcome from the FFF processes.

Mr. Taylor went on to say that the next step was to work on the biennial budget plan, and how to support FFF going forward. Patrice Barrentine expressed gratitude to Ms. Erickson-Brown and Meredith Molli for their extensive service with FFF. Mr. Taylor finished by thanking King Conservation District (KCD), as well as Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance, and Snoqualmie Valley Tilth, for their community outreach efforts; the lack of outreach earlier on in FFF, Mr. Taylor said, was what led to an early breakdown in communications in the processes. He advised there would be a more comprehensive FFF update at the July Commission meeting.

II) Selection and Land Committees: LeAnn Krainick reported that the Selection committee met on April 21st, with herself and George Irwin. Ms. Erickson-Brown is also on the committee but was unable to attend. She advised they are seeking two or three more commissioners, and that interested parties should contact Ms. Barrentine.

She then reported on the Land Use committee, speaking on the County's goal to add 25 new farmers and 400 new acres of farmland annually. She said while they weren't certain the County owning farmland would be productive, perhaps a sort of "farm-link" program could be implemented to help farmlands transition to new/next-generation farmers. In addition, Richard Martin of DNRP said, several criteria are being explored for future County land ownership/leasing. The next meetings of the Selection Committee and Land Committee will be held on May 19th at the Enumclaw library.

III) Local Food Initiative and FarmKingCounty.org: Mike Lufkin of DNRP overviewed the objectives of the LFI and FarmKingCounty.org website. He advised he was glad to meet with any Vashon local associations to make connections and assist in projects. He then gave a quick report on visitor data for the website: from March 22nd to May 9th, 911 sessions were logged, with 670 unconnected to KCD or County employees. 67% of sessions were unique visitors (a total of 642), with a total of over 2600 page views, and an average of about two minutes and three pages visited per session. He added that in the next couple of months, the County plans to increase promotion of the website, and again requested to be contacted with any additional feedback.

IV) Farm Fish Flood (FFF): This topic was addressed in the "County Updates" above.

V) King Conservation District (KCD): Josh Monaghan of KCD spoke on their FFF efforts, commending the "tremendous" work by KCD and County staff. He singled out several KCD/County staff for their roles, including County ecologist Kollin Higgins for his understanding of both fish and practical farming issues, and his efforts to ensure clarity on those topics. He advised KCD is still seeking an Executive Director. He added that KCD has been, with Ms. Krainick as well as Thomasson Dairy in Enumclaw, conducting some work on dairy education; he also said KCD is launching a small-acreage forestry landowner program, and that interested parties can contact him or Amy Holmes.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:08 pm

Next Meeting

Thursday, July 14th, 2016 at 4:00 pm

