

King County Agriculture Commission

DRAFT Minutes from

Thursday, November 12, 2015

Watershed Science Center, Issaquah

Commissioners	P	A	Commissioners	P	A
Nancy Hutto, Chair	X		Bob Vos	X	
George Irwin	X		Siri Erickson-Brown		X
Eldon Murray		X	Larry Pickering	X	

P=Present; A=Absent

Staff Present	
John Taylor	Michael Lufkin
Kathy Creahan	Patrice Barrentine
Richard Martin	Ted Sullivan
Randy Sandin	
Guests Present	
Roger Calhoon	Chris Keenan
Leigh Newman-Bell	Tom Quigley
Meredith Molli	Mike Hascomb
Amy Holmes	Jeffrey McMorris
Joshua Monaghan	Cynthia Krass
Mike Casilla	

Meeting Action Summary

- **September and October Meeting Minutes approved**
- **Motion to write letter to the KCC in support of the Tall Chief sale and name a commissioner to field questions from the Council until sale is complete passes unanimously.**
- **Next Meeting: December 10th, 2015**

Meeting Called to Order at 4:05 pm

Agenda Approved by Acclimation

Nancy Hutto asked for an update on the guidelines for new commissioners. Patrice Barrentine reported that the new commissioners would be eligible to vote at the December 10, 2015 meeting and reminded them to complete the required trainings for all new commissioners.

Approval of Minutes

George Irwin made a motion to approve the September 2015 meeting minutes. Bob Vos seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Irwin also made a motion to approve the October 2015 meeting minutes. Larry Pickering seconded the motion. The motion carried.

September and October meeting minutes approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Tom Quigley, President of the Sammamish Valley Alliance, spoke briefly on the increasing demand for wine tasting rooms in the Woodinville area, and that some people are trying to locate them on agricultural land even when not permitted to do so.

Introduction of Richard Martin, Agriculture and Forestry Incentives Program Manager – John Taylor

John Taylor introduced Richard Martin to the Commission. Mr. Taylor advised that Kathy Creahan would be retiring later in 2016 and was staying on with DNRP until then to support Fish Farm Flood (FFF) and regulatory reform, as well as to assist in training Mr. Martin. Mr. Taylor also spoke on Mr. Martin's recruitment process and extensive background and qualifications.

Watershed Improvement District – Cynthia Krass, Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance

Cynthia Krass spoke about an Alliance project involving response to a community desire for a mechanism to manage irrigation water rights and drainage issues in the Watershed Improvement District (WID). WID is an irrigation district; these districts in Washington date back to 1889 and have statutory authority to address many water issues including agricultural drainage, habitat restoration, and flooding related to water storage for the purpose of irrigation. Two main project objectives, she said, were increasing landowner access to irrigation water and protecting existing water rights, as well as addressing agricultural drainage on a system-wide basis. She said the program was a non-profit organization acting as administrative program manager to assist local landowners in moving forward in this process. She added that, once fully operational, this organization would be an independent special-purpose district not tied to the Alliance.

The next step, she continued, is for the King County Council (KCC) clerk's office to count voter ballots for the landowner election on whether to form the WID. If a two-thirds' majority of voters approve, the district would be formed and certified on December 7, 2015. The ballots also include a slate of candidates for a total of five district commissioners. She explained the WID would cover roughly the same size and area of the Agricultural Production District (APD). She added that provided this measure passes, there would be funding provided by the King Conservation District (KCD), and that formation of this district would also make the area eligible for funding through the state Department of Ecology. She stated an additional hope was to form a water bank in the new district for buyers and sellers of water rights to conduct that business.

Farm Fish Flood - John Taylor, Cynthia Krass, Josh Monaghan

Mr. Taylor briefly reviewed the history of FFF, which arose from a policy in the 2012 King County Comprehensive Plan that addressed a long-standing conflict between salmon recovery efforts and

agricultural uses. He explained there had been a struggle to gain support for an agreement on this matter from the agricultural community, many of whom felt there had been too little public outreach from King County. A Memorandum of Mutual Understanding (MOMU) was presented to stakeholders, which among other tasks set forth the task of King County and KCD creating an agricultural alliance to provide outreach to Snoqualmie Valley farmers. The goal of FFF, he said, is to provide landowners a better understanding of the community's perspective on related issues. Mr. Taylor explained that the MOMU included a commitment on King County's part to provide the stakeholders drafts of work scopes for several areas: a "buffers" task force (addressing the issue of farmers losing workable land when putting up buffers), a strategic plan for the APD, and a regulatory review/reform task force. Mr. Taylor also addressed a concern on the lack of a crop and soil scientist at King County. He said the KCD has worked to bring the Washington State University (WSU) extension services back with the County on a limited, short-term basis, but that the stance of KCD's Advisory Committee and Board is that the County needs to increase efforts to bring the WSU extension back with them fully.

Joshua Monaghan spoke on the farmland preservation, fish recovery, and flooding work of FFF and how integration of these three conflicting components was needed, and that his team was working on that. He stated there is a group of 12 people, including four local farmers, negotiating a compromise on these components. This group requested Mr. Monaghan's team ensure a majority of landowners/farmers are educated on this situation, and that these citizens have a clear idea of others' viewpoints in order to facilitate negotiations. He said a proposal was to, between now and February/March 2016, schedule a series of discussions with small groups of local farmers on their issues relating to FFF. Cynthia Krass further elaborated on the need for community engagement on these issues.

Mr. Vos stated that he believes there are several potential "win-win-win" solutions for FFF, one involving drainage tiles. An additional commenter affirmed the land drainage issue was a key means to engage discussion with farmers. Ms. Krass added that the subject of drainage tiles was indeed on their team's agenda for discussion.

Mr. Irwin voiced a concern on whether a group of four farmers on this negotiation panel could adequately negotiate the way the County changes the codification of the way APDs exist, and what rights/rules a farmer had in those APDs. Mr. Monaghan replied that he didn't believe this group had any wish to negotiate changes of that scope on its own. He extended an invitation for anyone wishing to attend any of these farmer consultations to contact his team to make arrangements to do so.

Break

Local Food Initiative – Mike Lufkin

Mike Lufkin introduced and discussed a PowerPoint presentation on the Local Food Initiative.

Access to Farmland – Kathy Creahan

Kathy Creahan introduced and discussed a PowerPoint presentation regarding access to farmland.

Tall Chief – Nancy Hutto

See packet for materials.

Ms. Hutto pointed out several newly-released documents regarding the Tall Chief sale. These included a petition, a letter by farmers in response to the petition, a list of frequently asked questions, and a letter from Commissioner Siri Erickson-Brown.

Ms. Hutto then called on Mr. Taylor to speak. Mr. Taylor reiterated his statements from the previous meeting that he believed the County's evaluation and scoring process of the submitted proposals for Tall Chief had been fair and thorough.

Mr. Monaghan spoke briefly to rebut a claim apparently posted on the website of the petition against the Tall Chief sale, a claim that alleged KCD was responsible for the petition. He added that KCD's board had submitted a letter to KCC in support of the Kellers' purchase of Tall Chief.

Mr. Irwin made a motion for the Commission to also submit a letter to the KCC in support of the purchase. Mr. Vos suggested an amendment that the Commission's chair also designate a commissioner to field inquiries from the KCC or County Executive going forward through the remainder of the purchase process. Mr. Vos added that Commissioner Eldon Murray had expressed a concern, that he believed county voters did not authorize the County to purchase and dispose of land, and hoped the Tall Chief situation would be educational to the County regarding its future involvement in such processes.

Motion to write letter to the KCC in support of the Tall Chief sale and name a commissioner to field questions from the Council until sale is complete passes unanimously.

Ms. Hutto asked Ms. Barrentine to reactivate the support letter drafted previously by the Commission and submit it back to her for her signature. Ms. Hutto also designated Mr. Vos as the commissioner to address future questions and concerns from the KCC regarding the purchase.

Meredith Molli spoke to the Commission about the petition in protest of the Tall Chief sale, and a letter she and a group of several other farmers have drafted to counter what they believe to be misleading allegations in the petition. She said the group didn't necessarily want to get involved in this; however, they did not feel comfortable leaving these allegations unaddressed. She invited anyone interested to read both the petition and her group's counter-letter, and to circulate the website which includes the counter-letter and supporting information.

Mr. Taylor advised Ms. Molli that he would inform them of the date and time of the next committee meeting and hearing on this issue. Ms. Hutto asked Jeffrey McMorris, aide to KCC Councilmember Kathy Lambert, if there was any further information available from the KCC. Mr. McMorris answered they would keep the Commission apprised of the next steps in the process, and stated that Ms. Lambert was publicly supportive of the Kellers' purchase.

Ms. Molli suggested there should be discussion in the near future about production practices for the County. Mr. Taylor answered that the Snoqualmie Valley Agriculture Strategic Plan process would possibly be the best venue for that discussion.

Updates

Mr. Monaghan provided a report on the KCD. He spoke of nine projects that would be funded through the Regional Food Systems Grant Program, a total award of \$600,000. He continued that the KCD was purchasing two pieces of equipment that would be available to assist local farmers: a mobile poultry-processing unit and a no-till drill. He spoke briefly on several additional updates including staffing changes: Mary Embleton hired on as KCD's new Foods Program Manager, and that KCD is in the process of recruiting a new Executive Director.

Ms. Barrentine gave a brief update on the status of the Regulatory Committee. She said the Committee is still reviewing the agricultural use code proposal changes and have so far received positive feedback from the commissioners.

Mr. Taylor spoke on the status of the 2016 KC Comprehensive Plan, stating the Public Review Draft of the Plan has been posted on KC's website and there is a 60-day review period for public feedback. He continued there would be roughly a 1.5-to-two month period for the County to integrate feedback into the Plan, and then submit those revisions to the KCC in March 2016. Ms. Hutto requested that the portions of the Draft relevant to the Commission be brought to a future meeting for review.

Mr. Pickering requested to be added to the Regulatory Committee. Ms. Barrentine advised she would send him the necessary invitation for the next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:07 pm

Next Meeting

Thursday, December 10, 2015 at 4:00 pm

Issaquah Fish Hatchery, Watershed Science Center, Issaquah