

King County Agriculture Commission Minutes from Thursday, March 12, 2015 Watershed Science Center, Issaquah

Commissioners	P	A	Commissioners	P	A
Nancy Hutto, Chair	X		Ward Roney		X
Siri Erickson-Brown	X		Bob Tidball	X	
George Irwin		X	Pat Traub (Commission Applicant)		X
Eldon Murray	X		Bob Vos	X	
Larry Pickering	X				

P=Present; A=Absent

Staff Present	
Kathy Creahan	Janne Kaje
Ted Sullivan	Patrice Barrentine
John Taylor	Joan Lee
Steve Evans	Linda Vane
Guests Present	
Meredith Molli	Josh Monaughan
Pat Mc Glothlin	Councilmember Kathy Lambert
April Sanders, Councilmember Lambert's Office	Shelby Jors
Leeann Krainick	Kurt Tonnemaker
Dan Albert	

Meeting Action Summary

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> February Meeting Minutes were approved Update on SWIF by April Sanders, Policy Director, Councilmember Kathy Lambert Commission began brainstorming recommendations on land use policy for Farm Fish Flood Ag Caucus Support and Thanks to Commissioners from Councilmember Lambert |
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Meeting Highlights with Action Items in Text Boxes

Called to Order 4:02 pm

Approval of Minutes

Bob Vos made a motion to approve the minutes. Eldon Murray seconded.

February meeting minutes approved unanimously

Public Comment

Nancy Hutto asked April Sanders for an update on SWIF. No updates have been made yet. The agriculture language is not opposed but other pieces are still being worked on. She will keep the commission updated as the policy piece will go to a vote of the Flood District.

Update on SWIF by April Sanders, Policy Director, Councilmember Kathy Lambert

Discussion of FFF needs for Recommendations from Ag Commission

John Taylor: We had a good meeting with FFF Ag Caucus, Commissioners, and Erick Haakenson on Tuesday (March 10 in Carnation). Minutes from that meeting were emailed out today.

Siri: at the last FFF meeting some critical issues came up about “what is farmland” and is it reasonable that we should be able to mitigate by preserving or protecting other lands. I am looking for the consensus conversation about what is the resource we are trying to protect and is there any way to have a truly no net loss policy. No net loss is in place for development but gray zone for habitat.

What is agricultural land? We need a modernized version that takes into account new realities. Then we need to talk about what it means to offset the loss of floodplain agricultural soil assuming that is something that needs to happen. How do we deal with that in a comprehensive way that everyone can understand?

There was additional discussion by some commissioners about how to begin this topic, concluding that Kathy Creahan give her presentation (*Farmland Policy Discussion*) for the topic summarizing commissioners and farmers comments, information requested by commissioners and key questions to answer for FFF.

Bob T: Would like a better study of land being farmed – particularly farmable not being farmed – way off; also would like to note land in the APD owned by non-farmers (*see slideshow and table of acreage being farmed, slide 8*).

Larry: Would it be important to map soil types for properties?

KC: Yes; these are soil classifications, on the map (*slide 8, USDA NRCS Soil Capability Class*), but soil types for specific soils would be useful on specific properties.

Larry: 2013 Ag Land Use map (*slide 11*) would show us how land is being used but would not show us productivity of dry/drained soils.

Eldon: Does the county have the ability to change the APD district? Can they expand the boundaries?

KC: We can, but we have not.

Eldon: Would they have to petition to be included?

Bob T: One thing that changed was that the lower Green APD was annexable by Auburn and Kent and the county changed the zoning to a rural island and preserved it from annexation.

Nancy: It would be down zoning if you got your land zoned APD.

Bob T: That's where FPP comes into play and takes the development rights off.

Siri: It would be helpful me for me to know how the APD protects land. **Policy question to be addressed: What protections does the APD zoning provide? What does it not provide?**

Bob T: GMA set out the policy of APD as long-term of commercial significance.

Siri: **What sort of protection does GMA obligate when land meets all of the commercial significance criteria? Would like legal information of what the standing is.**

Bob T: ex: of lawsuits \$M to keep APD use

Siri: How do we provide expert agricultural use, when we don't know the legal standing?

Bob V: Refers to Bob T's example of lawsuits; need more technical information – would like to see WRIA overlay of wetness.

Janne Kaje: We have mapped wetness of land if you'd like to hear about it in more depth.

Nancy: The best land for fish is also the best for farming.

Bob V: I don't think we'll get there any time soon, but one of the major factors we need is data. The fish folks have data, but we have not seen data about how much this will increase fish populations, we therefore tend to wrap ourselves in mantras like "no net loss of farmland." We don't have enough data of projects that are planned.

Janne Kaje: Planting, restoration is monitored, but not fish numbers by percentage.

Bob T: I'm not ready to tackle this yet. What about "no net loss" in the Comp Plan? Not there. Came from FFF. **We said *increased productivity is most important*, not no net loss in the FARMS report.**

Siri: I think we put the cart before the horse. This process got forced from FFF not by Ag Commission to think about land.

Nancy: Siri, you've asked if there's a tipping point.

Siri: Does it even exist? How do we see into the future of food needs? I don't think it's useful at this point. We probably have to draw a line somewhere, but how do we get there?

Kathy Lambert: It looks like you're looking for one answer and not all of the above.

Siri: **There are thousands of unfarmed acres in the APDs, can we look at utilizing these for Fish enhancements?**

Bob T: There was kind of an agreement in the Green (River APD) where the fish restoration projects had a ten year moratorium.

Kathy Creahan: That's why we're here. The Salmon recovery efforts are behind and require additional land to move forward.

Bob T: Who do we have to convince?

Kathy Creahan: The FFF group is looking to the commission to answer the question of which land should be protected for farming and which farmland could be replaced or improved in the process of expanding flood infrastructure and fish habitat.

Bob T: I think the Council will be involved as well.

KC: They will when they get the Comp Plan.

Bob V: I'd like to note that you mentioned Loss and Gain. We get very upset when we talk about loss and not too interested when we talk about gain. **But it looks like there are some things we can gain in this process.**

Nancy: It looks like we need to give up some of this land, so what have we needed for a long time like drain tiles?

John T: That really is the issue. **FFF has built a table with key partners where there is a high level of trust. If there is agreement on what ag needs, then let's take that to the table.**

Siri: So far, what is documented is no net loss. However, I don't find that very useful. **There is farmland all over this county that is no longer productive due to regulations or slowly not maintaining drainage tiles, flood gates or revetments.**

Larry Pickering: Can we talk about taking a stance that no land can be lost or about making it permanently possible for changing regulations for ditch maintenance?

Bob V: That's right on. It's very hard to trust when we talk about fish enhancements now and farm enhancements later. **That's why bundling came up at the sounding board.** We need to move forward on both at once.

Siri: **It's hard to make a deal when folks like [Commissioner] George Irwin and [former Commissioner] Matt Tregoning say we cannot lose any ag land. We need polished policy positions.**

Nancy: I think that should be the first line of business when we form a commission workplan.

Bob V: George has said no more losses. For me, I think there can be win-win losses, but bundling is required.

Larry: We may benefit more from learning more about fish recovery. When it comes to buffers are we only trying to protect the coho, or all salmon? Does that affect buffer width? It doesn't help to shade the water if you put warm water in from the tributaries. **Do a large number of small projects work better? OR a small number of large projects?**

Increase productivity by using/getting higher ground.

Nancy: If I heard you right, **these ditches could be cleaned for salmon and drain the fields better as a win-win.**

Larry: Yes.

John T: This is the sort of information and ask you can take to the table.

Bob V: Drain tiles are one of my favorite subjects. But it can really be a win- win-win: drains fields, filters pollutants, and absorbs heavy rains. **Would like a heavy emphasis on drain tiles.**

Nancy: We are not going to gain anything if we draw a line in the sand. It seems like an opportunity both ways.

Bob T: I hear the offer of flexibility on the buffer issue. I've asked Janne for more info on buffers... I am **against major loss off the high ground.** One of the conflicts with Fish is they probably want some of the high ground. **We need cooperation on appropriate buffers that do the least damage to the farms while serving fish.**

Siri: **This idea of the cap: How do we assess the value of high ground versus lower ground that is recently drained? It gets more complicated but we need to perform some of these assessments. I'm hearing that we're not equipped to do this, without science or professional assessments.**

BT: I'm willing to talk about **drainage and compensation. If land is going to be lost, the best thing we could get in its place is drainage and regulatory change.**

Larry: In a good year, 2-3 miles of ditches can be done. It will take until 2150 to do all of the ditches. **There could be ditch cleaning training program just like pesticide licensing program.**

Bob V: That's exactly right. About 3 years ago I helped a farmer in Enumclaw clean a ditch.

Siri: These are important solutions. Assuming there is going to be loss of acreage in the APD for Fish recovery, what do we need?

BREAK

Josh: What land do we need compensation for? What permanent, meaningful change can we make happen? Can we develop a framework for how to approach the wider question of land for land?

Permanent, meaningful change
Low cost, easy drainage
Tiles
Flood gates and pumps
Beavers
Multi-year permit
Revetments and bank stabilization
Farm Pads
No significant loss of high ground (needs expert help to sort this out)
Synchronize/bundle: Design of project has to fit fish & farm for each project
Worth differentiation between high and low ground
Keep track of cumulative effects
How do we answer how much is too much?
Value of farmland goes beyond commercial significance
Impact to individual farms as well as long term impacts to agricultural land
Technical Support: We need data on the fish and farm side; best available science for benefit and cost

What lands are we most concerned about losing in the APD?

- In production
- Was farmed in the past?
- Farmable?
- Infrastructure: floodgates

Commission began brainstorming recommendations on land use policy for Farm Fish Flood Ag Caucus

Councilmember Kathy Lambert speaks:

Thank you for working on these complex issues.

- Buffers
- List of state regulations
- Improper interpretation of state regulations
- Benign neglect of ditches/drainage by county is not okay
- No more Carnation Farms
- Appropriate buffers defined Hydroponics
- Expectation of APD land being farmed

Support and Thanks to Commissioners from Councilmember Lambert

UPDATES:

King County Local Food Initiative: Report is Published and online. We'll discuss it at a next meeting. 6 strategic goals for agriculture.

KCD: Josh M would like to talk about the new grant process at a next meeting. Survey about specific drainage needs coming out from KCD.

KC Financial Disclosure Forms Needed from Commissioners

Adjourned 6:50 pm

Next Meeting

Thursday April 9th, 2015

Issaquah Fish Hatchery, Watershed Science Center, Issaquah