

King County Agriculture Commission

DRAFT Minutes from

Thursday, December 11, 2014

Watershed Science Center, Issaquah

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

P=Present; A=Absent

Staff Present	
Kathy Creahan	Joan Lee
Todd Hurley	Steve Evans
Lilly Simmering	Patrice Barrentine
Guests Present	
Meredith Molli	Bruce Eliott
Pat Mc Glothlin	Josh Monaghan (King Co. Conservation District)
Jason Brown, Councilmember Reagan Dunn's Office	

Meeting Action Summary

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission voiced support and interest in the Tools for Farm/Flood/Fish Projects developed by Todd Hurley and Rick Reinlasoder for the Hafner Project • Commission voiced firm opinions on two Food Economy priority actions, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not support a physical one stop shop, but wants a resource person and services ○ Innovation districts should not get more attention than already successful farmers markets that have existing location needs. Also want more time to discuss this. • Began 2015 Brainstorm for Commission's Strategic Planning • Updates were given on Farm, Fish, Flood, King Conservation District, Farm City Roundtable, Tall Chief RFP Evaluation, Commission Recruitment, and WSU Composting Trial |
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Meeting Highlights with Action Items in Bold Text

Called to Order 4:15pm (extremely high winds and weather advisory)

Approval of Minutes

November meeting minutes were not approved due to a lack of a quorum

Public Comment

None

Evaluating the Tools for Farm/Flood/Fish Projects (example: Hafner) – Todd Hurley, Joan Lee, Kathy Creahan

Todd Hurley presented an overview of the tools developed by WLRD to weigh river project benefits and losses by the Commission's Snoqualmie Subcommittee. He shared new flood modeling images showing depth of flooding as well as velocity and flow patterns, tables comparing impacts and benefits to farms, fish habitat, and flood reduction by category, and a sunburst graphic of impacts to consider. These tools are working concepts of what should be evaluated on river projects affecting farms, floods, and fish, and a comparison chart showing pros and cons for each sector.

Graphics and examples were so good that an engaging conversation about stream flows and adjacent property (Barfuse Project) also mitigating flooding and the pros and cons of that were discussed putting strong emphasis on least amount of farmable land lost. Because of earlier commission recommendations, Hafner was prioritized over Barfuse by King County.

Commissioners asked questions about modeling costs and process as they saw the modeling very useful and wondered about using it in additional areas. The commissioners found the working concepts and comparison chart useful. No additional components were recommended as missing pieces of these tools.

Actions:

1. Commissioners: Are there other scenarios/tools you'd like to see when projects like this are developed? *None*
2. Formal Subcommittee recommendation on the project *Postponed*
3. Advisory vote by commission in favor or in opposition of subcommittee recommendation *Postponed*

A quorum was not present, so an advisory vote was not held on the subcommittee's recommendation to proceed with the Hafner project.

Food Economy Initiative – Lilly Simmering

Taking a more focused approach, Lilly asked for Commissioners for feedback on two key critical action items in the Food Economy Initiative before it is proposed to the County Executive:

1. A One Stop Shop (Farm Resource for Technical and Marketing Assistance including Production, Financing, etc.)
2. Food Innovation Districts

1. One Stop Farm Resource Shop

Lilly Simmering: Should it be a permanent or temporary physical location? *No*

Nancy Hutto: Would this be a county employee thing? Where would this be funded? Who would be staffing either of those options? The Ag team has been the one stop shop center. And we've one by one lost the people who have fielded the phone calls, went out to the farm and other departments and delivered these services or marketing. So, where is the staffing coming from for all of this?

Lilly Simmering: That brings me to my second question, which is who should be a part of this one stop shop? Our ag team has specialties in certain areas but what I'm hearing is that we would benefit from having additional people, like DPER, be part of this group. We would benefit from having groups like NABC, and Cascade Harvest Coalition be a part of this group. WSDA. Other folks who really touch upon ag and that goes beyond the scope of the county ag program such as a DPER issue, or a state issue.

About the funding, until we finalize these concepts and put a model forward, we're not going to have a good idea of the funding. What we do have is a good understanding of the FTEs who are doing the work that is needed right now. We have an idea of who the other folks are from other organizations that we want to do this. And we've been talking with other folks about whether or not a concept like this is worthy of us shifting our internal resources.

Nancy, I think your question is warranted, but it's kind of a chicken or the egg kind of question, in that, do we find the funding first and have that be the limiting factor or do we come up first with what the needs are and then come up with what would be the most effective model and then go for the funding that we absolutely need to implement such an idea?

Bob Tidball: Sounds like some of these are WSU extension services that we've lost: production help, economics and marketing (2 WSU staff positions). If we need to re-establish these functions, seems like we need to fund WSU and bring them back in. And that still needs money.

Lilly Simmering: I think that WSU ag extension is definitely something we want to make happen as a partner here.

Lilly Simmering: And those were services you needed in the past. Do you still need those same services for ag today since farming has changed? Or are these additional things we'd like to see from WSU? What should we bring WSU back to do?

Bob Tidball: You need to prioritize your needs first.

Siri Erickson-Brown: Are students doing this research and needs assessment? Each farmer has different needs and all of them need to be asked and their needs assessed.

Lilly Simmering: That's a possibility.

Siri Erickson-Brown: I want to be able to call somebody- one person and have them carry the ball and solve the problem and be held accountable.

Nancy Hutto: Sometimes you don't know what the needs are until they occur. You take what comes.

Siri Erickson-Brown: I used to call Claire and ask her – Claire, there's a beaver in my ditch, what do I need to do? New farmers have a ton of questions, experienced farmers different questions. But if you don't know where to start, it's harder to find the answers.

Nancy Hutto: Didn't WSU have those small farmer workshops and stuff?

George Irwin: You need a main contact person.

Siri Erickson-Brown: The information is out there. A ton of resources already exist. I would hate for us to spend a bunch of money and resources reinventing the wheel. And if small businesses can't find this information, they are going to have a hard time being a successful business.

George Irwin: We have identified some of the greatest startup obstacles. Where do I find land to buy, business planning, financing? Can we make it easier for them to find this information? We need a Clearinghouse!

Lilly Simmering: In ten or fifteen years, if we have farmers coming in to the county who don't speak English, and do or don't have degrees from WSU, should we pull all of these resources together in one location or do we have one person, like an Ag Czar, where all questions are directed. Maybe the one stop shop is one single person.

Siri Erickson-Brown: Yes! The number of questions that could come up is infinite. There needs to be a person who knows where to send you and I don't think that needs to be super formalized. But what I'd like to see is some heightened accountability so that when I call someone and I'm having this problem, if it doesn't go where I need it to go, I have someone to go back to and talk out why this didn't work and what the real problem is.

Nancy Hutto: One of the reasons this is sticky, is because of the complexity and if someone needs to talk to someone and doesn't want to talk to someone within the regulatory system, that there is a safe place to call like WSU or the KCD or someone who isn't going to come out and say look at that! Or maybe someone in the county who knows the farmers and whose role is to support and not report violations.

With county ag staff, WSU extension, KCD, and Cascade Harvest, it seems like we used to have the bases covered. We also used to have DPER at our meetings as a representative. We've lost a lot of pieces. KC Ag Team has been invaluable over the years: Claire, Judy, Rick, and Karen but in their extra time – as ombudsmen – work that is extremely important– but not in their allotted job descriptions.

So, much of what you're talking about our services we had that we've lost due to funding issues and the county separating from WSU.

George Irwin: So what she's asking is would you want it back?

Nancy Hutto: Yes, we want it back! We want these county and non-profit services and then they should be publicized more.

Siri Erickson-Brown: Survey 20 farmers who have been farming five years or more and find out when farmers were most challenged and how they found resources to deal with the problem. These stats will lead you to more effective action.

2. Food Innovation Districts (limited time led to commissioners asking to discuss this in length at another time)

It's basically a cluster of farm and food business and processing that enable consumers and local businesses to find local food like a food terminal or garment or flower districts – kind of like food hubs that is open year-round. There's one developing in Rainer Beach and Seatac.

Lilly Simmering: As a supplier of local food, what would you want?

- Would you want:
 - A restaurant or buyer located next to you and your space to sell produce? Ex. Amazon fresh
 - Food banks
 - Processing
 - Land to grow food by it?

Nancy Hutto: We are way behind on the agenda, can we postpone this?

Bob Tidball: We need more people here, too.

Lilly Simmering: Does the Commission want to comment on this?

George Irwin: These have been a successful business model around the world from Chicago's Meat Packing District to Japan.

Siri Erickson-Brown: I'm very much in favor of having some publicly sponsored venues for sales. But if you talk to farmers market managers, about 50% of their effort goes to securing or finding a new location. It's a big problem. Of primary importance to me, is to find where these transactions are already happening -in Pike Place Market and other markets around the city. And then find some way to work with cities and the property owners that host markets and find a way to make these less onerous. And then all the fancy stuff, let's do that, but only after farmers markets are secure.

Lilly Simmering: I feel like farmers markets are vulnerable because they are unable to stay open year round because of the weather or location. I have talked to restaurants and they don't go to Pike Place because it's a mess and you can't go in and buy anything of quantity and size. The difference is one of these commercial districts cater to the commercial side and to the public. They open at 5 with farm fresh product to sell to restaurants and farmers sell their highest quality then, and at noon the market opens to the public. How do we take what farmers markets do and make it more reliable and stable for farmers as a source of income and also for the consumers?

Siri Erickson-Brown: There are farmers markets that are open year-round in the city and the primary challenge is that we don't have any produce to sell in the winter. Having a wholesale market that is open year-round all-day isn't going to change the fact that we're all under water for three months and there's nothing coming out of our fields. So, I think the farmers markets have worked phenomenally well for small and beginning producers to get their foot in the door, and there have been some major food producers in this county that have started out with one booth at one farmers market. That works. It's an easy way for someone to grow ½ an acre of produce and sell their food.

I would be concerned about seeing a new location market model competing with existing farmers markets because right now the problem is not lack of outlets for food, I think the problem is lack of supply.

I sell everything I grow at I price I set and deliver directly to 30 restaurants every week that are very happy with our direct model. I'm just not hearing a ton of people say I need a new way to source locally.

And I'm worried about seeing government sponsored things compete with the existing free market that's working right now. And in until we have so many producers in King County that there are not enough places to sell all of our stuff, making a new market, is not the pinch point I see.

Lilly Simmering: You hit the nail on the head. If we meet our targets and increase the number of farmers and acreage in production, we will need new markets and not everyone will be able to sell in farmers markets. What will ag look like in ten years? We need to maintain existing markets and look ahead as innovators.

1. Actions: Commission responds and advises on specific recommendations
 - a. **One Stop Shop:** *Should NOT be a permanent or temporary physical location, but an accountable, resource person.*
 - b. **Food Innovation Districts:** *Wholesale infrastructure investment should not hurt existing farmers markets that also need resources for permanent locations.*

King Conservation District Update – Josh Monaughan

Updates for 2014 (and it's not over yet) in numbers

- 190 farm requests, up 25%
- Plans on Acres: 1,645; avg farm worked with 24 acre farms
- 82 Farm plans (goal was 70) 25% over last year

The last few years have been transformational. Now we have new funding that will expand our forestry and agriculture services in addition to a million dollar grant fund that will help farm and food businesses with conservation and infrastructure needs.

Thank you Ag Commission for your support in making all of this happen! Specific call outs to commissioners George Irwin, Nancy Hutto and Siri Erickson-Brown.

Farm Flood Fish Task Force— Joan Lee and Siri Erickson-Brown

Joan Lee delivered a succinct update on the task force progress.

All Day Retreat, November 21, where the 14 members, 4 representing agriculture, went into caucuses and selected the top three priorities as a caucus (farm, flood, fish) and then selected their top three solutions or outcomes for these priorities from the 64 developed by the whole task force.

This caucus work is currently being written up, reviewed by each caucus and then they will be merged into one document and presented to the task force for review in January.

Each caucus presented their selections to the task force at the retreat and members were surprised by the commonality between the three caucuses and issues. In fact, the solutions will be paired down to 20 because 7 were not selected.

More than half of the people at the retreat said this is the best collaborative process they've been in and attribute that to the openness of the people sitting on the task force.

The task force sees the need to continue weighing in on future steps.

Siri Erickson-Brown: I continue to be very pleased with the process and progress. The understanding of the fish and flood task force members has grown exponentially regarding farming. We are not solving every problem for farmers in the Snoqualmie but are on fish farm flood issues.

3 biggest priorities:

- Preserving Farmable Land (Keep Protecting Farmland and maybe add to it in the Snoqualmie)
- Increasing Productive Capacity of Existing Farmland/ Increase Farm Acreage (Regulatory infrastructure and drainage)
- Improving Flood Safety

Then there are 9 solutions, 3 for each priority. This is still being made into a final draft to reflect the intent of the group.

Nancy Hutto: Can we get that information or link to it?

Patrice Barrentine: We will get that to you as soon as it's available, but it won't be until after the next Ag Commission meeting because FFF meets to finalize it the week after us in January.

Siri Erickson-Brown: It has been a struggle to represent myself as a Snoqualmie Valley farmer and landowner and the interests that I try to represent as an Ag Commissioner. Many of the solutions that are most favorable to the task force would benefit the farmers at the FFF table, but may not have the long term benefits needed by the King County agriculture community.

Additional comments moved to Brainstorm below.

Ag Commission Strategic Planning Brainstorm – Nancy Hutto, Commissioners and Patrice Barrentine

Strategic Planning for 2015

Bob Tidball: *Issued a one page summary – Drainage Issues on Farmland in Lower Green APD - of current problem and recommendations* put together by commissioner Bob Vos, Bob Tidball and others.

Recommendations from the handout:

- Reconvene the Lower Green APD Sub-committee to prepare a consolidated report covering accomplishments toward drainage improvements in the Mullen Slough basin and assessment of residual issues.
- Immediately initiate FFF activity on the Lower Green APD with focus on mutual benefits to farms and fish in the Mullen Slough drainage area, including emphasis on benefits to the Food Economy Initiative, since this portion of the APD contains a substantial portion of utilized farmland.
- Incorporate the Mullen Slough into SWIF considerations since APD drainage issues are tied to flood conditions of the Green River itself

Matt Tregoning (submitted prior to mtg): I'd like to see the Commission focus on some of the issues that come out of the Kitchen Cabinet and FFF groups.

Maybe we take one core issue from both and really work to make sure some of the recommendations actually happen.

Bob Vos (submitted prior to mtg): I understand priorities for 2015 will be discussed. My priorities are:

- 1) Re-establishing the Auburn (lower Green) subcommittee
- 2) Working on farm-related regulations (particularly drainage) as supported by the Executive in a recent letter to Ag Commission, WLRD and DPER
- 3) Including lower Green area in farm/fish/flood discussions

Bob Tidball: Continue Farm-City Roundtables

Siri Erickson-Brown: Who do we represent when we talk about farming?

- Are we talking about a resource? OR
- Are we talking about the interest of current farmers

Defining Agriculture (farmable, soil quality, APD, FPP)

Who does a Commissioner represent when serving on County committees/task force?

Develop consensus on issues to be represented outside of the commission

When participating in a committee (example: Food Economy's Kitchen Cabinet), does not mean that the whole commission approves what is said.

Tying Lilly and Bob's words of connecting farmers with an urban population through video/ farmer profiles; anecdotes, sound bites that makes ag more accessible when talking about regulations and economic issues; want to draw on more real world experiences when trying to explain the complexities of farming to others.

George Irwin: Food Economy/Farm Bureau – San Diego County \$1.4Billion ag economy; how do we increase the ag economy in KC? Dairygold; How can the commission support Food Economy goals?

More interaction with the Council to advise them as our statute directs.

Updates

Farm City Roundtable – Bob Tidball

Food Economy (Lilly Simmering) and Food Innovation Districts (Kara Martin) presentations were given. 25 attendees. 4 cities were there. We should have the food innovation district presentation at the Ag Commission. Uniting with activist groups to promote agriculture can be very positive. Recommends more roundtables, not stopping them. Roundtable Achievement Sheet put together by Steve Evans was distributed in meeting packet.

George Irwin: Local Food is kind of like Lenny in Mice and Men, you can love something to death.

Siri Erickson-Brown: We need to be clear about what we need, so these folks can help.

TALL CHIEF RFP – Kathy Creahan

Keller Dairy, Seattle Tilth and Kou Oh and Fong Cha submitted proposals and the evaluation committee just visited with all of the farms last week. The proposals are each very different. The evaluation committee on which Commissioner Bob Vos serves, plans to make a decision on the property soon, but after the holidays.

Recruitment for new Commission Members - Patrice Barrentine

There are currently ten sitting members out of 15 commission positions. We are seeking to fill five vacant positions. So far, we have talked or emailed with eleven people. Of those, seven have expressed interest; one has declined to apply; haven't heard back from three. If you know farmers or agriculture organizations that make strong candidates, please reach out to them or let me know and I can send them an application. A commission recruitment press release is coming out soon. Applications are due by January 15th.

Board of Ethics Financial Disclosure – sent by Rick Ybarra

Beginning in January 2015, I will send King County board or commission members a Board of Ethics Financial Disclosure Form via their King County email account. The email will come from me and attached to the email will be a blank financial disclosure form in MS/Word format for board members to complete and sign. I will be asking them to either return the completed form to you or they can scan the completed form and return it to me electronically as a PDF attachment. I will not be accepting any hard copies so if you receive forms from your board members please scan the forms individually and send me an email with the separate PDF's attached.

WSU Composting one pager – Kathy Creahan

Drew Corbin, WSU Snohomish, has conducted on farm trials showing the value of compost production to plant health and yield.

Adjourned 7:15 pm

Next Meeting

Thursday January 8th, 2015

Issaquah Fish Hatchery, Watershed Science Center, Issaquah