



December 18 2013 Meeting Minutes

1:00-3:00 pm

Red Rabbit Farm, Orcas

ARC Members Present: Christina Orchid, Candace Jagel, Tim Clark, Bruce Gregory, Sara Jones, Danna Kinsey, James Most, Ian Harlow, Learner Limbach

ARC Members Absent: Tom Schultz, Mike Pickett, Hawk Pingree, Jim Sesby, Mark Tompkins

ARC Staff Present: Peggy Bill

WELCOME, AGENDA, AND MINUTES

CHAIR'S REPORT

Minutes: The minutes for the November 20th, 2013 meeting were approved (moved by Bruce Gregory, seconded by Learner Limbach, approved unanimously).

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Council approved \$35,000 from .09 funds for ARC in 2014. No funding is provided for overhead, inter-island travel, meetings, etc. Funding in support of hiring a Coordinator for the Island Grown Program will continue to be provided through Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC). The ARC has also been awarded Lodging Tax funding (LTAC) to support continued coordination and implementation of agritourism events. Boyd Pratt has indicated that he will not continue in the role of Coordinator. Boyd's coordination has been invaluable. However, both Peggy and Boyd agree that the programs would be better served by contracting with an individual who has expertise in marketing, promotion and social media.

ARC MEMBER COMMENTS

Candace Jagel reported on a farmer on San Juan who raises alpacas and whose neighbor is using his land as a shooting range, causing great distress to the animals. Does this landowner have any rights such as through Right to Farm legislation?

Sara Jones reported that there are limited options for USDA inspected sheep slaughter due to restrictions on slaughter plants as a result of scrapies. The slaughter facility in Whatcom County is no longer processing sheep. This is a great loss for sheep producers who deliver animals on a weekly basis for sales to regional restaurants.

Learner Limbach reported that the Orcas Coop is finalizing it's lease agreement and now has over 400 members. The support for the Coop will offer increased market opportunities for island farmers.

Farm regulations

Peggy updated members on the status of revisions to the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO)

following a ruling from the Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) that requires the county to reconsider proposed exemptions, including an exemption for “new and expanding agriculture”, specifically addressed in Table 3.8. ARC members discussed language proposed by the SJC Planning Commission. It was agreed that the ARC’s efforts to strengthen and restore agriculture in SJC depends on the ability of farmers to grow and expand into land not currently farmed. It was agreed that Sara Jones would organize a working group to discuss and propose a definition to the ARC. Peggy noted the extremely tight timeline imposed by the GMHB. Council will be taking up the issue on December 17th and again on January 7th so a recommendation from ARC must be provided in that time. The ARC agreed to convene a special meeting by phone to review and approve a definition proposed by the group. (Moved by Sara Jones, seconded by Candace Jagel. All approved.)

Farmland Preservation

Current Use Farm and Agriculture (CUFA): Tim Clark reported on the Council proviso approved in the budget withholding \$75,000 from the Assessor’s budget until Council has been provided with 1) a communication plan describing how landowners will be promptly and clearly advised of the status of their audits; 2) clarification of requirements for compliance consistent with RCW 84.34 and WAC 458.30; and 3) a report on removals and transfers from the program dating back to 2008.

Farm and Agriculture Conservation Program (FACL): Tim Clark reported on review of the existing FACL. The Planning Commission, Assessor and others have noted the inadequacy of the program as it was adopted in 2011, especially the 10 year timeline. Based on an analysis of other programs in the state, SJC’s FACL Program is one of the most regressive due to the short timeline, requirement that lands be subdividable, and high tax. Peggy and Tim met with Councilmember Stephens to discuss the program and potential changes. The following changes were recommended: 1) eliminate the subdivision requirement and allow any lands currently enrolled in CUFA to be eligible for enrollment for transfer into the program; 2) retain the 10 year timeline but add an opportunity for landowners to extend enrollment for an additional 5 years based on submittal of a farm management plan to re-establish commercial operations and transfer into CUFA within 5 years. Candace Jagel made a motion to approve, seconded by Sara Jones. All approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 3 pm. The next full meeting of the ARC will be held on January 15th via video-conference from island libraries.