

Agricultural Resources Committee

Minutes of December 18, 2006

12:00 -3:00 PM

Skagit Valley College

Friday Harbor, WA

ARC Members Present: Ken Akopiantz, Jane Burton-Bell, Peter Corning, Todd Goldsmith, Bruce Gregory, Eliza Habegger, Sara Jones, Jim Lawrence, Tom Schultz, Madden Surbaugh, Ron Zee

ARC Members Absent: Christina Dahl-Sesby, Ralph Hahn, Julie Miller, Rebecca Moore, Rena Patty, Kathryn Quackenbush, Mark Tompkins

Friends Present: Richard Anderson, Susan Corning, Shireene Hale, Elaine Kendall, Paul LaCramp,

CD/ARC Staff Present: Eliza Buck, Brian Cornelius, Danna Kinsey

Eliza Buck was introduced and has accepted the offer of serving as ARC Coordinator, a half-time position with the SJC Conservation District under an Inter-local Agreement with the County Council. She begins work on January 16, 2007.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Thomas Forster, Taproot Farm on Orcas and the Community Food Security Coalition, provided an update on the farm bill before Congress. Speaking from Washington, D.C., Forester said that, “the stars are lining up for a local to regional broad coalition” on sustainable agriculture. Washington DC legislators to work with are Rick Larsen, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell. Larsen is especially well positioned to make things happen. San Juan County farmers have a definite role in local picture. There is recognition that the San Juan Islands ag advocates have a “larger voice than their size.”

Forester also reported that an intern, Nicole, at Morningstar Farm on Orcas is working on a 5-page analysis of the Farm Bill’s impact on the islands.

The time is ripe for San Juan County to weigh in on farm issues especially concerning “local feeding programs.”

MINUTES

The minutes of the October 23, 2006 meeting were approved as written. Peter Corning moved acceptance, and Todd Goldsmith seconded the motion.

NEW BUSINESS

A presentation was made by Elaine Kendall and Susan Corning regarding a proposed GMO precautionary moratorium in San Juan County. The ARC agreed to have this initiative included in its subcommittee work.

A presentation was made by Peter Corning regarding the recent farm stand issue and challenges experienced by Synergy Farm. The ARC agreed to have this issue include in its subcommittee work.

OLD BUSINESS

Administrative Issues

The ARC agreed to establish three standing subcommittees for 2007, with membership and highest priority issues as follows:

1. Farm Marketing (incl. Education & Outreach)

Farm Marketing Subcommittee: Tom Schultz (acting Chair/Convenor), Jane Burton-Bell, Bruce Gregory, Ralph Hahn, Sara Jones, Jim Lawrence, Julie Miller, Rebecca Moore, Madden Surbaugh, Richard Anderson

Highest Priority Issues:

- a. Year-Round Farmers Market Facility (19 priority points)
- b. Access to Local Products (10 priority points)
- c. Food Co-op (9 priority points)
- d. Food Security (6 priority points)
- e. Farm-to-Cafeteria/School Programs (2 priority points)

2. Farmland Preservation

Farmland Preservation Subcommittee: Sara Jones (Chair/Convenor), Ken Akopiantz, Eliza Habegger, Jim Lawrence

Highest Priority Issues:

- a. Access to Land (14 priority points)
- b. Ag Incubator Program (for a New Farmer encouragement focus?)

3. Farm Regulation

Farm Regulation Subcommittee: Ken Akopiantz (Chair/Convenor), Christina Dahl-Sesby, Todd Goldsmith, Mark Tompkins, Ron Zee, Shireene Hale, Candace Jagel

Highest Priority Issues: (regulation received 21 priority points without issue designation)

- a. Farm Stands - short-term action issue (agreed by ARC members present as a new priority) to define farm stands and offer a resolution on this issue

- b. Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) (8 priority points) - mid-term action issue, Todd to serve on County CAO Review Committee as ARC representative
- c. GMO Precautionary Moratorium (3 priority points) - long-term action issue, Ron to serve as liaison with volunteer action team already identified by Elaine Kendall

County Issues

Shireene Hale reported to the committee that the County is making slow progress on the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO). Hale believes that Dept. of Ecology requirements on winter grazing can be met locally. There will be no blanket exemptions possible, however, there may be County assistance for farm infrastructure improvements. Hale and team are interested in input from farmers and the ARC on implementing plans.

Goldsmith requested that a sample Farm Plan process with CAO compliance recommendations be put up on the San Juan County Conservation District website.

NEXT MEETING

Our **next ARC meeting** will be **Tuesday, January 23** at the **Lopez Library** from **1:30-3:00 PM**. The WSU Extension Conference Room will be available for our meeting for ARC members who cannot come to Lopez. David Bauermeister, Executive Director of the Northwest Agricultural Business Center, will be invited to the meeting for a presentation. The new County Council Members (Gene Knapp, Richard Peterson, and Howie Rosenfeld) will be invited to an upcoming meeting of the ARC.