

Agricultural Resources Committee

Minutes of December 14, 2009

2:00 – 4:00 PM

Garden Room, Key Bank, Friday Harbor

ARC Members Present: Jane Burton Bell, Tim Clark, Peter Corning, Roger Ellison, Bruce Gregory, Sara Jones, Hawk Pingree, Jim Sesby, Dana Kinsey, Tom Schultz, Madden Surbaugh, Ken Wood, Mark Tompkins

ARC Members Absent: Eliza Habegger, Charly Robinson, Ron Zee

Friends Present: Rich Anderson, Candace Jagel

ARC Staff Present: Eliza Buck, Peggy Bill

MINUTES

Bruce Gregory moved to approve November 18, 2009 minutes. Tim Clark seconded. Hawk Pingree suggested minor revisions. Motion unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

ARC Coordinator

Eliza welcomed Peggy Bill as new ARC Coordinator.

Report from AG Guild

Jane Burton Bell reminded ARC that the public forum held by Town Council to discuss the permanent farmers' market is scheduled for Thursday, December 19, 2009 at 5:30 pm. She reported that the permanent farmer's market is still under consideration by Town, and that the Town will prepare a MOU (memorandum of understanding) which sets five conditions for review prior to closing. Closing is now anticipated for June 2010. If Town does not follow through to purchase the property, the AG Guild has discussed the idea of stepping in to purchase the building so that this important opportunity is not lost.

Farmland Preservation Subcommittee

Peggy Bill introduced Tim Clark as the new chair of the Farmland Preservation Committee. Peg provided an update on SJCC's proposal to increase the fee for applicants to the new Farm and Agriculture Conservation Tax program. A fee of \$3,000 per application had been proposed as a means to fully recover actual staff costs per application. Council voted 4 to 1 against changing the fee, noting that state law currently supports public expenditure in favor of providing tax incentives for resource and open space lands.

Farmer Enrichment Subcommittee

Tom Shultz reported that there was a field trip to Red Rabbit Farm on December 10th. Candace, Eliza, Peggy and Madden met with Christina Orchid at her farm on Orcas to talk about the idea of a culinary school project. Christine has already developed a successful culinary school program with guest chefs, using an excellent cooking facility in a barn. Christina recommended that ARC "start small" to try one or two projects

initially on SJI and Orcas, and noted that she would be willing to offer her services and facility for a kick off project. The issue of an ICL Coordinator to oversee this type of project was discussed briefly, including whether that position would be housed in ARC or in AG Guild, and whether the position would also be responsible for organizing SJC Agriculture Products Guide.

Regulatory Issues

Farm Stand/Farm Store Permits

Eliza provided an update on the Farm Stand/Farm Store Permit Application. A new form has been prepared by Mark Tompkins to specifically address questions that pertain to Farm Stands. Both Eliza and Peggy reviewed it and provided a few recommendations that were incorporated into the application. The new form will make it much easier for farmers to get necessary permits. Mark Tompkins said that they were ready for use. Thanks to Mark Tompkins for his assistance in getting that resolved.

Labor – Small Family Farm Interns

Eliza Buck reported that Senator Ranker had asked Mac Nicholzen, Counsel to the Labor & Commerce Committee, and an expert on WS and federal labor law, to work directly with ARC to draft small family farm intern legislation. Eliza noted that Bruce Gregory, Peter Corning, and Peggy Bill would be talking with, regarding a proposed draft of the legislation.

Peter Corning noted that he is hoping to create an educational niche for small family farms, also noting that we are not trying to create a loophole to get around labor laws. If L&I requires workmen's comp, then we hope to establish a lower rate than currently required for the category of "temporary workers". Tim Clark suggested that we make sure that SJCC is kept up-to-date on the legislation, especially given the fact that we are already working directly with Senator Ranker. Candace noted the importance of getting WSU Small farms and Tilth engaged to build regional and statewide support.

NEW BUSINESS

2010 meeting schedule

Peggy Bill reported that 2010 ARC meetings will be scheduled from 2-4 pm on the 4th Wednesday of every month. A meeting on Orcas and Lopez will be scheduled either in the spring or fall. Madden Surbaugh suggested the idea of meeting on the ferry, similar to OPALCO's annual meeting.

CAO

Bruce Gregory provided an update on the status of CAO. The state has extended the deadline for SSB 5248, particularly pertaining to resolution of agricultural issues from proposed statewide approaches to riparian, shoreline, and wetland protection. There is concern about an increased emphasis on enforcement-based approaches. Bruce recommends that ARC stay current on these issues, especially as it relates to potential impacts on agricultural lands. Bruce offered to provide information to allow for more detailed discussion at January ARC meeting.

Resilience Institute – SJC Focus group

Peggy provided an update on the Resilience Institute's proposed all day discussion in SJC scheduled for February 2, 2010. Peggy, Eliza, and Candace had recommended a diverse group of farmers for participation in the Focus Group, including several ARC members. Peggy was asked to explore possibilities for ARC to be more involved in the project. Madden commented on the relevance of the topic, and suggested that ARC take time as a group to address some of these issues, especially regarding resiliency and consideration of agricultural response to a disaster. Roger asked whether we could engage the county's disaster preparedness department. Peg noted that Lopez Community Land Trust is sponsoring a food charrette on January 30th to address some of these questions. Everyone is invited.

SJC Agricultural Action Plan

Hawk asked for feedback from ARC about the proposed Action Plan. Madden commented that the Pierce Co Action Plan overview provided good organization, but needed more substance. Tom recommended that we prioritize actions, noted that EDC will be a partner. Ken suggested that we should be clear about why we are doing a plan, and who our audience is. Eliza noted that it should reflect the mandate, set a vision and strategic plan, and that it can be used as an educational tool, especially for working with SJCC and EDC. Roger views it as a roadmap for ARC to fulfill our mandate. Jane commented that the historical context of agriculture in SJC is an important element that should be included. Madden commented that we should incorporate the findings from the farm surveys and supported the idea of using the plan to look to the past as an historical reference, describe the current state of agriculture in the county, and look to a vision of the future for agriculture in SJC. Hawk led a discussion about our assumptions about agriculture in SJC. Comments included: local food is better; multiplier effect of a strong agriculture economy; subsistence farming; the difference between "rural character" of a landscape vs. agricultural lands; tax incentives for agriculture and open space is important; etc. Hawk will lead a more detailed discussion of the Action Plan at the January meeting

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the full ARC will be 2-4 pm on Wednesday, January 27, 2010.

Appreciation of Eliza

A gift certificate was given to Eliza, in appreciation for all her good work over the last 3 years.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm, followed by a small party in honor of Eliza.