

Agricultural Resources Committee

Minutes of February 24, 2010

2:00 – 4:00 PM

Whidbey Island Bank, Friday Harbor

ARC Members Present: Jane Burton Bell, Tim Clark, Peter Corning, Roger Ellison, Bruce Gregory, Sara Jones, Dana Kinsey, Hawk Pingree, Madden Surbaugh, Ron Zee

ARC Members Absent: Eliza Habegger, Charly Robinson, Tom Schultz, Jim Sesby, Mark Tompkins, Ken Wood

Friends Present: Candace Jagel

ARC Staff Present: Peggy Bill

MINUTES

Hawk Pingree moved to approve Minutes of January 27, 2010. Bruce Gregory seconded. Motion unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Report from AG Guild

Jane Burton Bell reported on status of the permanent farmer's market. Town of FH may decide not to follow through on purchase. RBEG Grant is looking hopeful. Ag Guild will be notified in April. Farmer's Market will be commencing one time per month starting March 3rd.

Farmland Preservation Subcommittee

Tim Clark updated everyone on the Land Bank leasing process for the 53 acre Frazier Homestead on SJI. There have been fewer inquiries compared to King Sister's. The goal is to make a decision by mid-March. Applications are due by March 8th. Candace Jagel asked whether infrastructure could be improved on the site. Tim responded that the LB is receptive and is also discussing the issue of housing, as there are no structures on the site. They are working to find solutions. Tim also noted that the SJCLB combined data with SJPT to provide a map that shows all public and private conserved agricultural lands in the county.

Sara, Peggy and Tim met with Bruce Dunlop, Commissioner of Port of Lopez, to talk about a FarmLink opportunity on Port property adjoining Lopez airport. The Port has about 20 acres that they would like to lease for farming. Jane noted that SJI Port District also has farmland for lease, and Peg noted that Port of Orcas has leased land for a community garden. We will follow-up.

Ron Zee briefly discussed ARC's proposed policy regarding no net loss of farmland. He recommended that ARC use a resolution adopted in Whatcom County's as a template for redrafting the previous policy. Ron, Tim and Peggy will work on this and will present at ARC meeting in March.

Farmer Enrichment Subcommittee

The Farmer Enrichment Subcommittee meeting was held on February 22nd. Deborah Hopkins of SJC Visitor's Bureau also attended. Candace described the subcommittee's proposal to organize a "farm weekend" targeted for late spring (May 15?). Farm events would be scheduled for one weekend, with demonstrations, classes, or activities on 6-8 farms on SJI. SJC Visitor's Bureau would promote. Several ARC members discussed ideal timing for these events, as both spring and fall are busy seasons for farmers. The Farmers Enrichment group will continue to develop this idea, and will be talking with specific farms to get their commitments and ideas. They will provide more information at the next ARC meeting.

ICL Program: Peggy met with David Bauermeister, ED of NABC concerning potential funding for ICL Program. NABC has recently helped launch a similar project on Whidbey Island. They are seeking grant funding that could be directed towards development of our ICL Program. Peg will continue to meet with NABC to explore funding options, and will include Madden and Candace in future meetings, if possible.

Resilience Institute: Peter Corning, Bruce Gregory, and Sara Jones all attended the focus sessions on February 2nd sponsored by WSU Resilience Institute. The group was provided with several 50 year scenarios, and were all asked to consider potential impacts to farmers and potential solutions. In general, the group felt that local farmers would be proactive to adapt and prepare for potential threats and challenges.

Regulatory Issues

Labor - SB 6349, establishing an intern program on small farms

Peg noted that SB 6349 would be scheduled for hearings in the House. She promised to keep everyone informed of progress.

NEW BUSINESS

2010 Work Plan

Peg reminded everyone that ARC will be providing their annual report to SJCC on March 2nd. SJCC will be asked to approve our proposed 2010 work plan at that time. ARC was asked to review and approve the plan. Candace asked about including GMO as a priority. It was decided that ARC would have a discussion of the issue at a future meeting. *Action: Ron asked for a motion to approve the 2010 Work Plan, with changes noted. Bruce Gregory moved to approve, and Peter Corning seconded. Motion unanimously approved.*

2009 Accomplishments

Members were asked to list and rank the ARC accomplishments for 2009, for inclusion in SJCC presentation. The accomplishments were ranked as follows: 1) development of legislation to establish intern programs on small farms (SB 6349); 2) Mapping of agricultural lands in SJC (OFP grant); 3) Assisted SJC Assessor and landowners regarding compliance with Open Space Farm & Agriculture Program; 4) Worked with SJC CDPD to address Farm Stand permits; and 5) collaboration with EDC.

SJC EDC

Candace requested that Victoria Compton, ED of EDC, or Patty Miller, President of the EDC, attend a future ARC meeting to discuss their priorities and the opportunities for agriculture. Peg offered to follow up to schedule that meeting.

SJC Agricultural Action Plan

Ron provided a brief review of the outline for the Action Plan. Island by island meetings will be held to get input from the larger community, after a draft has been completed. ARC members were asked to provide comments and suggestions to the outline prior to the next mtg. Hawk will incorporate the comments for further discussion.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the full ARC will be 2-4 pm on Wednesday, March 24, 2010, at the Whidbey Island Bank.

Meeting was adjourned at 4 pm.