



**Agricultural Resources Committee**

Minutes of January 19, 2011

11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Whidbey Island Bank, Friday Harbor

**ARC Members Present:** Jane Burton Bell, Tim Clark, Peter Corning, Roger Ellison, Bruce Gregory, Candace Jagel, Sara Jones, Tom Schultz, Jim Sesby, Madden Surbaugh, Ron Zee

**ARC Members Absent:** Dana Kinsey, Hawk Pingree

**Guests:** Ian Harlow (by phone), Leslie Garcia, Doug Seibert, Boyd Pratt

**ARC Staff Present:** Peggy Bill

**WELCOME & CHANGES TO AGENDA**

- **Minutes:** The minutes of the October 27, 2010 ARC meeting were not available; they will be circulated and approved by email.
- **Public Comment:** There was no public comment.
- **Agenda:** Sara asked if a date could be set for an ag event on Lopez in the spring. This will be taken up at the February meeting of the Farmer Enrichment Subcommittee.

**CHAIR’S REPORT**

- **New ARC Meeting Schedule:** The winter ferry schedule will end in March, and the spring schedule should make attendance easier. A new meeting schedule, involving fewer business meetings and more outreach to the other islands, was suggested. A prime concern was the ability to do all the business work in two hours. It was moved by Sara Jones, seconded by Peter Corning, and carried that 6-7 longer meetings be held (not in the summer), with additional outreach meetings to be held on the other islands. In order to deal with timely and/or strategic issues, the formation of an executive committee (composed of the chair, vice chair, former chair, and any interested at -large members) was suggested. It was moved by Ron Zee, seconded by Tim Clark and carried to create an executive committee as discussed. Candace, Tim, Ron, Tom, and Bruce stepped forward to serve.
- **New Council—ARC Outreach:** There are two new county council members: Patty Miller (East Orcas) and Jamie Stephens (Lopez). The ARC members were urged to talk with the new members and develop good working relationships with their council members.

**COORDINATOR’S REPORT**

- **County Council Update:** March 1<sup>st</sup> is the annual update and review with the county council. The ARC will present our 2011 Work Plan at that time. ARC members are urged to meet with and educate the council members on farm issues.
- **ARC Office Moving:** The ARC office will be moving to the Conservation District office (thank you, CD!). Peggy will talk with Pete Rose about money for overhead and supplies. The ARC is working with the EDC on accounting procedures; there will be a meeting next week to work out differences. The question arose as to whether there was an organization other than the EDC that could receive .09 Funds; this will be investigated.

- **Small farm intern program:** There are two known applicants for the program in the county, with potentially two more. Ian expressed interest; Peggy will email him information, which he can hopefully disseminate among Orcas farmers.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Farm Regulations:** Jim Sesby, chair of the Regulations Subcommittee, reported on the following:

- **Farm stand regulations: In response to feedback from farmers and the SJC Planning Commission,** the Regulations Subcommittee proposed to amend the ARC's draft language for Chapter 18 in support of farm stands and agritourism opportunities. This includes: a new definition of "farm stands"; a size limit (400 sq. ft.); and a requirement that at least 75% of the annual sales be from products grown or processed by the farm operation. The regulations are still being revised; they will be sent out by email for approval.

**Farm Business Enrichment:** Tom Schultz, chair of Farmer Enrichment Subcommittee, provided the following updates:

- **Island Grown Program:** The Island Grown program, formerly known as the Island Certified Local program, is moving ahead with market branding for restaurants and food purveyors, as well as farms and producers. The membership has been doubled to approximately 64 members. A draft logo and brochure were circulated, with the caution that changes are still being made. Various suggestions were offered and noted.
- **Agritourism:** Deborah Hopkins, Hawk Pingree, and Sandy Strehlou continue to meet about the Scenic Byways Plan to ensure proposals that support agriculture and agri-tourism. The Subcommittee will address upcoming agriculture tourism events at their next meeting, including a discussion of potential dates. Sara Jones will join the discussion.

**Farmland Preservation:** Tim Clark, chair of Farmland Preservation Subcommittee, provided the following updates:

- **Farm and Agricultural Conservation Program.** A new section has been developed for farmland that has been farmed historically. The proposed changes have been through the SJC Planning Commission twice. The version they have put forward is conservative. It imposes a seven-year time limit after which a conservation easement must be placed on the farmland for it to remain in the program; it includes a requirements that the farmland be subdividable. No points for other resources are allowed. The third and last "touch" by the county council, which will include a public hearing, is scheduled for January 25<sup>th</sup>. Although some suggestions for change were made, it was pointed out this has been in process for four years, and this is our last chance to get it adopted. Thirteen other counties have Farm and Agricultural Conservation Programs in place; however, as proposed, SJC's would be one of the most conservative. Committee members were urged to talk with their council members and testify at the hearing.

**Strategic Action Plan Update:** Boyd Pratt, consultant to ARC for the Office of Farmland Preservation grant, gave an update on the Agricultural Strategic Plan.

- **Farmland Mapping.** A database of actively farmed land in the county is being compiled by island. This includes criteria such as ownership (farmed by owner or leased); grown for local market (food or fiber, hay or pasturage, or nursery); infrastructure (barns, outbuildings, ponds, fenced pastures, etc.); and historic barns. This database will help in determining priorities for farmland preservation in the islands. Boyd will be the keeper

of the database; ARC members may ask for spreadsheet/map information from and send comments /data to Boyd.

- **Strategic Plan.** The strategic plan is in process. Issues raised at the two island outreach meetings (Lopez and Orcas) and the ARC Retreat will be prioritized and addressed. A draft strategic plan is due March 15<sup>th</sup> and will be available for comment.

### **DISCUSSION OF 2011 WORK PLAN & PRIORITIES**

Peggy asked that the ARC 2011 Work Plan be discussed to see if it was inclusive and had measurable outcomes. The work plan is due by March 1<sup>st</sup>. It was agreed that an ad hoc committee would meet to prioritize input from ARC members, and outreach meetings and retreat, and then move them into the plan for review and approval by the ARC prior to the March 1<sup>st</sup> presentation to the county council. The 2010 Work Plan was reviewed to consider what elements should be kept in the 2011 Plan, what elements should be deleted, and what revisions should be made. The following comments were offered

#### **Strategic Planning**

- **Strategic Plan:** Finalize in June 2011 and begin implementation of key strategies
- Farmer Enrichment.** (Subcommittee will further develop)
- **Island Grown:** Continue to expand and build program, enroll new members, finalize branding materials, etc.
- **Agritourism:** Continue to promote and coordinate agritourism events in spring and/or fall; consider whether Island Grown fees should go toward ag/farm events.
- **Agricultural Guides:** WSU Extension is currently revising the SJI Farm Products Guide. It was suggested that a new, all-county map be prepared, along the lines of the New Mexico example provided by Ron.
- **Farm-to-School:** Coordinate an annual SJC Farm-To-School Summit to allow exchange of information; someone should pull together the information shared.
- **Permanent Farmer's Market:** Provide ongoing support; Madden will act as liaison between the ARC with the SJI Ag Guild.

#### **Farmland Protection**

- **No Net Loss of Farmland:** Change to "Farmland Preservation Goal"—give it a new name and continue to press for its adoption.
- **Property Tax Incentives:** Continue to promote tax incentives for farmland, including adoption of the Farm & Agriculture Conservation Land (FACL) Program.
- **Program Connecting Farmers to Farmland:** High priority; coordinate a forum for exchange between emerging landless farmers and landowners interested in having their land farmed. Provide models and materials.

#### **Regulations & Policies**

- **Farm Labor:** Continue to promote intern program; seek to make the regulations permanent.
- **Farm Businesses:** Promote regulations and policies that support economic opportunities for farmers.
- **Regulatory Assistance:** Work directly with farmers to offer regulatory assistance.
- **Landuse Policies:** Continue to promote landuse policies that support agriculture.

**Administration:** all of these are on-going.

Committee members were asked to look through the summary of the island outreach meetings and the ARC Retreat and get their ideas on 2011 Work Plan priorities to Peggy.

Madden brought up two issues that he thinks should be addressed: 1) the lack of coordination among farm and agricultural organizations and entities; and 2) a marketing campaign for local food that offers consumer education on why pay more for local food.. Partnerships with the farmers' markets are an important aspect and opportunity. It was resolved to refer this to the Agricultural Business Support Subcommittee.

**The next ARC meeting is February 16, 2011, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., location TBD.**

**The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.**