

## **Agricultural Resources Committee**

Minutes of March 27, 2007

3:00 – 5:00 PM

Orcas Senior Center, Eastsound

**ARC Members Present:** Ken Akopiantz (via phone), Peter Corning (via phone), Christine Dahl-Sesby (via phone), Eliza Habegger, Todd Goldsmith (via phone), Bruce Gregory (via phone), Sara Jones (via phone), Jim Lawrence (via phone), Julie Miller, Madden Surbaugh (via phone), Ron Zee

**ARC Members Absent:** Jane Burton Bell, Ralph Hahn, Rebecca Moore, Tom Schultz, Mark Tompkins

**Friends Present:** Sidney Coffelt, Coffelt Farm Orcas; Bob Connell, Orcas Island; Steve Dipendbrock, Morningstar Farm; Rifaat Fay, SlowFood Orcas; Bill and Barbara Humes, Orcas Island (also representing Bob & Barbara Nutt); Candace Jagel, WSU Extension; Bill Watson, EDC staff; Alicia Miller, Orcas Island;

**CD/ARC Staff Present:** Eliza Buck, Steve Hussey, Danna Kinsey

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ron Zee asked to put off public comment to the end of the meeting when there will be a full group discussion with Orcas farmers present. Ron also wanted to acknowledge the recent loss to our community of Dr. Marcia Zakarison on San Juan Island. Dr. Zakarison was married to ARC member Tom Schultz, who is in our thoughts and prayers. A card from the ARC was sent to Tom and family.

### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the February 27, 2007 meeting were approved as written. Todd Goldsmith moved acceptance, and Julie Miller seconded the motion.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Presentations were made by each of the subcommittees.

#### *Marketing*

Eliza Buck presented for the Marketing Subcommittee.

- Local products certificate program: Eliza drafted a letter and survey to send out to a sample of restaurateurs. ARC moved to send the letters as written. Madden stated that he wanted the Granges and the Farmer's Markets to endorse the program.
- Farm and product signage: Eliza spoke to Public Works and Community Development & Planning about signage project. Farm signage is exempt but Public Works would like to see specifications on signs before they are installed.
- Food system asset mapping: Eliza spoke with Ryan Hembree at Snohomish County Planning Department about their asset mapping project.

Julie Miller made an appeal for help with the Orcas Farmer's Market rent issue.

- County Parks office raised the rent for the Orcas Farmer's Market. The fee will increase by 100% this year. This increase leaves the farmer's market without an operating budget to purchase needed supplies and make improvements. The vendor fees are already high at \$350 for 22 weeks. Lopez and San Juan farmer's market vendors pay substantially less. Julie will send the ARC a copy of the letter she writes to the County Council about this matter. The Marketing Subcommittee will look at this issue in more detail at their next meeting, and it will be on the ARC agenda for April.

### *Preservation*

Eliza Habegger and Sara Jones presented for the Preservation Subcommittee.

- Eliza is investigating Land Bank land lease legalities. The existing ordinance is rigid. There is a maximum lease duration of 10 years and it must go to the highest bidder. The Land Bank will try to work with the CDP to rewrite the ordinance. The County currently defers to State law for long term leases.
- Eliza spoke with Mary Embleton of the Cascade Harvest Coalition about Washington FarmLink and learned that in the program there were four times the number of farmers interested in leasing lands than land owners willing to lease. About 200 farmers and 45 landowner. Embleton is willing to give a workshop about FarmLink and other Cascade Harvest Coalition programs.
- Sara and Eliza Buck working on a bulletin board prototype. Eliza spoke Girl Friday about calendar on website, but it's not ideal. Rex Doane and Eliza working with bulletin board software. A question to farmers about how they would like to use the ARC website would be helpful.

### *Regulation*

Ken Akopiantz and Todd Goldsmith presented for the Regulation Subcommittee.

- After a quick review of the UDC recommendation, Todd Goldsmith forwarded a motion to adopt the recommendation as written. Sara Jones seconded it and the members approved it unanimously.
- Todd Goldsmith gave a brief synopsis of the Board of Health recommendation. Anything in a farm stand that has 75% local farm product will be exempt from fees. Someone selling products more than 25% local farm products will be classified as a farm store and will need to pay a fee. Bruce Gregory motioned to adopt the recommendation as written. Jim Lawrence seconded it and the members approved it unanimously.
- Todd Goldsmith gave an overview of the recommendation to the Fire Marshall. Candace spoke with Fire Marshall Bob Lowe about farm stands within a larger structure. He called the CDP, which said that the whole building would have to go through a permitting process. Sara Jones motioned to adopt the recommendations as written. Bruce Gregory seconded.
- All three recommendations will be sent to their respective agencies and to the County Council.
- Todd Goldsmith gave an update on the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO). An ad hoc task group was formed to create a Conservation Farm Plan section of the

CAO, similar to what Island County has done. They had a good meeting on Lopez with the Tim Gates of CTED (GMA manager) and Paul Anderson from the Department of Ecology (a wetland specialist) who clarified a number of things. They are “on-board” with what the task group is doing. Their support will be instrumental in getting it passed at the state level. There will be a checklist that will help draft a standard farm plan. If the landowner can’t complete the checklist they will need to develop a custom farm plan with the assistance of the Conservation District. The task group will draft final language soon.

#### *ARC Coordinator’s Report*

- The Coordinator’s Report was e-mailed to members several days prior to the meeting. She requested that members bring questions about report to the meeting. There were no questions for the Coordinator.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

ARC Meeting Materials Distribution List & Database Use.

- A discussion about who should get the ARC database. Groups can send us their memos and messages, we can forward the information.

ARC Member Role and Expectations. – Draft accepted by group for distribution.

ARC Articles to Local Media – Eliza notified members that the San Juan Journal has a 250 word limit for letters to the editor.

ARC Logo

- Sara told committee that the logo is still under modification and that the group will have an opportunity to vote on it at the next meeting.

Priority Loading for Agricultural Producers

- Tom Schultz made a presentation to the County Council about the need for priority loading of livestock vehicles. He drafted language changes for WAC 468-300-610 to allow commercial vehicles that have “irregular” schedule like the MPU to qualify under (1)(p). The committee discussed adding other products to the language to include fish and produce. Christina Dahl-Sesby forwarded a motion to add “and fish” to the proposal and send a letter of endorsement to the County Council. Jim seconded. The committee agreed unanimously.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Jim Lawrence lost five sheep last week. He found the skin of a one year-old ewe. Four other sheep were gone from the herd. No traces of who or why this happened.

John Van Lund will be identifying location for dog ordinance signs.

Tomorrow there will be a court hearing on the fate of a pit bull that attacked a child on Orcas. There was a request to invite Bill Cumming, County Sheriff, to a fall ARC meeting.

### **OPEN DIALOGUE WITH ORCAS FARMERS**

Discussion about dog attacks on livestock. Orcas farmers very concerned about the lack of County Sheriff responsiveness to calls about dog attacks. It was suggested that the loss of livestock to dogs should be treated like robbery. Bill Watson of the Economic Development Council suggested that there needed to be a public record made of the economic impact of attacks on livestock.

Steve Dipendbrock of Morningstar Farm requested that the ARC look into the rent issue of the Orcas Farmer's Market. The market is critical to some Orcas Island farmers and the discrepancy between the vendor fees on the three islands is too great.

Sidney Coffelt of Coffelt Farm requested information about regulations for on-farm housing for farm workers.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Our next meeting will be **Tuesday, April 24** at the San Juan Island Grange from **2:00 pm to 4:00.**