

Agricultural Resources Committee (ARC)

Minutes of March 25, 2008

3:15-5:15 PM

Orcas Hotel Parlor Room, Orcas Island

ARC Members Present: Jane Burton Bell, Peter Corning, Christina Dahl-Sesby, Neal Foley, Todd Goldsmith, Eliza Habegger, Danna Kinsey, Jim Lawrence, Julie Miller, Tom Schultz, Madden Surbaugh, Mark Tompkins

ARC Members Absent: Bruce Gregory, Ralph Hahn, Katie Hover, Sara Jones, Rebecca Moore, Ron Zee

ARC Friends Present: Owen Cheevers, Orcas Island; Whitney Hartzell, Orcas Island; Michele Heller, Lopez Island; Bill Humes, Orcas Islands; Mindy Kayl, Orcas Island; Alan Lichter, Council member (Orcas); Kji McIntyre, Orcas Island

CD/ARC Staff Present: Eliza Buck

MINUTES

Danna Kinsey moved approval of the February 26, 2008 minutes. Julie Miller seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

The ARC welcomed new member Neal Foley, chef and farmer on Shaw Island, who raises, cattle, chickens, sheep and pigs. He's part of the Hoffman family that's been on Shaw for three generations.

Public Comment: Michele Heller of Lopez Island introduced the Lopezlocavores. They are a group committed to promoting and eating local food. They are trying to contract with local growers to grow specific products for them. It's a long-term vision for strengthening local agriculture. They prepare a monthly dinner from local foods for the community. Michele handed out a flyer and invited all to attend the next dinner on March 27th. She asked to present at the next ARC meeting. She wants to bring contracts for farmers to consider in providing food for their program. They also want to be a part of coordinated effort for food storage facilities in the islands.

OLD BUSINESS

Farmland Preservation and Farmer Enrichment Programs: Project Task Force Updates

Farmland Preservation

Eliza Habegger presented for the Farmland Preservation Program. The Conservation Easement Education Campaign task force organized three workshops: with LandWorks on partnerships in saving farmland; with an appraiser and the County Assessor on appraisals and open space taxation; and with an attorney on inheritance laws and conservation easements. The workshops were very informative, but attendance was low. County maps for prioritizing farmland preservation are also being worked on. Collaboration with Linda Neunzig of Snohomish County will help us coordinate colors used in coding maps in order to create a regional picture. Tim Clark and Eliza Buck will be working on an inventory of agricultural lands in the county this summer.

The ag lease task force is working out infrastructure details. The Land Bank is having the well tested on the King Sisters property on San Juan Island. Land Bank is aiming for listing the property in the

summer. A rate sheet has been developed. The County Council has approved the Land Bank purchase of an easement on the Coffelt property on Orcas.

Kji McIntyre asked what the ARC was doing to assist new and young farmers. Eliza B. suggested that the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild may be in a better position to assist farmers since they have the ability to raise funds and get grant money for projects. WSU Extension has many programs such as Cultivating Success, etc. Mentorships were recommended. Bill Humes told how a small group of farmers pushed the county for the Open Space Taxation Program in the '80s and the program was finally adopted in 1991.

Enterprise Budget

Candace Jagel reported for the Enterprise Budget task force. They recommend that dairy, grain and meat would be the priority enterprises to work on. They also recommend that it would be more a feasibility study, and only one study in 2008 because we're moving into peak season. There is only \$1,500 per study/budget, which would need to be completed within six months. A handout outlining the feasibility study included three sections: investment potential, enterprise budget and data analysis.

The committee voted on their priorities and agreed on the order of: 1) grain, 2) meat and 3) dairy.

Neal Foley was asked and agreed to join the Enterprise Budget task force.

The Land Trust on Lopez is talking about a farm equipment cooperative.

CAO Update

Todd Goldsmith reported that the committee has met twice since the last ARC meeting. They've only worked on two out of five sections: critical aquifer recharge areas and fish and wildlife sections. Neither of the two sections has been completed yet. They have made all the changes to the comp plan elements. They will meet with the Health Department on June 19th to go over ordinance language.

Farm to School

Jane Burton-Bell reported on the Farm-to-School task force. The task force sees the role of the ARC as being a facilitator for farm to school programs. They will monitor activities, keep interested parties informed and try to create some cohesion in the county. They are recommending a summit of all the school districts in the county. They drafted a letter to assess interest. Eliza B. will follow up.

Michele Heller said that a group from Lopez School is going to attend a summer institute at the Center for Ecoliteracy on curriculum for farm to school programs. The institute will be from June 22-27 in Marin County, CA. A second institute will take place August 9-13 in NYC. The Lopez Superintendent and Principal will be attending that institute.

Ag Guild

Jane Burton Bell reported on the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild. Board members are: Elaine Kendall and Peggy Weir, SJI Farmers Market Association (Co-Chairs); Candace Jagel, WSU (Secretary); Bill Watson, EDC (Treasurer); Rebecca Moore, SJI Farmers Market; Bruce Gregory, SJICD; Jane Burton Bell, ARC; Christine Miller, SJC Fair; Rob Waldron, IGFC; Rick Hughes, Orcas Farmers Market; Lopez Farmers Market (pending); Suzy Pingree, At Large; Megan Jones, At Large;

Cloud Oakes, At Large; Denise King, Skagit Valley College (ex-officio); Greg Hertel, Port of Friday Harbor (ex-officio); and David Bauermeister, NABC (ex-officio).

The mission of the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild is to foster a vibrant and sustainable local food system in San Juan County, Washington, through technical and financial support to the agricultural community, and consumer education and advocacy on their behalf.

The vision statement is: Agriculture is a vital component of our rural islands' extraordinary beauty and abundance. Through a supportive community and regulatory environment in the County, more farmers, ranchers, food processors and food vendors prosper, and all islanders benefit from the subsequent local bounty. We envision a strong agricultural sector with many successful farmers producing a majority of the food consumed by islanders, thereby creating self-reliance and food security. San Juan County is a model in creative solutions for farmland preservation and in its support of farmers and in its celebration of our agricultural heritage.

Lovel Pratt is the Project Director who is actively seeking grants. Eliza B. has submitted two grants through the NABC. The Ag Guild has applied for 501c3 status. Suzy Pingree has created a website www.sjiagguild.net. Madden Surbaugh is hosting a fundraising dinner on May 18th at Steps. Vance Corum will meet with the Guild that weekend. The Ag Guild is asking the ARC for donations to the Guild: Jane suggested \$100. Todd will check with Ron Zee about the ability to donate.

Farmer Enrichment

Tom Schultz reported on the Farmer Enrichment Program, which has six areas: permanent farmers market, ICL program expansion, fall harvest dinner, farm to school programs, agritourism and mobile poultry processing unit. Farm to school, ICL expansion, agritourism, and fall harvest dinner are active. Permanent farmers market task force goals have been completed. Mobile poultry processing unit task force is inactive.

The Islands Certified Local (ICL) program task force and the agritourism task force have merged, and are meeting once a month. Fifty-two surveys were mailed and seventy were emailed. Eighteen have been returned. The task force is trying to define criteria for certification of processors and producers. The ICL will have a banner ad in the Puget Sound Fresh Farm Guide.

Michele Heller offered to promote the ICL program through the Local Meals on Lopez sponsored by the Lopezlocavores. Eliza B. will send her an ICL poster.

Agritourism ideas were presented through a diagram. The task force is trying to come up with a position statement to present to the County.

Coordinator's Report

Eliza passed around the 2008 Work Plan and requested comments and changes be sent to her via email. The ARC received a request from County Council Chair Howie Rosenfeld to weigh in on the role of agricultural lands in storm water mitigation. Bruce Gregory wrote a preliminary response, which was forwarded to Howie. Eliza B. requested a position statement from the ARC.

Todd pointed out that non-native grasses are considered impervious. Bruce said it was contradictory to the national standards such as grassed waterways and vegetative buffers. The Federal Government pays farmers to use these practices. It was agreed that the ARC would send a letter with a list of best management practices (BMPs) that mitigate storm water runoff and examples of farms in the county using them. Tom asked that animal agriculture be promoted in the letter because it is coming under a lot of pressure and it is our largest farm gate product. The letter will be circulated to the committee for comment.

Danna Kinsey reported that the County has dug a drainage ditch on the property her family manages for storm water run off. She is not sure of Public Works' motivation.

NEW BUSINESS

Refocus the ARC

Eliza B. encouraged the ARC to meet on Monday rather than Tuesday in order to be able to attend County Council meetings during public comment. The ARC agreed to try Mondays. The next meeting will be held on April 28, 2008.

Danna Kinsey made a motion to move the meeting from the fourth Tuesday to the fourth Monday of the month. Julie Miller seconded it. The motion was unanimously approved.

Eliza reported that the new Stewardship Network of the San Juans requested that the ARC nominate a steward for agricultural steward award. Nomination forms were distributed. She also announced that the Stewardship Network will host an event on April 19, 2008 on Lopez Island.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mindy Kayl reported that there is a water pipeline being introduced that will move 5,000 gallons of water a day from Crow Valley where Charles Arnt's farm is down along Dolphin Bay Rd. three miles to a subdivision. She requested that the ARC send a letter in protest. The developer is moving water from a well and trying to make it a Class B utility. The well is in a hay field that has been used sporadically for grazing. The property was purchased for water rights only. Todd told the committee that the applicant will have to file for a water right with the Department of Ecology. A notice will be posted. That is the point at which the public can contest it. There is a \$50 filing fee. Mindy and Danna will send information to the ARC.

Mindy Kayl thanked the ARC for the bulletin board. She finds it very useful.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be **April 28, 2008**, San Juan Island (location and time TBA).