

Agricultural Resources Committee (ARC)

Minutes of May 27, 2008

12:00 – 2:00 PM

Coho Restaurant, Friday Harbor

ARC Members Present: Jane Burton Bell, Peter Corning, Christina Dahl-Sesby, Neal Foley, Todd Goldsmith, Bruce Gregory, Eliza Habegger, Sara Jones, Danna Kinsey, Tom Schultz, Madden Surbaugh, Mark Tompkins, Ron Zee

ARC Members Absent: Ralph Hahn, Jim Lawrence

Friends Present: Peggy Bill, Tom French, Candace Jagel, Bill Watson

CD/ARC Staff Present: Eliza Buck, Tim Clark

MINUTES

No quorum in April so March 25, 2008 minutes were not approved. *Todd moved to accept the March and April minutes. Sara seconded.*

Public Comment: Chef Tom French introduced himself and talked about his work on farm-to-school projects. He's talking with the San Juan Island School District on a full scale pilot "demonstration" of local food in the school cafeteria. He has private backers interested in the project. He inquired about production capacity and infrastructure needs. There is public meeting tonight at 6:30 PM at Mullis Center.

OLD BUSINESS

Farmland Preservation and Farmer Enrichment Programs: Project Task Force Updates

Farmland Preservation

Eliza Habegger gave an update on the Land Bank's application for a grant from the state for farmland preservation to purchase a conservation easement on the old Kjargaard farm. She invited the committee to attend a county council meeting where the Land Bank will ask for support –June 10th at 3 PM.

King sister's lease project is moving along. The well passed testing: 5.5 gallons per minute. They are working on changing a driveway easement that affects the building site.

The Coffelt Farm sell to the Land Bank has been completed.

Tim Clark gave a report on the Agricultural Conservation Easement Education Campaign. Neal Foley gave a talk on farming options of Shaw Island. Tim will be submitting articles to the Project Home section of the Islands Weekly monthly. There is a clause in the Open Space tax program called Farm and Agricultural Conservation Land, which is for land that no longer meets the Ag Open Space program requirements. Our county rating system does not work in favor of farms. Tim will be working with the county planning department to rework the criteria. Mapping of farmland is underway through a windshield survey and existing maps.

Eliza Buck reported that Jim Lawrence represented the ARC at a meeting in Yakima held by the state Community, Trade and Economic Development office on farm worker housing. He said small farms were underrepresented and that no effective solutions were offered for small farmers. In a follow up

email, Dan Fazio of the Washington Farm Bureau proposed that a separate category be developed for small farmers. Marty Miller, the executive director of Office of Rural and Farm Worker Housing wrote to Jim and told him that they would work with islanders to find solutions.

Farmer Enrichment

Tom Schultz gave an update on the farmer enrichment task forces. They have developed a definition on agritourism and included heritage barns due to the recommendation made by Sandy Strehlou of 100 Friends of Old Island Barns in order to have a placeholder in any plans for the Scenic Byways plans. Committee added ag educational events and farm tours & trails to the definition.

Jane Burton-Bell motioned that the definition be forwarded to the County Council for inclusion in the county code and to the Economic Development Council for inclusion in the Economic Development Element. (Couldn't hear who seconded the motion).

Tom reported on the ICL program expansion. We sent out a survey to determine what fees and services farmers and food processors would consider for ICL program participation. Eighteen surveys were returned. The committee decided that there would be a \$25 annual fee, processors must use at least 75% local ingredients excluding water, livestock must live at least 50% of their lifespan in the county. Local means San Juan County.

Todd motioned to have the ICL task force move forward with the expansion program as discussed. Bruce seconded. The committee unanimously approved.

CAO Update

Todd Goldsmith requested that someone else from the committee join him in representing the ARC on the CAO committee. He had not attended the last two meetings. The next meeting will be June 3, 2008.

Ag Guild Update

Jane Burton Bell reported that the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild had a fundraising event on Sunday, May 18th at Steps Wine Bar and Café. Vance Corum was the guest speaker. Over \$4,000 was raised by the event. Vance also did a rapid assessment survey at the farmer's market on San Juan Island. There were nearly 300 responses. The Ag Guild will be able to use results decision-making and writing grants. The Ag Guild has a table at the farmers market weekly to promote the permanent farmers market project. The next meeting is on June 3, 2008 at 1:30 PM.

Coordinator's Report

Rebecca Moore resigned from the ARC in order to put her energy into the new San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild.

Committee agreed that the ARC would sell ICL t-shirts available at the fair.

NEW BUSINESS

Presentation from San Juan Islands Visitor's Bureau (SJIVB)

Deborah Hopkins and Robin Jacobson spoke about the SJIVB's efforts to support local agriculture. Deborah, the director, started by giving their mission statement: "to enhance the economic prosperity of

San Juan County by promoting the San Juan Islands as a preferred, year-round travel destination, while respecting and sustaining the Islands' unique and diverse ecosystems, environments, lifestyles and cultures." One of their four primary goals is to foster an appreciation for our maritime and rural ways of life. Agritourism and culinary tourism are very hot items right now. People want to get out and experience real farms. The visitor's bureau is funded by the county and town hotel/motel tax. They are a membership organization with over 300 members including many farms and wineries. They produce a 36-page brochure with listings of members including the ARC and the farmers markets, which has a 175,000-piece distribution. Their website received over 1 million hits in one year. They were instrumental in getting the ferry route and islands designated for the state scenic byway program.

Robin, the media-relations manager, pointed out a significant pitch she calls "island farms and the best of northwest cuisine", which is getting huge national and international attention. "Islands Certified Local program – a partnership between island farms and restaurants. Farm to table, all island grown and prepared, this food is FRESH. The longest transport time between islands is one hour so how old could it be? Many of our restaurants and B&Bs participate in the ICL program, which stands for Islands Certified Local. These businesses use a minimum of 5% local farm products from the San Juan Islands such as vegetables, fruits, meats, cheeses, herbs and so on. Many island chefs have their own organic garden, walking from the garden to the kitchen as they prepare the evening's menu. Farms abound in the islands providing a large assortment of choices for chefs and visitors alike." She uses a hyperlink to the ARC website ICL page. Farm to table opportunities are appropriate agritourism options for the islands.

Savor the San Juans: A Medley of Food, Art and Culture is a month long festival in October. Some restaurants will be offering a 3-course meal for \$30 Thurs-Sun in October.

Thank you to leaving officers and members

Todd Goldsmith, Katie Hover, Julie Miller, Rebecca Moore, and Ron Zee.

Ron Zee extended a note of appreciation to Rex Doane for managing the ARC website.

Election of New Officers

Bruce Gregory, Chair; San Juan Islands Conservation District

Eliza Habegger, Vice-chair; San Juan County Land Bank

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Contra Dance on June 21, 2008 at the SJI Grange. The proceeds will go to the ARC.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be **September 22, 2008** (Place & time to be announced in August).