



Agricultural Resources Committee

Minutes of May 26, 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, Candace Jagel, Sara Jones, Hawk Pingree, Jim Sesby, Tom Schultz, Ken Wood, Mark Tompkins, Ron Zee

ARC Members Absent: Eliza Habegger, Dana Kinsey, Madden Surbaugh

Guests: Rich Anderson, Liz Illg, Deborah Hopkins, Dan Borman, State Senator Ranker, Fred Berman

ARC Staff Present: Peggy Bill

MINUTES

Ron noted changes to April 28 minutes. Tim moved to approve the April 28, 2010 minutes as amended. Jane seconded. *Motion unanimously approved.*

NEW BUSINESS

Scenic Byways. Liz Illg, San Juan Islands Scenic Byway program, and Deborah Hopkins, San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau, updated the ARC on the Scenic Byway process and noted opportunities for future funding for agricultural projects related to the byway. All potential elements must be listed in the San Juan Islands Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. The ARC agreed to support ongoing involvement.

The ARC Farmer Enrichment Subcommittee is the ARC lead on this. Subcommittee member Hawk agreed to represent the ARC on the scenic byway committee.

GMO. Peter presented a brief summary of efforts to date regarding GMOs, including voluntary pledges signed by over 100 farmers several years ago. The economic benefits of a GMO-free zone were considered, including potential economic opportunities for seed growers and seed companies. It was noted that WSDA is technically “in charge” of plants in Washington State and would need to authorize a GMO exclusion zone. Candace agreed to research how an exclusion zone for certain crops was established in Skagit Valley. A GMO Task Force was established and will meet in next few months to discuss next steps. ARC members interested in participating in the GMO Task Force include Candace, Jim, Peter, Roger, Bruce, and Ken. Additional names were also proposed, and these people will be contacted. Peg will coordinate a GMO Task Force meeting.

ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS. *Candace Jagel was nominated for chair, and Tim Clark was nominated for vice-chair. Unanimous approval.*

ARC COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Office of Farmland Preservation Grant. Peg collaborated with Tim, representing the ARC and the San Juan County Land Bank (Land Bank), and Katie Hover, representing the San Juan Preservation Trust (Preservation Trust), to submit a grant proposal to the state Office of Farmland Preservation for \$25,000. The focus of the grant would be to conduct research and outreach to identify priorities for farmland conservation and strategies for strengthening SJC's agricultural economy. The final product will be a San Juan County Agricultural Strategic Action Plan. The ARC will be notified by mid-June whether it will receive the grant. The project would start date in July and be completed at the end of June 2011.

.09 funds. The San Juan County Council approved ~\$5,000 from .09 funds to be used for advancing the Island Certified Local (ICL) program. Peg will work with EDC to develop a plan, including outreach surveys, to evaluate the interest, goals and priorities of businesses that source local products and of the farmers and food processors who produce them.

SJC Fair. The ARC, WSU Extension, the San Juan Islands Conservation District, and the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild will collaborate to organize the Ag Tent at the Fair. ARC member participation is encouraged.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Farmer Enrichment. Tom provided an update on the Certified Islands Local Program (ICL). We are currently seeking funding through Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC) as part of a USDA Specialty Crops grant that they have submitted. The funds would be used to more fully develop the ICL Program to expand the benefits and marketing opportunities of members, and to increase the number of members. The EDC has requested additional county .09 funds to support the ICL Program. Discussions about the name and logo are ongoing. The subcommittee has also focused on providing input on the Scenic Byways Program. It is critical to provide input to make sure that agriculture is represented in the plan. Tom also summarized the subcommittee's focus on agri-tourism, and summarized the *Islands Farm & Feast: Taste Spring in the San Juans* event that took place on San Juan Island on May 14-16. The SJ Visitor's Bureau provided great assistance in regional marketing. Ten farms and 4 businesses participated. All of them reported that they would be interested in participating in a future event. An event is being considered for October, as part of the *Savor the San Juans*.

Farmland Preservation. Tim provided an update on the Land Bank Lease on the Frazer land. The Lease Committee awarded the lease to Mike Sundstrom, who will be using the land for cattle and grain production. Mike sells his beef to the SJI School District for use in their lunch programs. The Lease Committee will be re-evaluating the process so that the end goals of sustainability and public benefit are more clearly articulated and defined. ARC has collaborated with Land Bank and Preservation Trust and will be submitting a grant Office of Farmland

Preservation (OFP) to help research and draft the agricultural strategic plan, which is listed as a top priority for ARC in 2010. OFP will make a decision on grant awards by mid-June, with start date of July 1, 2010. Tim also reported that he and Peg are working with county staff and Prosecuting Attorney's Office to draft a revised Farm & Agriculture Conservation Program, to be included in the county Public Benefit Rating System current use taxation program. The Planning Commission will be holding a workshop on this issue on June 17th.

OTHER BUSINESS

San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild. Jane and Candace provide an update on the status of the permanent farmer's market proposed at 150 Nichols St in Friday Harbor. On May 4, Governor Gregoire signed the State capital budget (ESHB 2836) which included Local Community Projects to be funded through the Commerce Department, including \$375,000 for the purchase of the farmers' market facility. The Ag Guild is waiting for notification regarding a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant submitted for \$99,900 in acquisition funds. The Board is continuing to address concerns and issues raised by the community, and is moving forward with raising additional funds for the project.

SMALL FARM INTERNSHIP PILOT PROGRAM

Washington State Senator Kevin Ranker and WSDA Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program Coordinator Fred Berman joined the ARC for a discussion of the pilot program. Fred provided a brief history of intern labor laws, including the pilot legislation adopted by the state legislature this spring. The goal is to take the program statewide after the pilot program sunsets in 2011. Senator Ranker recommended that the ARC work with Washington State Labor & Industry (L&I) this summer to begin program implementation. Questions regarding curriculum, number of interns, and timing were discussed with Kevin and Fred. Fred suggested examples of curriculum, such as WSU's "Cultivating Success" Program. The ARC will continue to work with L&I to help set up the applications and solicit applications.

Peg commented that we need to identify ways to solicit applications for the pilot internship program. A meeting with representatives from L&I and representatives from SJC, WSU and other organizations will be scheduled for later in June.

The next ARC meeting is September 22, 2010. Subcommittees will continue to meet over the summer.

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.