

## **Agricultural Resources Committee**

Minutes of November 18, 2009

2:00 – 4:00 PM

Skagit Valley College, Friday Harbor

**ARC Members Present:** Peggy Bill, Jane Burton Bell, Tim Clark, Peter Corning, Roger Ellison, Bruce Gregory, Sara Jones, Hawk Pingree, Christina Dahl- Sesby (for Jim Sesby), Charly Robinson, Madden Surbaugh, Ken Wood, Ron Zee

**ARC Members Absent:** Eliza Habegger, Dana Kinsey, Tom Schultz, Mark Tompkins

**Friends Present:** Richard Anderson, Candace Jagel

**ARC Staff Present:** Eliza Buck

### **MINUTES**

*Hawk Pingree moved to approve the October 26, 2009 minutes. Bruce Gregory seconded. Motion unanimously approved. Ron Zee made some revisions of typographical errors.*

Welcome new ARC member – Ken Wood of Orcas Dreams, Inc., Orcas Island.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **Report on ARC Coordinator Search**

Ron Zee reported that 19 applications were received and 3 finalists were interviewed. An offer is pending. We hope to have the new candidate begin on December 1, 2009.

#### **Report from AG Guild**

Jane Burton Bell reported that the Town Council will hold a public forum on Thursday, November 19, 2009 at 5:30 pm at the Mullis Senior Center to discuss the allocation of \$400K from Hotel/Motel Tax Funds for the purchase of the Nichol Street Brickhouse, which is the proposed site of the permanent farmers market. This is an opportunity for all to voice their opinions.

#### **Farmland Preservation Subcommittee**

Peggy Bill reported that the subcommittee met and discussed moving the farm and AG land open space program is not on the docket for revision until next year. There are 17 landowners who have applied because they no longer are compliant with the OSFA program. The Assessor will not take action until the County approves the open open space program. The OSFA audit is currently on hold because the Assessor's office does not have the staff to work on it. Peggy will ask Charles how the ARC might assist his department.

Gene Knapp has asked for more information about WA counties that have 'no net loss' of farmland policies in place. Eliza provided links and documents.

Peggy spoke about the SJI Community Foundation's interest in funding 3 pilot projects on conserved lands – collaborative projects with the Land Bank, Preservation Trust. They will assist with marketing and business plan and follow the project all the way through. It's currently in the conversation level.

### **Farmer Enrichment Subcommittee**

Madden Surbaugh reported that the subcommittee will visit Christina Orchid & Red Rabbit Farm on Orcas Island on December 10<sup>th</sup> to look at her facilities as a possible venue for the first culinary school workshops.

Hawk Pingree is taking the lead on the AG Action Plan; however, it will be a full committee effort.

The ICL program needs a coordinator in order to have it grow. This coordinator could also work on the AG Guide.

Eliza spoke about postponing the AG Guide project until next fall and asking the EDC to assist WSU with updating the AG Product Guides for SJI and Orcas islands. Eliza will go to the EDC Board on December 9<sup>th</sup> to ask them to fund the product guides as the first phase of the larger project.

### **Labor Issues**

Eliza Buck distributed draft guidelines for small family farm internships, a memorandum to the County Council and a background paper. (Thanks to Peter Corning for working on these documents.)

*Tim Clark moved to forward the draft guidelines, memorandum and background paper to the County Administrator for his commentary before sending it to the County Council. Bruce Gregory seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.*

### **Regulatory Issues**

Eliza reported that she had spoken to Mark Tompkins and Betsy Wingren about concerns farmers have expressed about punitive and unhelpful approaches of the health inspector and department. The permitting of farm stands and farm stores was also discussed. Eliza proposed to write a guide for farm stand/store owners on how to fill out the food establishment permit application. This guide could then be attached to the permit application. A guide was drafted and shared with Mark Tompkins. After reviewing the draft, Mark offered to create a separate application form for farm stand and farm store permitting. He said he would draft the form before the December ARC meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Ag Action Plan Discussion**

Ron expressed an interest in having an action plan ready to approve by the May 2010 ARC meeting. It's really an expanded work plan including goals for a five year period or longer. The committee received links to three documents to review as models:

Snohomish County Agriculture Action Plan, Pierce County Agriculture Strategic Plan, and the Kitsap County Agriculture Action Plan.

Jane Burton-Bell stressed the importance of the historical background of agriculture being included in the plan.

Peggy Bill shared her experience working on a Snohomish County Ag Action Plan and the value of including all stakeholders in the process.

Ken Wood requested discrete sections for each island based on their unique qualities and input from community members.

Ron asked committee members to think about the different priorities and categories for the AG Action Plan to be discussed at the December meeting.

#### **Regulations Subcommittee Discussion**

Ron asked if there were people who want to work on regulatory issues. Candace Jagel asked the ARC to work on right to farm language, which she believes is insufficient and based on personal experience does not protect farmers from private landowner interests. Candace and Ron volunteered for the regulatory subcommittee.

#### **AG Movie Series**

Ron proposed that the ARC sponsor a winter food film series. The ARC agreed that it was a good idea but recommended that our local libraries be encouraged to show recommended films – Good Food, Fresh, Food Inc., and The World According to Monsanto. Charly Robinson volunteered to help get something going on Orcas.

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:49 PM.**

**The next ARC full committee meeting will be on December 14, 2009 from 2-4 pm at Key Bank Community Room (downstairs).**