

Agricultural Resources Committee (ARC)

Minutes of October 27, 2008

1:15-3:30 PM

Lopez Island Library

ARC Members Present: Peter Corning, Todd Goldsmith, Bruce Gregory, Eliza Habegger, Sara Jones, Jim Lawrence, Hawk Pingree, Tom Schultz, Madden Surbaugh

ARC Members Absent: Jane Burton Bell, Ralph Hahn, Danna Kinsey, Mark Tompkins

ARC Friends Present: Richard Anderson, San Juan Island; David Corbin, Lopez Island; Jonathan Dupuis, Lopez Island; Eleanor Hartman, San Juan Island; Michele Heller, Lopez Island; Candace Jagel, WSU Extension; Jean Perry, Lopez Island

Guest Speakers: Maryon Attwood, Jake Fowler, and Rick Reed from NW Ag Business Center

CD/ARC Staff Present: Eliza Buck, Tim Clark

MINUTES

No quorum to approve the September minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

Farmland Preservation and Farmer Enrichment: Project Task Group Updates

Eliza Habegger reported that the request for proposals (RFP) has been posted. Eliza Buck will post the RFP on the ARC website. Tim Clark suggested that we start compiling names of people who are interested in leasing farmland as well as those who have land to lease. The task group will meet to discuss how to best capture this information.

Proposals are due December 19th. Applications will be sent to review committee (2 Land Bank and 2 ARC members). Bruce Gregory was asked to review farm plans. Selected proposal will be presented to County Council in February 2009 for approval.

Tom Schultz reported that the ICL/agritourism task group worked on the agritourism definition by adding ag educational events and explored an initiative to match food producers with purveyors. San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau asked the ARC to include farm store. Rik Karon asked the ARC to include horse boarding and riding. Farm websites, the ICL program, food establishments using local food products were other proposed additions.

Candace will be organizing a “Chef’s Collaborative” type event in January 2009 on San Juan Island.

Candace Jagel reported on the Farm-to-School task group, which decided that their original goal to host a summit was no longer needed since all school districts are on board with the farm-to-school concept. The task group will visit each of the school programs to learn what is needed and to discuss what might be appropriate in the way of countywide support for the programs.

CAO Update

Todd Goldsmith reported that they are beginning to discuss the “general section.” There is a “reasonable use exception,” or an escape clause, which allows the landowner to use up to 80% of the property. If a governmental body denies the landowner all use of their land, it is considered a “public

taking,” which is prohibited by the federal law. The review committee may propose that the Land Bank develop a program to allow landowners to pay into a fund that would go into the future purchase of a property with some critical land attributes like wetlands or wildlife habitat. The review committee will meet with the state committee on Nov. 6th to help them get some direction on this. The reasonable use exception allows a garden or orchard in critical areas.

Ag Guild Update

Candace J. reported that the Ag Guild is currently doing feasibility studies on two sites: the “Boede Building” (old Friday Harbor Electric) and hypothetically the Browne’s Spring Street property (there is no confirmation that the site is for sale). The Land Bank and Town of Friday Harbor have set an Oct. 31 deadline for a decision about whether to proceed with the Boede property transaction. However, the Ag Guild will not meet that deadline because the feasibility studies will not be completed by that time. The Ag Guild has received an anonymous donation of \$1,000 to facilitate the winter farmer’s market to be held in the Friday Harbor High School common room, which will bring the farmer’s market closer to the farm-to-school project.

Michele Heller inquired about school kitchens being used to as a commercial kitchen for value-added products. Candace J. will follow up.

Coordinator’s Report

Eliza Buck reported that the County Administrator has submitted a budget that does not include funding for the ARC in 2009 to the County Council. The Council will most likely finalize the budget by December 2nd. She urged members to write letters of support for the ARC.

NEW BUSINESS

Rick Reed, Project Director for the Puget Sound Food Network (PSFN) presented the concept and took questions and ideas from the ARC. The PSFN is funded by a \$400K federal grant and will:

- ✦ Foster a regional food system that supports local agriculture and provides healthy foods to local communities;
- ✦ Increase access to locally produced products throughout the region;
- ✦ Enhance the economic viability and sustainability of family farms by providing new market opportunities.

The Network will be a web-based tool that enables real-time communication between food producers, consumers, and other participants in the Puget Sound food system.

The PSFN allows farmers and other food producers to: communicate directly with consumers; find processing, distribution, and storage; assess demand and plan production accordingly; combine products with other producers to meet consumer demand; network with other producers to decrease overhead; showcase their product, expand their market, and sell online.

The PSFN allows consumers to: communicate directly with food producers; learn who is producing what food, where, and at what price; influence food production; make plans based on product availability; benefit from publicity as a source of local food products; place orders, arrange delivery, and pay online.

Reed told a story of how in a response to farmers’ requests for processing facilities in the region led to him connecting Sean’s Quality Produce in Everett with a farmer on Whidbey to help them do business together.

Reed asked for input on what functions the web-based tools should be included in the network. He handed out a sheet with links to websites that serve similar functions to the PSFN (see attachment). They will have a prototype on-line by spring 2009. There may be nominal user fees in the beginning. The network will include maps and links to participating farms. There will be people facilitating sales.

The PSFN has a large regional advisory committee from 12 counties. Bruce Dunlop of Lopez Island is the representative for San Juan County.

Jake Fowler of the NABC talked about how he and Maryon assist farmer clients with business development. Maryon Attwood of the NABC gave an example of how they are helping farmers develop Community Sustained Agriculture (CSA) businesses through a mentor-based course, 30 hours per week, focusing on field experience. It will begin in January 2009 and go through harvest on Whidbey Island. Applications are available on the NABC website.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be **November 24, 2008**, Friday Harbor (location and time TBA).