

## **Agricultural Resources Committee**

Minutes of October 26, 2009

3:00 – 5:00 PM

Skagit Valley College, Friday Harbor

**ARC Members Present:** Peggy Bill, Jane Burton Bell, Tim Clark, Peter Corning, Roger Ellison, Bruce Gregory, Sara Jones, Dana Kinsey, Hawk Pingree, Tom Schultz, Jim Sesby, Madden Surbaugh, Ron Zee

**ARC Members Absent:** Eliza Habegger, Ralph Hahn, Charly Robinson, Mark Tompkins

**Friends Present:** Candace Jagel, Lovel Pratt

**ARC Staff Present:** Eliza Buck

### **MINUTES**

*Peter Corning moved to approve the September 28, 2009 minutes. Jim Sesby seconded. Motion unanimously approved.*

### **OLD BUSINESS**

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

Jane Burton Bell reported that the Ag Guild held a potluck dinner featuring Michael Ableman of Foxglove Farm of Salt Spring Island as part of their educational mission. His book Fields of Plenty is available at the SJI Library.

#### **Permanent Farmer's Market (PFM)**

Lovel Pratt reported on the PFM project progress. Public hearing will be held by Town of Friday Harbor Council on their allocation of \$400K in Hotel/Motel Tax Funds to purchase the Nichol Street property, November 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM in the Mullis Senior Center. Some of the complaints lodged refer to parking issues, the use of public funds for the PFM project, and advantage of farmers market vendors over storefront businesses. There are currently more letters in support of the PFM at the Town than letters in opposition. The Ag Guild will make a case for the economic benefits of the PFM to the community.

#### **Farmland Preservation Subcommittee**

Peggy Bill invited new members to join the farmland preservation subcommittee. She reported that the key agenda items are moving the farm and conservation land tax program forward; pilot projects on conservation lands – collaborative projects with the Land Bank and Preservation Trust – tie into community grain projects, farm to school projects and other projects.

#### **Farmer Enrichment Subcommittee**

Tom Schultz welcomed Roger Ellison to the subcommittee. Tom reported that the subcommittee discussed the PFM, the Islands Certified Local (ICL) project and creating a culinary school program in the county to feature the preparation of local foods.

Madden had spoken to Christina Orchid of Red Rabbit Farm on Orcas Island who is ready to support the culinary school project with space and expertise.

### **Labor Issues**

Eliza Buck distributed a matrix of farm classifications developed by L&I, definitions, and draft guidelines for small family farm trainees. The matrix, as interpreted by us, does not offer opportunities our farmers want, which is to have affordable coverage for “trainees” on their farms. The committee will continue to work on it.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Regulatory Issues in the County**

Sara Jones reported that her family farm opened a farm stand to sell their products, which they have been selling at the farmers market. They received a packet from the Health Department requiring them to apply for a food permit. They contested it based on their permits with the USDA, WSDA and the Department of Health. Currently, they are working with Betsy to clarify points and resolve the issue. Sara requested clarification about the process and recommended reducing the duplicate layers of regulation and a more friendly approach in working with farmers.

Tom recommended re-activation of the regulatory subcommittee.

#### **ARC Coordinator Search**

Ron Zee reported Eliza is leaving the ARC. The search will include advertising countywide for two weeks, applications will be due November 11<sup>th</sup>, and the search committee will interview the week of November 16<sup>th</sup>, the new hire will be December 1<sup>st</sup> and Eliza will work with new Coordinator until December 14<sup>th</sup>. The selection committee is Ron Zee, Bruce Gregory, Hawk Pingree, and Bill Watson.

The Farmer Enrichment Subcommittee requested that the new coordinator be given time to develop the ICL program.

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:10PM.**

**The next ARC full committee meeting will be on November 18, 2009 from 2-4 pm at Skagit Valley College in the Community Room.**