



Agricultural Resources Committee
 Minutes of October 27, 2010
 2:00 – 4:00 PM
 Whidbey Island Bank, Friday Harbor

ARC Members Present: Tim Clark, Peter Corning, Roger Ellison, Bruce Gregory, Mark Thompkins, Hawk Pingree, Candace Jagel, Sara Jones, Dana Kinsey, Jim Sesby, Tom Schultz, Jim Sesby, Ron Zee, Victoria Compton
 ARC Members Absent: Jane Burton Bell, Madden Surbaugh
 Guests: Boyd Pratt, Todd Goldsmith
 ARC Staff Present: Peggy Bill

WELCOME & CHANGES TO AGENDA

- Minutes: The minutes of the September 22, 2010 ARC meeting were approved.
- Public Comment: There was no public comment.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- Discussion of ARC meeting scheduling and year-end retreat: Candace presented the idea of a year-end retreat, with the purpose of identifying long-term priorities for agriculture in SJC. It was suggested that we cancel the November ARC meeting, and schedule a half-day retreat in early December. Candace also mentioned that the retreat would include a discussion of ARC relationship to other agricultural organizations.
- ARC subcommittees: The list of subcommittees was handed out to review membership and focus for each subcommittee.
 - Farmland Preservation subcommittee: Tim Clark, Chair, with Sara Jones and Bruce Gregory. Focus areas are a) farmland mapping; b) Land Bank assistance; c) Farmlink Program; d) Assessor's early warning; e) Farm & Agriculture Conservation Program; and f) No Net Loss (on-hold).
 - Farm Business Enrichment subcommittee: Tom Schultz, Chair, with Candace Jagel, Roger Ellison, Hawk Pingree; and ARC friends, Rich Anderson, Sandy Stehlou, and Deborah Hopkins. Focus areas are: a) Island Certified Local Program promotion; b) Farm-to-School Programs; c) Agritourism; and d) Farmer-purveyor connection.
 - Farm Regulations subcommittee: Peter Corning, Jim Sesby, Mark Tompkins, Ron Zee, Hawk Pingree. Focus areas are: a) scale appropriate regulations; b) state agriculture ombudsman; c) CAO review committee; d) water rights and right to farm; e) intern pilot program; f) county regulations. It was suggested that we remove county-farmer relations from the list. GMO was recommended as an addition.

SJC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL REPORT

- Victoria Compton notified ARC that EDC is offering classes that may be of interest to the farming community, including a class on Holistic Management in late fall or early 2011, organized by Bruce Gregory; Cultivating Success, organized by WSU Extension, (Candace Jagel); and Business Planning and Financing, organized by EDC.

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

- Island outreach meetings: As part of the Office of Farmland Preservation grant, ARC and WSU are coordinating a series of outreach meetings on Waldron, Orcas and Lopez. The meetings offer an important opportunity to listen to the needs and issues of island farmers.
- GMO: ARC has coordinated several meetings with stakeholders interested in the issue of GMO, and a potential initiative to restrict farming of GMO crops in SJC. Is the ARC interested in continuing to focus on this issue? Elaine Kendall led an initiative several years ago, with ~100 grower pledges committing to be GMO free. Todd Goldsmith noted that WSDA is in charge of decisions on what crops can or cannot be grown in the state, and that it would therefore not be feasible to request council action. The ARC supports the idea of developing a voluntary GMO Free Zone, with an eye towards emphasizing the economic opportunities, such as GMO free seed production.
- ARC budget: The county Auditor has proposed \$35,000 from public facilities (.09) funds for ARC in 2011. These funds can only be used for salaries and benefits. The ARC must identify a source of overhead funds to contribute to office rent, bookkeeping, and supplies.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Farm Business Enrichment: Tom Shultz, chair of Farm Business Enrichment

Subcommittee, provided the following updates:

- Island Certified Local Program: Membership in ICL is currently about 30, including farmers and businesses that support agriculture. Eliza Buck conducted interviews and surveys during the summer. Next steps will be to work with Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC) to assist with updating branding.
- Scenic Byways Program: A draft proposal is ready for review. Sandy Strehlou has been representing agriculture on the committee, including promotion of an agriculture image on the logo, as well as defining agriculture related projects that might be available for future funding.
- Agritourism: The Lopez Fall Festival was a success, with 18 events held on 8 farms, and also including 1 restaurant, the organic grocery store and a non-profit organization. Reviews by participants were very positive. Sara recommended earlier lead time in the future to allow for more advertising.

Farmland Preservation: Tim Clark, chair of Farmland Preservation Subcommittee, asked Boyd Pratt, sub-consultant to the OFP grant, to provide an update on the strategic action plan.

- Strategic Action Plan Update: Boyd noted that ARC will be holding a retreat to focus on identifying priorities and actions. The retreat will be held late 2010. Other stakeholders will be invited to attend. Island outreach meetings will also offer insights into priorities.
- Farm and Agricultural Conservation Program. Tim reported on the latest version of the Farm & Agriculture Conservation Program. There are several key issues, both proposed by the Planning Commission: 1) the clause requiring that a property be subdividable in order to be eligible for the program; and the 7 year time limit for staying in the program, with the option to move into Agriculture Current Use Taxation or to donate a permanent conservation easement. Tim also showed the table that compares SJC's proposed program with other programs adopted in the state. If adopted, SJC's program would be one of the most conservative in the state

Farm Regulations:

- Farm stand regulations: The subcommittee has been working on revising the proposed legislation. There was a discussion of how to define "local" – whether it meant produced

in the county or on the farm. Peter clarified that the current proposal defines farm stands as 100% produced by that farm operation, while farm stores must have at least 75% of the products grown within the county. The question was also raised about whether it was necessary to distinguish between farm stands and farm stores, or whether to provide one definition that addressed the broad goal of supporting direct, on farm sales of locally products. A suggestion was made that Island Certified Local Program certify farm stands as a gold star with at least 90% grown by that farm operation, and farm stores certified as a silver star with 75% grown

OTHER BUSINESS

Agricultural recycling: Danna reported that the Agriculture Recycling project was a great success. There will be no funding available next year to support this important program.

The next ARC meeting will be held as a half-day retreat in early December 2010, location and specific date to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.