

Thurston County Agriculture Advisory Committee

March 16, 2023

Meeting Minutes

<https://youtu.be/QB7hXb0a3hE>

ATTENDEES:

Members Present:

Joe Hanna (Chair); Jake Yancey (Vice Chair); Pat Labine; Robert McIntosh; Celeste Winther; Chris Doelman; Gary Kline; Greg Schoenbachler; Glenn Schorno; Kevin Jensen; Stella Waxwing; Ex Officio Present: Sarah Moorehead (Executive Director, TCD Staff); Stephen Bramwell (WSU Extension Director, Ex Officio)

Members Excused Absence:

Gigi McClure (scribe)

Guest Speakers:

Ashley Arai (Thurston County Agriculture Community Program Manager); Andrew Deffobis (Thurston County Planner)

Guests Present:

Loretta Seppanen

Called to Order:

Zoom meeting was called to order at 7:06pm

Introductions of members and guests

Approval of Current Agenda – Motion to approve the agenda (Robert/Chris) - passed

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes February 2023 (Robert/Pat) – passed

Committee Items Discussed:

1. Assignment of Scribe, Joe Hanna (5 mins)

-Kevin volunteered to record minutes for this March 2023 meeting.

-Robert brought up that the committee has not had to rotate scribe for eighteen months.

-Committee decided to set in place the scribe for the remainder of 2023 at the April meeting.

2. Public Comment, Joe Hanna (10 mins)

-No public comment

3. Thurston County Ag- New Community Ag Program, Ashley Arai (30 mins)

-Ashley requested that Andrew take the first 5 minutes to discuss the need of two volunteers for the conservation futures ranking committee. The conservation futures meeting will be held late April or early May and will be 100% virtual.

-Gary Kline volunteered for the futures committee, Joe Hanna will be the alternate volunteer.

-Ashley provided a PowerPoint presentation about the Community Agriculture Program, Ashley is the Program Manager that was created in 2022. Ashley's position is the liaison between Thurston County community planning and agriculture operators. Ashley is also involved with code compliance issues.

-Ashley is asking the Ag committee to aid in the working lands strategic plan refresh. Ashley will send out an edited version of the document to the committee for the committee to begin to mark up with updates.

4. OPMA Certification, Robert McIntosh (TBD)

-Members expressed concern in the February 2023 meeting, whether or not OPMA rules apply to the committee. Robert stated that the BOCC has made clear in the hand book that all the counties volunteer boards/committees must follow OPMA rules. However, from a legal standpoint, the ag committee may not have to comply with OPMA. There appears to be some conflicting information.

-Since the ag committee has oversight of the PDR program, if/when the PDR program is funded and functioning then the ag committee may at that time have to comply with OPMA according to Joe.

-Robert asked the ag committee if we want to be the only volunteer board with the BOCC to go against the OPMA?

-Chris posed the question, are the devices the ag committee members use at the monthly meetings open to public records requests? Discussion about this with several members.

5. Committee Membership, Joe Hanna & Robert McIntosh (TBD)

-Commissioner Mejia contacted Joe in response to his letter requesting information about ag committee membership. BOCC is looking for recommendations from the ag committee for an ex officio member school student and two additional voting members. It is assumed it would be one farmer member and one non-farmer member.

-1978 ag committee document about committee membership discussed having a timber farmer member. Committee discussion ensued regarding having a designated timber farmer or silviculturist. Glen made a recommendation to simplify this discussion to follow state law and make a forestry position on the ag committee. Committee discussion about forestry position.

-Jake continued the discussion and suggested where does the persons vested interest lay, and that will help categorize that person into either the farmer or non-farmer member position.

-BOCC made a recommendation to change the title of "Non farmer member" to "member at large."

-Stephen made a comment that Ashley Arai should be considered for a third ex officio position on the committee.

6. Proposed By-Law Changes, Robert McIntosh (TBD)

-First proposed amendment - First paragraph article 4, current vebage: "special meetings may be called at the discretion of the chair," change to "August, December, or other special meetings may be called at the discretion of the chair."

-Robert made motion on the first amendment, Pat second, motion passed.

-Second proposed amendment – Article 4, meeting conduct: "In accord with Thurston Counties handbook for advisory boards and commissions, the committee shall comply with the open public meetings act, RCW 42.30." "The Committee welcomes guests and invites their input. However, the chair may reserve their input for a particular part of the meeting, and/or set time limits on their comments."

-Robert made motion on the second amendment, Pat second, Jake provided discussion. Robert decided to withdraw the motion, Pat accepted the withdraw.

-The second proposed amendment will be tabled until the April 2023 meeting.

-Stephen suggested that it may be a good time to amend the bylaws adding a third ex officio member (Ashley Arai,) to the committee.

-This will also be tabled until the April 2023 meeting.

-Robert proposed to include the third ex officio member discussion on the April 2023 agenda.

7. Volunteers for Conservation Futures Ranking Committee, Andrew Deffobis (5 mins)

-This agenda item was taken care of under item #3

8. WSU Extension Update, Stephen Bramwell (10 mins)

-Stephen provided a calendar of events for the SW Grazing Association coming up.

-Discussed grazing school in April 2023.

-Food hub winter produce box available and planning to do a ranch box for 2023.

9. Thurston Conservation District Update, Sarah Moorehead (10 mins)

-March 8, email sent out looking for focus group for meat study.

-Youth farming alternative with Oly high school having challenges with funding from school district.

-Riparian bill legislation is now dead, but may pop up in a budget proviso.

-Department of Commerce plans to have millions of homes built in the state over the coming years, urban density being looked at and more pressure on farms.

10. Good of the Order:

-Gary spoke up but lost connection

8. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn (Jake/Robert) - passed. Meeting was adjourned at 9:03pm.