

Thurston County Agriculture Advisory Committee

April 15, 2021*

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

Members Present: Richard Mankamyer (Chair); Joe Hanna (Vice Chair); Pat Labine; Robert McIntosh; Gigi McClure (Scribe); Tom Watson; Jedidiah Haney; Kevin Jensen, Jake Yancey

Members Excused:

Members Absent:

Ex Officio Present: Stephen Bramwell, WSU; Sarah Moorehead (TCD Exec. Dir)

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Davis; Aslan Meade (EDC)

Guests Present: Loretta Seppanen; TJ Johnson; Jeff Swotek; Miriam Villancian; Peggy Smith; Marilyn Sitaker (Evergreen State College); Linda Powell; Michael Ambrogi (TRPC); Brenda Bentley; Rosalinda Diah ; Peggy Smith; Charlene Andrade (DOC); Frania Zgorski; Helen Wheatley (TCD); Marcie Cleaver; Nathaniel Jones; Eric Johnson.

Called to Order:

Zoom meeting was called to order at 7:01pm

This is a Special Phone/Online meeting via Zoom. Login Below.

Introductions

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (not available for March due to email issues)

Approval of Current Agenda – Motion: approve agenda as submitted (Joe/Gigi). Committee accepted

Committee Items Discussed:

1. Welcome new committee member Jake Yancy.
2. Committee Chair and Committee Guidelines: Chair (Richard Mankamyer) read the Agricultural Committee Guidelines at the start of the call.
3. Survey Results (Jennifer Davis): Supporting the on-going comprehensive plan amendment project committee driven result of agricultural policies and programs. As second draft has been sent out to the committee for review. This survey is all in house and the support of the committee is very appreciated. The conclusion focused on the top 4 concerns of the community.

Top 4 concern

- ✓ Education and Outreach
- ✓ Policy Changes
- ✓ Incentive Programs
- ✓ Economic Development

Chapter 3 of the Thurston Comprehensive Plan is where you will find the most recent data on farming and farmland, county agriculture policies, descriptions of programs, and Ag lands of long-term significance. Comprehensive Plan Link:

<https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/planning/Pages/comp-plan-current.aspx>

Motion: Advise the BOCC to look at substantially expanding its designation of the long-term use of Agricultural Lands (Jedidiah/Joe) – committee approved.

4. Presentation ‘Regional Agricultural Development’ (Stephen Bramwell, WSU Extension and Aslan Meade, Economic Development Council): Reviewed the market need for agricultural infrastructure. Formation of letter of understanding with Thurston County being the first to sign and support the needs of farmers.

Agricultural Business & Innovation Park – The park will stimulate and generate economic development for local farmers, as well as agritourism and education. Opportunities and success will depend on the success of the first building in the Tenino Agricultural Park. Possibility to continue to expand and the need grows.

SW WA Grain Project – in 2018 the need was identified to get grain out and a rail line was put in place to support grain sales with an immediate increase in 2020 sales/payments. Looking for funding for infrastructure for grain storage.

SW WA Food Hub – With 16 positions support food opportunities for the community. Featuring local fresh foods.

Sentinel Lands, HCP, Livestock Producer Associations – opportunity for livestock operators. A series of workshops focused on conservation of agricultural lands.

REPI: <https://www.repi.mil/>

WCCRI: <https://rco.wa.gov/grant/washington-coastal-restoration-and-resiliency-initiative/>

Western SARE: <https://western.sare.org/grants/>

6. Potential Farm Tours – Possible set up in June 2021

7. Thurston Conservation District (Sarah Moorehead): There are two workshops coming up - Tips for Buying Farmland April 29th and Managing Nauseous Weeds for Livestock on May 20th.

WSU Extension Update: Nothing at this time.

01:15:32 Loretta Seppanen: Jed - it is the other way around - to get the 4% up we need to use the 10 acre minimum rather than 20 or 40 acres. That smaller number picks up MORE farms and is more consistent with our smaller farms that we have.

01:16:12 Jedidiah Haney: Loretta, that is what I was surmising. Thank you.

01:16:39 Loretta Seppanen: Another metric is what % of all farmed acres is designated. Again Thurston is at the lower end - by a lot.

01:20:20 Marilyn Sitaker: it's important to look also at how many acres. For example, Thurston (4%) is 15,878 acres while Clark (10%) is only 2,405 acres.

01:23:30 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: You got it Jennifer - termed easements to put in cost-effective protections now, while long-term solutions are developed. :)

01:32:34 Jedidiah Haney: Excellent work Jennifer and staff!!

01:32:56 Marilyn Sitaker: My pleasure!

01:34:06 Jennifer Davis, Thurston County Planning Mgr: Kudos to Miriam on the survey report-- looking so good.

01:34:47 Jedidiah Haney: Great work Miriam!

01:35:13 Miriam Villacian, Thurston County: Thanks all! It was a pleasure to work with Marilyn and Loretta on this!

01:35:53 Jedidiah Haney: Awesome work Marilyn and Loretta!

01:41:06 Jedidiah Haney: Ex: Whitewood Cider Co. is opening a tasting room in Tenino!

01:49:49 Joe Hanna: Welcome to Kevin

01:52:56 Joe Hanna: Stephen can you forward the powerpoint to committee

01:57:18 Stephen Bramwell: Yes I can send the ppt, thanks for that question Joe

01:57:27 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: That's great - thanks Aslan!

01:58:30 Tom Watson: With the size of the structures, is there any potential for future farm expos or farm shows, FFA or 4H participation?

01:59:20 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: There's a WDFW easement on this parcel I believe. Structures would not likely be suitable. I imagine it was mitigation for other development - just a guess. Happy to partner on a conservation project in this space!

01:59:41 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: **section of the parcel

01:59:53 Jennifer Davis, Thurston County Planning Mgr: It all depends on the type of easement and the management plan for it. Who holds the easement?

02:00:13 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: Aslan? I thought you mentioned it was WDFW.

02:00:20 Jedidiah Haney: thanks Sarah!

02:02:17 Aslan Meade: Tom Watson, there is a new 52 acre equestrian center going in across the street and I can imagine a lot of those uses like farm expos or farm shows, FFA or 4H could happen there.

02:02:27 Helen Wheatley: Are those farms in Thurston County?

02:02:33 Helen Wheatley: Fenn and Zucati?

02:03:02 Joe Hanna: think they are Lewis

02:03:20 Helen Wheatley: Where is the Thurston County benefit?

02:04:32 Tom Watson: thank you, I was hoping for multi-use capabilities.

02:05:05 Dalynn: Helen it's a cross county hub eventually Stephen may get thurston growers on board

02:05:15 Loretta Seppanen: Helen - Thurston county growers also benefit. As of now there are fewer grain growers in Thurston vs Lewis, but with this option that can changes. Growing grain is a help in the crop rotation of some farmers

02:06:14 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: This is a really great region for growing various grains - good climate. Independence Valley (Rochester) has a farmer or two that are participating in this.

02:07:14 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: Also might be a good transition crop for Thurston County producers that are struggling with their current operations, with this increased market access.

02:08:22 Tom Watson: If it becomes a reality, there are many opportunities not only Thurston county AG but a regional AG hub bringing in people from all over the area, also increasing revenue for our county.

02:17:46 Marilyn Sitaker: Research has shown that having cooking classes like this helps retain food security box customers

02:20:03 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: REPI: <https://www.repi.mil/>

02:20:08 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: WCCRI: <https://rco.wa.gov/grant/washington-coast-restoration-and-resiliency-initiative/>

02:20:47 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: Western SARE: <https://western.sare.org/grants/>

02:22:59 Tom Watson: Have you looked into working with JBLM and their transition assistance program (TAP) to show them what they can do to be an entry-level farmer, or training to be a butcher or work at a processing center?

02:25:12 Marilyn Sitaker: Nice job Stephen and Aslan, good to hear the latest updates on all these projects.

02:25:33 Aslan Meade: Thanks Marilyn. We couldn't do it without you!!

02:27:42 Jake Yancey: thank you Stephen and staff

02:28:19 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: Great job Aslan and Stephen! :)

02:28:37 Tom Watson: great motivational presentation.

02:28:52 Stephen Bramwell: See Sarah Moorehead's reference to links above for the funding lines. Thanks Sarah!

02:29:45 Tom Watson: yea!

02:30:51 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: <https://us9.campaign-archive.com/?u=682557a3281aee2a980df8e09&id=d9445e9b9c>

02:34:10 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: can you hear me?

02:36:57 Sarah Moorehead, TCD Staff: Kim Pham (she/her)

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02:39:28 Stephen Bramwell: Good questions from Helen above. Per some of the discussion around grains at the Lewis site, there is opportunity also to bring in products through the grains facility, such as lower cost organic poultry feed. Some Thurston livestock producers, as well as organic valley dairies in Lewis and Thurston have expressed a lot of interest. So the commerce goes both ways. Bringing in agriculture product that Thurston growers want is beneficial.

02:41:17 Jake Yancey: 2nd by Jake