

Agricultural Resources Committee

Minutes of January 23, 2007

1:30 – 3:00 PM

Lopez Island Library

ARC Members Present: Ken Akopiantz, Jane Burton Bell, Christine Dahl-Sesby, Todd Goldsmith, Bruce Gregory, Eliza Habegger, Ralph Hahn, Sara Jones, Jim Lawrence, Rebecca Moore, Madden Surbaugh, Mark Tompkins, Ron Zee

ARC Members Absent: Peter Corning, Julie Miller, Tom Schultz

Friends Present: David Bauermeister, NABC Executive Director; Candace Jagel, WSU Extension; Holly Kent, Lopez; Jana Marks, Friends of the San Juans; Charles Mish, Lopez; Bill Watson, EDC staff

CD/ARC Staff Present: Eliza Buck, Bryan Cornelius

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

MINUTES

The minutes of the December 18, 2006 meeting were approved as written. Todd Goldsmith moved acceptance, and Sara Jones seconded the motion.

NEW BUSINESS

Presentations were made by each of the subcommittees.

Marketing

Jane Burton Bell presented for the Marketing Subcommittee. They met on January 11, 2007 and agreed that the most pressing issue facing the committee was a permanent farmers market. They chose to use the term “permanent” rather than “year-round.” In addressing the need for a permanent farmers market, the committee felt that they would also be exploring the other issues designated by the committee as relevant to the Marketing Subcommittee.

Madden Surbaugh has proposed a certification program for local restaurants and businesses (such as grocers) that use local farm products. A standard needs to be established but Surbaugh urged the committee to be inclusive as not to alienate businesses.

Action Item: Develop full proposal on certification for committee action by the next ARC meeting.

ARC could support the Grange in their plans for a permanent farmers market by writing letters of support and helping to leverage financial support from various funding sources. The funders mentioned were: FEMA, USDA, WSDA, IGFC, County, Town of Friday Harbor, Visitor’s Bureau, Historic Preservation Office, SJC Hotel/Motel Tax, Civic Center Committee, and the NW Agricultural Business Center.

Farmland Preservation

Eliza Habegger has accepted the chair position for the subcommittee. The subcommittee determined that linking new farmers with farmland was a pressing need in the county, so they are conducting research accordingly. They are trying to determine who needs farmland to farm and who has land available to lease. They are also looking at “Farm Link” models in other Washington counties.

Education and outreach is also an important piece of the picture. Sara Jones recommended that bulletin boards be set up on the ARC and WSU websites to help link farmers with resources of all sorts.

Jane Burton Bell suggested the possible use of the “What’s Growing On” column in the Journal to help educate the public. Letters about agricultural issues and what the ARC is doing could be submitted monthly (also see discussion about Eliza Habegger’s letter in Old Business).

Jim Lawrence will call Janet Abbott at the State to see what’s happened with former Governor Locke’s \$40 million allocation for farm worker housing. Affordable housing is a big need to encourage new and young farmers to the islands.

Regulation

Ken Akopiantz presented the work of the Regulation Subcommittee. They have identified three areas of focus: 1) Farm Stand/Store regulation; 2) Critical Areas Ordinances (CAOs); and. 3) GMO moratorium (headed up by Elaine Kendall).

Action Item: Draft definitions for farm stand and farm store, and present at the next ARC meeting.

Todd Goldsmith will represent the ARC at the CAO review committee meetings.

Shireene Hale and Ron Henrickson are drafting an interim definition of farm stand and farm store. Todd also drafted a document to help delineate between the two. Board of Health says that permits are necessary, however, they waived the Synergy Farm case until further clarification. Fire Marshall Lowe will present a proposal for inspection fees to County Council on February 14.

Action Item: Create a regulation brochure for farmers listing relevant permits, fees and contact information.

Ron Zee reported that Elaine has contacted Renata Brillinger of Californian’s for GE-Free Agriculture to learn more about effective campaign strategies.

OLD BUSINESS

Eliza Buck gave an update on administrative issues including website and logo. Handed out draft of ARC work plan. See attached report and documents. Feedback requested.

PRESENTATION

David Bauermeister, Executive Director of NW Agricultural Business Center (NABC) stated that NABC was formed to assist “agricultural entrepreneurs” in five NW counties – Island, Skagit, San Juan, Snohomish and Whatcom. Farmers may submit an application to NABC for technical assistance with plans for innovative and value-added products.

San Juan County had \$3.1 million in farmgate sales in 2002 (less than 1% of 5-county value). Bauermeister noted that Snohomish County has an “Agricultural Action Plan.”

NABC could assist ARC in finding funds for a permanent farmers market.

A feasibility study is underway for a USDA poultry processing coop facility in Burlington. A mobile processing unit (there is an example in eastern Washington) is also being explored.

NABC brochures and cards were handed out at the Lopez site. (Those members who attended the meeting on San Juan Island may receive them by requesting them from Eliza at 378-6621.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The ARC currently needs to fill three vacancies on the committee: two openings for Orcas Islanders and one opening for a representative from the San Juan County Granges. Please direct your recommendations to Ron Zee at ronzee@rockisland.com.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be **Tuesday, February 27** at the **WSU San Juan Extension Office** in Friday Harbor from **11:30-1:45 PM**.