

Agricultural Resources Committee

Minutes of February 27, 2007

11:30 – 2:00 PM

Skagit Valley College, Friday Harbor Campus

ARC Members Present: Ken Akopiantz (via phone), Jane Burton Bell, Peter Corning, Christine Dahl-Sesby, Todd Goldsmith, Bruce Gregory, Sara Jones, Jim Lawrence, Rebecca Moore, Tom Schultz, Mark Tompkins, Ron Zee

ARC Members Absent: Eliza Habegger, Ralph Hahn, Julie Miller, Madden Surbaugh

Friends Present: Richard Anderson, Westcott Bay Orchards; Christopher Baer; Michael Greenberg, Orcas Island Nutritionist; Candace Jagel, WSU Extension; Jana Marks, Friends of the San Juans; Bill Watson, EDC staff

CD/ARC Staff Present: Eliza Buck, Danna Kinsey

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

MINUTES

The minutes of the January 23, 2007 meeting were approved with one change. Jana Marks name should be moved from the “ARC Member Present” line to the “Friends Present” line. Todd Goldsmith moved acceptance, and Bruce Gregory seconded the motion.

NEW BUSINESS

- WSDA delay in Shaw Dairy inspection

Christina Dahl-Sesby reported on the chronology of events that took place beginning in December when the WSDA inspectors tested milk at the Our Lady of the Rock Monastery dairy on Shaw Island, which resulted in the temporary cessation of milk sales to customers. The biggest concern was the time lag between testing and reporting. After much discussion by the Committee, members decided to document the chain of events and to draft a letter to Claudia Coles, WSDA Food Safety Program Manager expressing ARC concerns about test results being delayed. A follow up letter to the San Juan County Council would be drafted if Coles did not respond to the letter.

- Extended ARC Meetings for March and April

Ron Zee led a discussion on the next two ARC meetings. Orcas was recommended for the March meeting. Eliza and Julie will coordinate location and try to drum up Orcas participation. Waldron was suggested for April but the Committee felt that the logistics would make attendance too small for an all committee meeting.

The April meeting will be held on San Juan Island. Ron will invite County Assessor Charles Zalmanek to make a presentation at the April meeting on tax deferments. In May, Ron hopes to bring Fred Berman, WSDA Small Farms Program Coordinator to speak to the Committee about the Small Farms Program.

Eliza will investigate whether there would be an opportune time for ARC members to visit Waldron Island farms in the fall.

- **ARC Response to Coop Natural Grocery Store effort on San Juan Island**

Eliza told the Committee about the efforts taking place on San Juan Island to form a coop grocery store. Eliza is on the Steering Committee, which is assessing the feasibility of such an endeavor. She recommended that she send out information about the coop to the ARC producers mailing list because the coop steering committee needed to hear from more farmers. No motion for action was forwarded.

- **Endorsement of “Leave Only Footprints”**

Ron informed the Committee that the SJICD has chosen to endorse the San Juan Islands Visitor’s Bureau’s “Leave Only Footprints” message and he asked the ARC if they would also like to endorse this message.

Sara moved for the ARC to endorse the “Leave Only Footprints” message. Christina Dahl-Sesby seconded. Motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Presentations were made by each of the subcommittees.

Marketing

Jane Burton Bell presented for the Marketing Subcommittee.

- **Local products certificate program:** Madden Surbaugh will conduct a sample survey of restaurateurs about the local certification idea. The subcommittee has chosen a 10% minimum for inclusion in the program. Compliance cannot be monitored and will be on the honor system. Subcommittee will come up with design. It was recommended that schools and institutions that meet criteria also be invited to participate.
- **Farm and product signage:** The subcommittee is looking into the possibility of placing standardized signage on farms around the County (a la “Blueberry” signs along Hwy 20 in Skagit). This is an effort to keep agriculture in the public eye. Need to do research into similar programs in Skagit, Clallam, and Kitshap counties.
- **Food system asset mapping:** Considering forming a food system working group to take on asset mapping project. Tom and Candace will be attending a WSU Small Farms Team retreat in March, which will address this topic.
- **The Ten Rivers Vision:** Rebecca distributed a hand-out for review.

Preservation

Sara Jones and Jim Lawrence presented for the Preservation Subcommittee.

- Jim spoke with Pat Arnold , Farm Worker Housing Specialist with the Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED), about the Farmworker Housing Infrastructure Loan Program. Grower must match the loan funds at least dollar for dollar, however, some match can be in-kind (labor). For details see <http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/fsl/arcs/mfh/documents/12ctedinfraloanprog.pdf>
- Eliza Habegger is investigating how the Land Bank can lease back to farmers. She’s looking for successful models and the contracts that make them work.
- Sara has been researching possible models for web networks. Eliza Buck and Sara will continue to work together to set up an online information sharing system on the ARC website.

- Sara revisited the idea of bringing San Juan County Assessor to speak to the ARC about ag tax deferments. Ron will invite Charles Zalmanek to April meeting.

Regulation

- Ken Akopiantz and Todd Goldsmith presented for the Regulation Subcommittee.
- Farmer/Gardener Pledge of Support: Eliza distributed a draft pledge form for ARC members to use to enlist people in a campaign to use non-genetically modified seeds. Some committee members did not want to circulate pledge under the auspices of the ARC. Tom Schultz recommended that there be an educational forum with various positions presented on the topic. Ken Akopiantz suggested that the wording be changed from Farmer/Gardener to “Citizen Pledge.” No action taken at this time.
- Recommendations on San Juan County agricultural fees and permits: A draft of a resolution and proposed code revisions that outlines new permit fees for farm stand and farm store operations was distributed. Since many of the members had not read the documents, the Committee chose to table the discussion until members had time to review the documents thoroughly. No action taken at this time.

ARC Coordinator’s Report

- Eliza distributed her monthly report.
- Logo: Jim Lawrence showed four new drawings that he’s developed. Reactions were favorable. Sara and Eliza will follow up with Jim on getting logo to final stage.
- Eliza handed out an ARC Member’s Role and Expectations document for members to review. This is the information that would be given to help orient potential new ARC members. No action taken at this time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- There will be a meeting on the 2007 Farm Bill in Everett on March 14th. 9:00 AM-3:00 PM, McCollum Park, 600 128th St SE. Free meeting to discuss the 2007 Farm Bill. Sponsored by Cascade Harvest Coalition, American Farmland Trust, and Snohomish County WSU Extension. RSVP by March 9th by calling 206-226-1914; or email: agsummit@soleauconsulting.com.
- The San Juan Island Coop Steering Committee will hold public meetings at the Friday Harbor High School Commons on Wednesdays, 2/28, 3/7 and 3/14 at 6:30 pm.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be **Tuesday, March 27** on Orcas. Place and time to be announced.