



OFFICE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Washington State
Conservation Commission
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Task Force Preservation Meeting
Lacey Community Center, Lacey, Washington
February 6, 2008

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

The Farmland Preservation Task Force met on February 6, 2008 at the Lacey Community Center in Lacey, Washington. Chair Bob Hart called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

Attendees

Task Force Members:

Bob Hart, Chair, Farmer Representative, North West Region
John Mankowski, Governor's Executive Policy Office
Lynn Bahrych, Conservation Commission
Sheryl Cox, Farmer Representative, South East Washington
Greg Schoenbachler, Farmer Representative, South West Region
Gus Hughbanks, NRCS State Conservationist
Rudy Plager, Adams County Commissioner
Don Munks, Skagit County Commissioner
Fred Colvin, WA Association of Conservation Districts
Steve McGonigal, Manager, Office of Farmland Preservation
Richard Thomason, Farmer Representative, North Central Region
Jacob Anderson, Farmer Representative, South Central Region

Guests:

Heather Ballash, CTED, Dee Caputo's Alternate
Eric Hurlbert, WA State Dept. of Agriculture, Lee Faulconer's Alternate
Lindsay Adams, Legislative Assistant for Mary Margaret Haugen
Jim Fox, RCO
Gina Smith, Cascade Land Conservancy
Dan Wood, WA Farm Bureau
Rick Rudig, Vice President of Farm Bureau
John Lucas, Lewis Co. Farm Bureau
Mike Rundlett, Western WA Agricultural Association
Patrick Lee, Manager, Clark Co. Legacy Lands Program
Kari Sacarski
Don Stuart, American Farmland Trust
Jennifer Harte, WSDA
Carrie Coineandubh, WSDA Future of Farming

Commission Staff:

Mark Clark, Executive Director of WA State Conservation Commission
Mary Anderson, Executive Assistant
Ron Shultz, Special Assistant to the Executive Director
Stu Trefry, Regional Manager
Lori Gonzalez, Administrative Assistant

Meeting Minutes from December 5, 2007

Fred Colvin moved to approve the December 5, 2007 Meeting Minutes with noted corrections. It was seconded.

Motion passed.



Approved Minutes of
December 07.doc

Proposed Ground Rules

Chair Hart brought forward two issues for the Task Force to discuss.

Is there a need for a quorum? Members agreed that is important for the scheduled meetings to take place whether or not members are present. If a member is absent, meeting information will be sent to them.

Should an acting chair be appointed if the chair is unable to attend a meeting? There was discussion by the members. A suggestion was made that members take a consensus vote with those present to decide who will be the acting chair in the event that the chair is not in attendance.

Jacob Anderson moved to amend Item 10 to Agreements and Recommendations of the Proposed Ground Rules:

WHEREAS, the Farmland Preservation Task Force is a long term program charged with multiple powers and required duties; and

WHEREAS, policy advice to the governor, legislature, as well as internal decisions will be continually made periodically; and

WHEREAS, A minority report would create a pretentious partisan divide leading to a lack of public and popular support for the task force; and

WHEREAS, the success of the Task Force is dependent on the public trust and support as well as the support from the legislature and governors office: Now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED That all decisions, recommendations, and policy advice be through Consensus Vote, with Consensus being defined as a general agreement by voice of the group, when and where there is dissent a vote shall be taken with consensus being equal to 80% and greater of the group, without consensus action/advice shall not be taken.

Vote was held on the proposed amendment. Jacob Anderson voted in favor. All others opposed.

Motion failed.

A lengthy discussion was held. There were concerns raised regarding majority and minority reports to be given to the Legislature and the Governor's Office.

A consensus of the group is important, but minority reports are important as well. From time to time, there may be disagreement between the members on ideas brought forward, but the common goal for the Task Force is to give advice of the viability and preservation of farmland to the Conservation Commission and Office of Farmland Preservation. It's important not to have a political edge. Innovative ideas that may not be the majority are still important – it does not mean that the group is not successful. A good idea today will still be a good idea a year later!

The Task Force members agreed to work together to reach a consensus when it can and will vote when it cannot. In cases where there is agreement, there may be a majority Task Force recommendation and a minority report. (See *Proposed Ground Rule Item 10*)

Lynn Bahrych moved to approve the Proposed Ground Rules and add a new Ground rule as follows:

“Recommendations and agreements will be discussed at one meeting. The drafts and any requested research will be then forwarded to the Task Force, and the recommendation or agreement may be voted on at a subsequent meeting.”

Don Munks seconded.

Motion passed.

Mission Statement

Five Task Force members submitted ideas that were presented to the Task Force. There was agreement to include, “Our Mission is to promote the vitality of Agriculture and Preserving Farming, Farmers, and Farmland in Washington State through recommendations to the Governor and Legislature, and development of Public Support.” There was concern that ranchers be included, perhaps by the use of “agriculturist” or “producers of food and fiber.”

A sub-committee was established to work together on composing the mission statement. Sub-committee members are: John Mankowski, Lynn Bahrych, Bob Hart, and Steve McGonigal. The mission statement will be drafted and sent out to members.

Conservation District Survey Responses

Out of 47 Conservation Districts only 16 had submitted their surveys. Three individuals connected with a district also submitted surveys.

Main concerns expressed from the surveys are: cost of property, economics, regulations, labor pool, size of operations, food production, development pressures, next generations, land, and water.

There was discussion that agriculture may be viewed as a burden instead of an asset. Education will help create an appreciation of agriculture in our state.

There was a request to Dan Wood, Farm Bureau, to forward their regulations to Steve McGonigal who will share with the Task Force.

Mark Clark, Executive Director of the Conservation Commission, assured the Task Force that Commission staff will identify the issues from the surveys and create a matrix categorizing issues to assist the Task Force in prioritizing their on-going work. The goal is to invite speakers to present the issues around the state at future meetings.

The Task Force will continue to accept submissions from the conservation districts and Commission staff will create a matrix with the issues to help in prioritizing in identifying work. Members would like to discuss the issues brought forward at future meetings.

Definitions of Agricultural Lands from Various Sources

The Task Force viewed a collection of definitions that had been gathered by Ron Schultz, Commission staff, as a result of a request that was made at the December 2007 Meeting.

The Task Force agreed to define agricultural land. Ron Shultz will draft a definition and work with Fred Colvin. Steve McGonigal will send the draft definition to the Task force.



ag definitions
table.pdf

Related Washington State Government Programs

Steve McGonigal noted a correction on the Related Programs document in the section for Recreation Conservation Office (RCO). The correct funding is \$9m Capital Budget (bond proceeds).

The Task Force would like to discuss the purchase of wild life habitat purchased by Department of Fish and Wildlife at a future meeting.



Related Programs
January 2008.doc

Related Federal Programs

Steve McGonigal reported that detailed information on federal related programs is being gathered as time allows and will be shared as soon as it is available.

There were earlier reports that the federal Farm and Ranch Preservation Program had unused funding available for Washington State on a regular basis. Those reports were found to be untrue.

Related Local Programs

John Mankowski emphasized to the members that part of the statutory mandate for Office of Farmland Preservation and the Task Force are here to assist cities and local governments with developing their programs with model ordinances or model programs. It helps to know who is doing it well and borrow from them, know what the demand is, and where we will be spending our time.

Ron Shultz will compile the regional reports.

Legislative Report

Ron Shultz noted that all bills have to be out of the original committees that they were introduced in by February 8, 2008. This is a short time frame due to the short legislative session.



Bill Tracking and
Analysis Table for OF

SW Regional Profile

It was suggested if the information and categories in the SW Regional Profile are useful to the Task Force, information can be compiled from each of the regions and incorporated into the regional reports.

Sheryl Cox requested that farm income from timber be included, especially in the NE region.

Questions were raised regarding agricultural statistics and net cash statistics. How are they taken and how often? Eric Hurlburt, Department of Agriculture, responded that the county statistics are on a five year cycle.

John Mankowski was interested in finding a way to measure success in farmland preservation. What measures make sense to track? How to gather that data? It was suggested to have the regional reports include discussion of county and city farmland preservation programs within that region. It may also be helpful to have input from the National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Natural Resource Assessment group (Department of Agriculture).



SW REGIONAL
REPORT.pdf

Meeting Lunches

Chair Hart proposed the idea to include lunch during the meetings so that meetings are more effective and productive.

Chair Hart announced that he is working on securing co sponsorships to assist with costs of lunch for guests at the April meeting.

Steve McGonigal mentioned that a group photo will be taken at the first meeting attended by all members.

American Farmland Trust

Presented by Don Stuart, Pacific NW States Director



Presentation to
Farmland Task Force.

Clark County Legacy Lands Program.

Presented by Patrick Lee, Manager



CF presentation to
OFP Advisory Commit

Other Powers & Duties of the Task Force & Office Farmland Preservation

Steve McGonigal stated that one of the duties the Office of Farmland Preservation has is to be an information clearinghouse. Plans are being made to develop some traveling exhibits this fiscal year. We get invited to exhibit at events, more than we can staff, but we can at least offer them an exhibit and literature.

Concerning the duties related to farmland transition, we may look into who could put on a workshop for appropriate audiences next fiscal year.

Staff Activity Report

Steve McGonigal gave a brief overview of staff activity since the December 2007 Meeting. If the task force would like more details please let Steve McGonigal know.

Agenda for next Meeting

- Chair Hart and Lynn Bahrych will invite the British Columbia Director of Agriculture to share what Canada is doing.
- Session on the Comprehensive Irrigation District Management Plan. (Mike Rundlett, Western WA Agricultural Association)
- Skagit Farmland Legacy Program.
- Snohomish/King County Focus on Farming Conference.

Correspondence

The Task Force agreed to respond to correspondence received to address comments and concerns. The Task Force may take those concerns into consideration.

Steve McGonigal invited the Task Force members to let him know if they would like a copy of the outgoing communications. For example: survey questionnaire, response letters to citizens concerns, etc.

In response to Mr. LeRoux, the response will include "we have identified water as vitally important." Chair Hart reiterated that the Task Force priorities are to issues - not to reach each landowner's situation or each bill introduced.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM