

**King County Agriculture Commission  
Minutes from February 12, 2004  
Mercer View Community Center  
Mercer Island, WA**

Commissioners Present: Tom Quigley, Judy Duff, Karen Kinney, Martha Goodlett, Burr Mosby, Roger Calhoon, Bill Knutsen, Michael Blakely and Ewing Stringfellow,

Commissioners Absent: George Irwin

Staff: Judy Herring, Steve Evans, Elizabeth Weldin, Claire Dyckman, Eric Nelson, Laurie Clinton, King County (KC) Dept. of Natural Resources & Parks (DNRP), Agriculture Programs; and Sylvia Kantor, WSU Extension KC

Guest Agency Staff: Josh Monaghan, King Conservation District (KCD); Larry Nussbaum, Stewardship Partners; Russ Carlsen and Jeff Cox, Aides to KC Council member Kathy Lambert; and Dave Marks, Manager, KC Fairgrounds

Guests: Kathryn Kerby, Maxine Keesling, Will Knedlik, and Bob Tidball,

Tom Quigley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:10PM. Introductions were made.

**Commission Business**

**Commission Round-a-bout:**

**Martha** announced that the Cultural Community she manages with the Pea Patch of Seattle has a temporary position open for youth educator. The position requires someone with teaching experience, who likes to work with kids and has gardening experience.

**Bill** reported that the Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Forum that he sits on will be holding a meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February to talk with farmers and people interested in salmon recovery. This is in regards to grant money available for salmon related projects on rivers and streams in the Snoqualmie Valley. He has also been asked by Council member Kathy Lambert to be part of a group that is reviewing the KC Comprehensive Plan and making recommendations to the KC Council. In WRIA 7, which encompasses the entire Snohomish river system, they are starting to review application for projects for funding from the State Salmon board. They've identified culverts and obstructions as being a priority and second to that is seeing oxbows reconnected to the main stem of the Snoqualmie and Snohomish rivers.

**Burr** was glad to say he finally received his temporary occupancy permit for his new agriculture building on Tuesday.

**Michael** told about the two Tilth chapters she's involved with that are simultaneously putting on workshops. Tilth Producers is hosting regional workshops on pest management with WSU. The workshops will be held on farms and target specific pests to provide a "hands on" experience. Sno-Valley Tilth, in the Snoqualmie Valley is putting on a series of workshops targeted to urban gardeners to help them with their gardening needs.

**Ewing** said the 20 steers he raised this year will be ready for sale in June.

He also told about the 5-year agreement he signed with the East King County Regional Water Authority, which is in its final year. They have been testing the North Bend area aquifer in the Snoqualmie Valley. Last year they extracted about a million gallons of water within a couple of weeks and discharged it into the Snoqualmie River. It was done during the rainy season so there was no significant affect on the local wells. They will be test again during the dry season to find out if using the aquifer significantly lowers individual wells in the valley.

## **Approval of Minutes**

**Motion 1-0204:** Ewing made the motion to approve November minutes, Michaela seconded. Passed unanimously.

## **Commission Business**

### **Chair report:**

Tom reported that this would likely be his last meeting as chair. He said he found it a tremendous opportunity and an honor to be involved with this Commission. He also addressed those who consistently come to the meetings –with better attendance than some of the commissioners - and thanked them for those efforts and commended them. He also provided an update on the progress of the group he is part of in the Sammamish Valley that has been trying to put together a 100-acre vision of a working farm, garden walks, arboretum, and Farmers Market. They believe it will be a great benefit to ag tourism and help the Farmer’s Market out there as well.

### **Commission Staff report:**

Laurie handed out the annual “Statement of Financial and Other Interests” from the KC Ethics Board for the commissioners to fill out during the meeting so they can be returned by the deadline. She also distributed the new and first-ever KC Agriculture Program brochure. She announced that the Ag Commission interviews have been scheduled for February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Public comment**

Those wishing to speak deferred until after the Comprehensive Plan Amendment discussion per approval by Tom.

## **Commission Business con’td.**

### **Ag Programs:**

Michaela reported they discussed the need of coordinating a more structured approach to determining the feasibility of the Enumclaw processing facility. Tom said a tour is being planned and the Commission will be notified when that is arranged.

Karen explained the ideas they discussed to create a liaison among the Hmong growers and planning on workshops to help improve communication as well as assistance in farming and marketing.

## **Snoqualmie Valley USDA Poultry Processing Facility**

Kathryn Purdy gave a presentation representing herself and other farmers who would like to open a cooperative processing facility for poultry. There is currently no facility in the entire Puget Sound region. This facility would allow farmers for a fee, to bring in small batches of birds (100-200 at a time, or smaller) to slaughter, butcher, package and label under USDA certification for sale anywhere. This will give small producers the ability to enter markets from which they have been excluded. A central location has been selected to minimize the travel time for the majority of producers in the Puget Sound region. A large part of the processing equipment has been located and the fee for the converted processing trailer has been negotiated. They have an ambitious schedule to open for business this year in order for producers to hit most if not all of the growing season.

Ewing wondered if there would be enough birds to utilize the facility right away. Kathryn said they already have an estimated 20,000 birds when growers know it will be ready. They are still working diligently on their overall financial plan.

Bill wondered how the USDA inspection works and Kathryn said that an inspector is on site every day the facility is in operation. Current plans are that the trailer will stay in one location. An option that might be considered in the future is for the trailer to also move from farm to farm. Burr suggested as a liability

consideration that they include facility cleaning and preparation training so that all who use the facility are certified.

### **Nominating committee:**

The committee made up of Martha, Karen & Burr submitted George Irwin as Vice-Chair, and Judy Duff as Chair. Judy accepted the nomination and shared her current health condition with fellow Commissioners to make sure they could make an informed vote. She is confident that she will be able to meet the obligation of Chair and looks forward to doing so, if elected. The Commission applauded her. Tom asked if there were any nominations from the floor and there were none.

**Motion 02-0204** Ewing moved that nominations be closed and Michaele seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

**Motion 03-0205** Michaele moved to accept nomination from committee for George Irwin as Vice-Chair, Ewing seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Motion 04-0204** Ewing moved to accept nomination from committee for Judy Duff as Chair, Michaele seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Old Business**

Michaele brought up her previous idea of idea for a “Farmer Advocacy” committee. She feels that often farmers in the community have difficulties with regulations or other obstacles and don’t have a place to go for help. She hopes that the Commission would hopefully be able to serve as a liaison for such issues as permits; resources for information; development issues; neighbor disputes or other circumstances that a farmer is not able to solve alone. There was discussion on who will staff the Committee. Steve will be involved as the Farmbudsman, and Laurie or Claire will likely be lead staff.

**Motion 05-0204** Michaele moved to create a “Farmer Advocacy” committee, Ewing seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Laurie said that the water issues would be on the May agenda. Judy stated that she felt it might be a good thing for the Commission to support the bill at the state to repeal the “use it or lose” water rights bill. Ewing related his experiences from his farm in Kittitas County and that the current law tends to force a farmer to use water whether they need it or not to avoid losing their water rights. Eric said there are quite a few water bills active currently in the state House and Senate on water. One of the real hot issues is clarifying the fact that stock watering wells are a legitimate use for the 5000 gallons per day exempt wells. He reminded everyone that the session only lasts a couple more weeks in case anyone personally feels strongly about any of those issues. He also said he has been in contact with the water supply folks at DNRP, and while they are looking at it from stream flow and environmental quality it would be useful to have staff attend an Ag Commission meeting to begin a dialogue. Laurie will invite the person who works on water quantity issues.

### **New Business**

Claire handed out a letter she had drafted. She explained that Snoqualmie Watershed Forum staff made a request yesterday for a letter of support from the Ag Commission for a grant they are writing.

The grant is for the US Fish & Wildlife, “Private Stewardship Grant Program”. This grant would provide money and technical assistance to private landowners who are willing and able to do fish restoration projects. The goal is to have 3 or 4 landowners identified in the next week or so. The meeting Bill mentioned on February 20<sup>th</sup> is to try and get participants. The letter is needed by March 3, so the Commission would need to write an approval letter without knowing what projects are in the grant. The Commission was supportive of the concept but a few members were hesitant to write a letter of support when they hadn’t seen the projects. There was discussion on the possible projects and a question if an approval could be made to write a letter after one or more Commissioners were informed of the projects, and then okaying the letter.

It was suggested that an ad hoc committee be assigned to look via email at the letter once the projects have been determined. Laurie explained that the Commission could approve a motion to approve a letter be sent if the committee chooses.

**Motion 06-0204** Martha moved that representatives of the commission agree to serve on a committee to review the proposed grant projects and make a recommendation whether or not the chair should sign the letter of support. Michaele seconded. Motion passed with Ewing voting nay. Roger, Bill and Ewing will serve as the ad hoc committee.

### Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Karen said she would go through the Comprehensive Plan recommendations from the Commission and she began with the list of recommendations from the Regulatory Committee.

- Horticulture center – AC recommendation was to move to retail sales table, it's going to stay in the recreational/cultural uses table.
- Allowing museums as a conditional use in the ag and forest zones if they are natural resources or heritage museums change was done.
- The general services table under miscellaneous repair - change was made allowing up to a maximum of 5000sq.ft. total repair space, which includes outside and inside area unless it's in an existing agriculture building.
- For ag product sales, processing of food, and the storage component that is refrigeration, storage and warehousing previously had to be 60% from KC. That has been changed to 60% from the Puget Sound counties (which are the 12 counties bordering Puget Sound – which corresponds to Puget Sound Fresh).

There was discussion on the difficulties of implementing enforcement of the 60% rule.

There was also lengthy discussion regarding the Commission's request to set up a Farmer's Market category.

Karen said that since there are ag product sales which includes farmer's markets and farm stands and the fact that there is no plan for a major restructuring of the entire code, staff felt it was not practical to put in the farmer's market change. Staff feels that they have accomplished the vast majority of the Commission's requests. One of the factors is that in a couple areas the technicalities of making the new proposed changes work would have to be implemented by County staff, whether through regulation or the permitting process. The rules have to make sense to staffs who enforce the code and issue permits.

Judy thanked Karen for all the hard work and requested direction for the commission in the future to understand where the difficulties lie so they could know specifically what the stumbling blocks were, and then be able to make an informed decision how they want to proceed.

Michaele wanted to be sure that staff understood how critical the Commission's recommendations were for farmers. Martha added that she felt the Commission was trying to give some flexibility with the farmer's market issue and on-farm sales allowing people to sell things on their farm that weren't grown there. She felt that the spirit of what the Ag Commission was trying to do had been removed.

Karen said they were under a tremendously tight timeline, the document had to go to the printer the following week. She reminded the Commission that staff incorporated many of their recommendations such as:

- eliminating the 40% sales over 5-year period requirement;
- making sure that both the permitted use 2000sf and the 3500sf could be enclosed buildings eliminating that it could be covered but not enclosed, so that you can have a building;
- for on the farm product refrigeration and storage, 2000sf permitted use and 3500sf as conditional use (the Ag Commission asked for unlimited size, but staff determined that unlimited size warehousing in the APD or rural area could have unintended implications from throughout the code) and that was in the public review draft. 2000sf is permitted, in the Ag & Rural zones, in the rural area and lots less than 35 acres in the A zone, so smaller farms and anything in the rural area it's 3500sf unless located in an existing farm structure. Then on lots that are at least 35 acres of size in the A zone, you can go

up to 7000sf unless it's located in a farm structure including but not limited to the barn. These structures used for warehousing, refrigeration or storage are to be located on portions of ag lands that are unsuitable for ag purposes, such as areas that are already in developed portions of ag land and are not available for direct ag production

- The same provisions as above are mirrored for processing, so it would be the same for the warehousing footnote and processing. So again you can actually go up to 7000 sf with a conditional use permit in the APD on lots greater than 35 acres. It does have to be on land in the developed pocket of the farm.

There was discussion on concerns that these large structures could be built with no requirement to have a productive farm. Recommendations were made to require a link to an agriculture use; such as having the buildings be accessory use to a farm activity, either on the same property or adjacent properties or properties within the County. Karen said she will be sure that is addressed.

There was additional discussion on the farmer's market vs. farmstand issue in regards to farm roads and be able to join with a neighboring farmer to sell products together.

There was lengthy discussion on the horticulture center issue and that it seems to be written for the Molbak relocation to their greenhouse property.

Tom thanked Karen for all her time and efforts.

Paul reported on the property and land use zoning issues dealing primarily with those in the northeast corner of the Sammamish Valley APD. They have been looking at a block of about 29 acres in the NE corner that is zoned rural although it's inside the APD. There was a site-specific land use hearing in front of the hearing examiner where the landowners argued for urban and staff recommended denial. The examiner's report came out on Jan. 15, and recommended denial. So staff's denial recommendation and the examiner's report will go to the Council in the March 1 Executive's transmittal. There's a policy in the Comp. Plan that recognizes that there are rural properties in the APD, as well as other policies that say that Ag should be left in and take the rural out. But with urban pressures, it is a calculated risk to open this whole issue up. Paul said he would keep the Commission apprised of the situation.

### **Public Comment**

**Maxine Keesling** expressed her concern regarding the lack of notification on rezoning for the properties Mr. Reitenbach had spoken about in the Sammamish APD. She said they were totally unaware of the APD designation when it was first made. She also said that when a larger property in the north of the APD was removed by a "technical change" in 1995, none of the other parcel owners were notified.

**Will Knedlik** commented that in regards to the 12 counties allowed in the 60% Puget Sound area zoning code allowance, it makes no sense for King County to ignore the other 38 counties in the state, which all have real farmers. These farmers all need to be able to participate in markets in King County to survive.

### **Stewardship Partners – Salmon Safe Program-**

Larry Nussbaum provided the background of Stewardship Partners and encouraged everyone to check their website at [stewardshippartners.org](http://stewardshippartners.org). It is a non-profit conservation organization creating opportunities for conservation and restoration that is compatible with landowner interest and needs. The organization was founded in recognition of the difficulties in conducting restoration projects on private lands given the struggles associated with farming, forestry and natural resource issues. They provide assistance to landowners in generating resources and getting access to technical assistance by serving as a liaison between landowners and various services, agencies and programs. The Salmon Safe Farm Recognition and Labeling program is a non-regulatory tool set up to reward fish friendly farming practices that minimize impacts to water quality and fish habitat. It is a certification and labeling program. The Salmon Safe program itself is based out of Portland, OR. They are anxious to tap into the

Seattle market. The certification guidelines are focused around 5 categories: riparian wetland management; water use mgmt.; erosion and sediment control; chemical use; and animal management. There are also additional guidelines related to bio-diversity management. Salmon Safe has a website [salmonsafe.org](http://salmonsafe.org). The first Washington efforts will be focused the Snoqualmie Valley. They are trying to raise funds to cover costs for farmers to go through certification in this initial pilot year. Their idea is to create a pool of funds primarily targeting the SV, but having some funds available for other landowners that really want to get involved.

Farmers will pay a fee anywhere from \$300 - \$600. In the first year the intent is to cover the cost of that fee to get people to participate. There was discussion on the program and clarification if anyone can participate. Larry said they wanted to encourage everyone, they were just targeting the Snoqualmie Valley in their preliminary efforts. They are looking for a regional partner to do the certifications. It must be a credible organization, in terms of the conservation restoration world as well as respected in the agriculture community. In Oregon, Salmon Safe and organic certification could be done at the same time. Tom wondered if a farm management plan (FMP) was done by the KCD couldn't be part of that certification. Larry said that getting a FMP would be sort of a first step to getting certified. Ewing asked if it was considered plausible that a farmer could sell his product for a dollar more with Salmon Safe certification. Larry said they don't actually know that, and they aren't implying that is possible. What they are promoting is that the certification is a working tool to distinguish farming practices and create substantial public awareness. It is believed that exposure to more markets may be more beneficial than actually getting a dollar more for the product.

Larry said he would provide periodic updates on the project.

### **Commission Business**

Karen Kinney asked when the Comp. Plan goes before the Council. Eric said it is transmitted on March 1. He reminded everyone that they will have plenty of opportunities to provide comment to Council. He also said he hoped the Commission realized they have come along way from where we were, and that they recognize that while all their recommendations were not accepted, they have made tremendous strides in relationship to the zoning code. Ewing asked if this wasn't going further down the restriction route and Eric replied that there had not been the opportunities there will be now. Prior to these changes, everything that was sold on your farm, processed or stored had to be grown on your farm. This will open the door to allow collaborative ventures to create greater economic opportunities.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10PM.