

**King County Agriculture Commission**  
**Minutes from May 12, 2005**  
**Issaquah Fish Hatchery**  
**Issaquah, WA**

Commissioners Present: Judy Duff, Nancy Hutto, Ben Kodama, Bob Tidball,, George Irwin, Roger Calhoon and Michaele Blakely

Commissioners Absent: Dick Gradwohl, Gaylia Bullock, Ewing Stringfellow, Grant Davidson,

Staff: Judy Herring, Steve Evans and, King County (KC) Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) Agriculture Programs; Silvia Kantor, Washington State University Extension (WSU) KC.

Guest Agency Staff: Julia Larson, KC Economic Development Office; Josh Monaghan, King Conservation District (KCD)

Guests: Marilyn Cope, King County Council; Shakti Hawkins; Senator Maria Cantwell's Office; Mary Embleton, Cascade Harvest Coalition; Judy Taylor;

Judy Duff called the meeting to order at 4:10pm.

**Commission Roundabout**

Bob Tidball reported that he planted strawberries and will expect a crop next year. Michaele Blakely reported that Tilth and WSU are sponsoring Farm Walks around the state this summer. These walks give growers a chance to see other farms and get ideas on how to improve their farm management skills.

**Commission Business**

**Chair Report:**

Judy Duff thanked the Ag Commissioners and staff for their support and continued efforts to enhance local agriculture during her ongoing battle with personal illness

**Commission Staff Report:**

Steve Evans reported that a group of Hmong farmers are organizing to form a non-profit entity to purchase land for farming purposes. This would provide some long-term stability for this farming community. Nancy Hutto suggested that a representative from this group be invited to the next Ag Commission meeting to provide information on this effort.

**Staff Report:**

Judy Herring reported that the WIRA 7 (Snoqualmie River watershed) plan passed the County Council unanimously. Proposals for the manure digester project on the Enumclaw plateau have been submitted they are being reviewed by staff and selection of the contractor will be made sometime in June. Commission comments were submitted regarding the WIRA 9 (Green River) plan. These comments were taken into account by the County and sent a letter written to the WIRA 9 Committee. The County position is that fish habitat can be recovered without a drastic turnover of agricultural lands. All FPP deeds and restrictions should remain in place when planning for salmon restoration along the Green River. The WIRA 9 plan won't be before the Council for several months. Several farms in the Snoqualmie are working with Salmon Safe and the KCD to develop habitat restoration for salmon. WSU is giving an update report on the ADAP research they have conducted. This presentation will on Monday, May 16. The FPP program has been awarded \$237,000 by the Federal Farmland Protection Program. If negotiations with the owners are successful the money will be spent on the purchase of the Zante property in the Sammamish APD and the Gorder property in the Enumclaw APD. The revised Deed and Agreement to purchase FPP properties is scheduled for discussion at the next Utilities and Natural Resources Committee Meeting. The Nelson Bauer property is scheduled for surplus as soon as possible. Because of its historic nature the home on the property will be moved further back on the site. It was discovered that the home was contaminated due to methamphetamine use. Once this issue is resolved the house will be cleaned or demolished and surplus can continue.

**Approval of Minutes:**

The February, March and April minutes were approved without modification.

**Public Comment:**

Judy Taylor requested that the Commission find a replacement for her to attend the WIRA 9 Committee meetings. Judy will draft a brief "job description" so staff and Commissioners can search for a new person to attend these meeting on behalf of the Ag Commission. Bob Tidball indicated that there was an earlier agreement that WIRA 9 staff would bring all Ag related issues to the Commission for review. This was designed to avoid requiring busy Commissioners to attend meetings that might not be pertinent to Ag related issues. The Commission voted to send a letter to the WIRA 9 Committee that reflected this agreement and that a search for an interested representative would be conducted.

**Agency Reports**

**Washington State University (WSU) Extension KC:**

Sylvia Kantor announced that planning is underway to conduct a King County Heritage tour during the Harvest Celebration. Planning for the Farm Expo is underway and there are several meetings the public is invited to attend to share ideas that could improve the event. About 30 people attended the graduation ceremony for the Cultivating for Success class. Todd Murray is the new Horticulture Agent. Composting and hay nutrition workshops are being planned and can be found on the Extension web site.

### **King Conservation District (KCD):**

Josh Monahagn passed information out the described the Conservation Security Program. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) rules have been issued. KCD staff has been trained on how to apply these rules and are available to discuss them with livestock owners. In short a livestock owner must follow CAFO rules if he/she is feeding animals and there is direct or indirect discharge of manure into a water body

### **Senator Cantwell's Office**

Shakti Hawkins, Aid to Senator Maria Cantwell reported that the Bush Administration is proposing to eliminate funding for the Hatch Act by 2007. Hatch Act funding is the only federal program that provides long term funding to Land Grant universities for Ag research. She also indicated that Farm Support programs are scheduled for reductions of \$5.7 Billion over the next 10 years.

### **Cascade Harvest Coalition (CHC):**

CHC Executive Director, Mary Embleton, gave an update on the Puget Sound Fresh program. She indicated that the Farm Guide has been expanded and distributed. It is self-supporting because advertising space is sold in the Guide. Mary described work regarding policy advocacy including the Ag Commission Summits. She described several workshops that CHC offered including Farm to Food Service and media training events. The CHC is developing and expanding workshops for new and existing farmers. Mary is actively search for funding to continue and increase the frequency of the workshops. Currently there are over 600 program participants in the program. There are 150 farmers looking for land of which 70 are Hmong farmers. About 57 people are enrolled who have land for sale or lease. CHC is looking for ways to identify more landowners. Another CHC, Northwest Farming for Humanity, was described. It is a program labor is volunteered in exchange for food donations to a local food bank. Last 6,000 Lbs of produce was donated to food banks through this effort.

### **WSDOT SR164 Corridor Study Discussion:**

Judy Herring described WSDOT's proposals for developing a bypass from Hwy 18 to Hwy 164. Some of the proposals would site the bypass through the Upper Green APD. The Commission expressed concern over any conversion of Ag lands for this use. Commissioners requested that this be discussed at the next meeting in some detail. WSDOT has requested that the Commission and Farmers comment on the bypass plan as soon as possible.

### **Rural Economic Development Plan:**

Julia Larson gave an update on work with developing USDA poultry processing facility in Enumclaw. She also described the broader vision of developing a food innovation center for King County. A Rural Resources Web Site is being planned. This new site would offer business plans for people looking to develop appropriate rural enterprises. The site would also provide links that would make it easier to find resources to develop a new business that would enhance to rural area. She invited anyone to share with her materials that would be appropriate for this web site.

### **Commission Mission and Goals:**

Nancy Hutto led a discussion on the mission and future operations of the Ag Commission. In general, discussions centered on using the committees already developed to review issues and bring recommendations to the Commission's monthly meeting. Many things related to Ag are working well in King County. The Commission would like to hear more of those stories at the meetings. Commissioners want to be more proactive and less reactive. Issues should be brought to the Commission early enough so that time can be spent discussing them in detail. The meeting agendas should have fewer items so more thoughtful discussions can be initiated. It was suggested that the committee structure should be discussed at the next Commission meeting. Ways should be developed to encourage more farmers to attend meetings or be involved with the Ag Commission.

### **New Business**

The Ag Commission voted to send a letter to appropriate congressional representatives urging them to support and fully fund the Hatch Act. The Commission voted to send a second letter to the same congressional representatives to fully fund the Farm Support Programs.

### **Old Business**

Commissioners requested that Mark Issacson the new WLRD Manager come to the next meeting to share his vision of Ag in King County and provide information on next year's budget. It was suggested that appropriate KCD and Extension staff attend to provide input on their respective funding issues. The Commission would like to invite appropriate Council Members/staff to this meeting to participate in the discussion.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:00pm.