

## **Pierce County Agriculture Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – May 22, 2019**

Wednesday, May 22, 2019, 6:30pm-8pm

Allmendinger Center, WSU Puyallup Extension and Research Center  
2606 W Pioneer Ave, Puyallup, WA 98371

### **Attendance**

Committee members:

Carrie Little – Little Eorthe Farm, Becky Weed – Harlow Cattle Company, Sarah Howard – (alternate for David Schactler – Eatonville Nursery), Paul Mosby – Mosby Brothers, Jim Kropf – WSU-Pierce County Extension Director, Ken Scholz – Snowshoe Evergreen, Dan Picha – Picha Farms, Tim Curtis - Sterino Farms (alternate for Jake Sterino), Ben DeGoede - Windmill Gardens and DeGoede Farms, Dan Hulse – Tahoma Farms, Councilmember Pam Roach – Pierce County Council .

Dan Muir – Coordinator, Pierce County Agriculture Advisory Committee  
Hugh Taylor - Office of Pierce County Council

### **Members of the public:**

Jordan Jobe – WSU, Judy Hurley – Assistant to Councilmember Dave Morell and a Drainage District 19 Commissioner, Amy Cruver – Assistant to Councilmember Jim McCune and Drainage District 13 Commissioner, Jerome O’Leary – Snowshoe Evergreen, Kate Devalan – PCC Farmland Trust, Alison Nichols – Pierce Conservation District, Sarah Wilcox – Floodplains by Design.

### **Meeting**

Carrie Little, Committee Chair, welcomed all to the meeting.

**Motion:** Mr. Curtis made a motion to accept the April meeting minutes. Mr. Hulse seconded. All voted yes, none opposed. Motion passes to approve April minutes.

**Motion:** Mr. Scholz made a motion to approve the May agenda. Ms. Weed seconded. All voted yes, none opposed. Motion passes to approve the May agenda.

### **Public Comment**

Jerome O’Leary – HB 2087 partially addresses the Recapture Tax issue that is part of the Ag Advisory Committee’s key issue document. The Bill did not get out of the state Finance Committee. The Ag Advisory Committee can look at this issue and consider being proactive in supporting it if it comes up at the State Legislature again.

### **Chair’s Report**

Pierce County is still going through the process of hiring for the Agriculture Planner position. There is no official announcement at this time.

## **Coordinator's Report**

Report waived to add time to the agenda.

## **Agricultural Drainage Task Force**

Hugh Taylor reviewed the history of communication from Pierce County staff and the Ag Advisory Committee on the proposed creation of an Agricultural Drainage Task Force. The Committee has discussed the Task Force but has not made a formal recommendation. The County Council has requested that the Committee make a recommendation. Mr. Taylor distributed this resolution (R2019-59) for the Committee to review and discuss.

Councilwoman Pam Roach reviewed the proposed members of the Task Force and expressed concern that more Drainage Districts Commissioners have not been formally notified of the proposed Task Force. Councilwoman Roach expressed concern that the establishment of a Drainage Task Force would result in dissolving the Drainage Districts.

There was general discussion on the proposed members of the Task Force. Several committee members expressed a desire to see more farmers on the Task force who are directly affected by drainage issues as they would have knowledge and experience to share.

Resolution R2019-59 is scheduled for Rules and Operations committee action on May 28<sup>th</sup> and final Council action is June 11<sup>th</sup>.

## **Motion:**

**Mr. Hulse moved that the Ag Advisory Committee recommend to the County Council to approve the Resolution with edits to Section 2 of the Resolution to include alternates for members, 3 members of the Ag Advisory Committee, and 1 member each from the unincorporated Drainage Districts.**

**Seconded Mr. DeGoede. All voted yes. None opposed. Motion passes.**

## **Agriculture Policy and Regulatory issues document - review**

The Committee reviewed the document with the intention of calling out the highest priority issues that should be addressed. The committee made the following comments.

- Address agricultural water supply, new wells process, water rights auctioning. The committee asked Mr. Muir to schedule a speaker from the Dept of Ecology to discuss these topics with the committee.
- Addressing on farm signage restrictions and limits.
- Canyon Road extension project. Pierce County needs to perform outreach to local landowners now. Pierce County needs to notify landowners of project timelines so they can make better plans to cope with the changes. Canyon Roads extension staff is scheduled to speak to the committee at the June 2019 meeting.
- Farmworker housing. Pierce County has more regulations than the State which can prevent new housing projects due to increased costs. The committee should monitor labor bills at the state legislature to be informed on the impact on they will have on farm labor.

- Farm Labor *Availability* should be added as its own topic.
- Allow for more crop level 2 production throughout the County. The Planning Commission is currently recommending that crop level 2 be allowed throughout the County. The recommendation still needs to move through the full County Council.
- Conversion of agricultural lands to wetland and flood projects. At the September meeting Jordan Jobe will speak on this topic through the Floodplains for the Future and Farming in the Floodplain Project.
- Increased staffing at the County that will support agriculture
- ARL De-Designation Process
- Voluntary Stewardship Program
- Agricultural Burning
- Recapture Tax – Current Use Assessment

Councilwoman Roach mentioned that the County Council has a lobbyist. We would need draft legislation coming from one of the legislators in the County that the Ag Advisory committee would support. In September, or sooner, the committee could come up with items they want the lobbyist to champion (pending Council approval).

## **Old Business**

### **Canyon Road extension – Tim Curtis**

The biggest issue to date has been no consultation with the landowners in the area. The project will negatively impact several aspects of the farming operation. Loss of land, loss of high ground, road access that is too narrow, reduction in maneuverability of the shipping trucks, etc. Some of these issues can be addressed with better communication with the property owners.

Hugh Taylor will investigate the issue of the 35-foot entryway requirement and if it is possible to make the entryway larger.

Another issue is the requirement to build sidewalks.

Another issue is the project will not install utilities. This will lead to the new road being torn up again at a latter date to install utilities.

Dan Picha – There is a risk that the project will destroy the rural culture of the area. Slow roads and tractors on roads will disappear. The County says it wants to preserve agriculture, but this project will harm local farms viability.

## **Meeting adjourned**