

Pierce County Agriculture Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – September 25, 2019

Wednesday, September 25, 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, David Schactler – Eatonville Nursery, Jerome O’Leary (alternate for Paul Mosby – Mosby Brothers), Ken Scholz – Snowshoe Evergreen, Dan Picha – Picha Farms, Tim Curtis - Sterino Farms (alternate for Jake Sterino), Dan Hulse – Tahoma Farms, Jim Kropf – WSU-Pierce County Extension Director, Ben DeGoede – DeGoede Brothers – Windmill Gardens.

Dan Muir – Coordinator, Pierce County Agriculture Advisory Committee

Speakers:

Melissa McFadden – Pierce County, Surface Water Management

Members of the public:

Judy Hurley – Assistant to Councilmember Dave Morell and a Drainage District 19 Commissioner, Charlie Kirry – Assistant to Councilwoman Pam Roach, Sarah Wilcox – Farming in the Floodplains Project, Mike Poteet – Pierce County Agriculture Planner, Kate Delavan – PCC Farmland Trust.

Meeting

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

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

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

Public Comment

None

Chair’s Report

Ms. Little reported on the upcoming meeting with Pierce County Executive Bruce Dammeier and another meeting with Pierce County Planning and Public Works Director, Dennis Hanberg. Chair Carrie Little, Vice-chair Becky Weed, and Committee Coordinator Dan Muir will attend the meetings representing the Ag Advisory Committee. Any other committee members interested in attending should coordinate with Mr. Muir.

Coordinator’s Report

Mr. Muir reported that the October meeting of the Ag Advisory Committee will be held at the Chicon Room in the Admin building across the street from the Allmendinger Center.

The King-Pierce Farm Bureau annual meeting and banquet will be October 14th. All present here tonight are invited to attend. The KPFB will also have an election for seats on its Board of Directors. If you are interested in running for a seat, or know of someone who is, please contact Mr. Muir for additional information.

Introduction of Mike Poteet, Pierce County Agriculture Planner

Ms. Little introduced the new Agriculture Planner hire, Mike Poteet. Mr. Poteet shared his background in farming and desire to help farmers in Pierce County. Mr. Poteet encouraged landowners to copy him on any permits they submit to the County so he can assist if needed.

Muck Creek Bridge – Becky Weed

Ms. Weed shared the project to rebuild a bridge over Muck Creek on her property. Ms. Weed will need several permits to move forward with the project. Ms. Weed will give monthly updates to the committee for the purpose of illustrating the costs and time consumed on moving a project like this forward.

Mike Poteet reported that the County is putting together a “permitting team” to address making the permitting process more efficient. Ms. Little also said there were initial discussions with Mr. Poteet about creating an “emergency permitting” process for situations that need to be dealt with immediately like a flood event.

Surface Water Rates and Charges for Agriculture - Melissa McFadden

Ms. McFadden presented the Surface Water Management utility service fee road map for 2020-2023. Starting in 2021, SWM is proposing a tiered rate structure with all parcels paying a Base Rate and removing exemptions for federal lands. Surface Water Management will propose that for 2020 all current use agriculture parcels will be billed no more than the single-family residential rates. For many parcels, but not all, this will reduce surface water charges from current levels.

There has been discussion about equity in surface water charges. They would like to see the people who contribute the most to water quality or flooding issues or receive the most benefit to foot a little bit more of the bill.

Mr. Hulse suggested that in many cases farms provide a benefit to the community when it comes to surface water retention, riparian buffers, etc. It should be considered to provide those lands with a credit for these benefits.

New Business

This was Mr. Hulse’s last meeting as a committee member. Mr. Muir thanked Mr. Hulse for his service on the committee. Mr. Muir will work with Tilth Alliance to nominate another farmer for Mr. Hulse’s seat on the committee.

Old business

There was discussion of how to get the WSU ag extension agent position filled again in Pierce County (it is currently unstaffed). Jim Kropf will send information to the committee on upcoming visits by WSU administration to the Puyallup campus.

Meeting adjourned