

Pierce County Agriculture Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – January 22, 2020

Wednesday, January 22, 2020, 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, Ken Scholz – Snowshoe Evergreen, Dan Picha – Picha Farms, Jim Kropf – WSU-Pierce County Extension Director, Paul Mosby – Mosby Brothers, Councilwoman Pam Roach – Pierce County Council. Jerome O’Leary – Snowshoe Evergreen – acted as Mr. Mosby’s alternate until the arrival of Mr. Mosby. Micha Ide – Bright Ide Acres, Ben DeGoede - DeGoede Brothers – Windmill Gardens.

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

Speakers:

Maxine Hill – SR 162 Community Group

Mike Poteet – Pierce County Agriculture Planner

Members of the public:

Jordan Jobe – WSU, Sarah Wilcox – Farming in the Floodplains Project, 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, Yanah G Cook - McKenna, Alison Nichols – Pierce Conservation District, Maxine Hill – Riverlook Farm, Joe - Riverlook Farm.

Meeting

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

Motion: Mr. Scholz made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes. Ms. Weed seconded. All voted yes, none opposed. Motion passes to approve November minutes.

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

Public Comment

None

Chair’s Report

Waived time to add to the rest of agenda

Coordinator's Report

A letter of support from the Ag Advisory Committee to the Pierce County Council requesting the extension of the Committee past the year-end 2020 sunset date was drafted and submitted.

The Pierce County Council Lobbyist, Mike Shaw, has been approved to lobby on agriculture issues by the County Council. If new legislation comes up that the Ag Advisory Committee would want to support or oppose, we can request that the County Council have Mr. Shaw lobby on that issue.

Motion: Mr. Picha made a motion that the Ag Advisory Committee recommend that Dan Muir be the agriculture representative at the WRIA 10 and LIO meetings addressing watershed planning. Mr. Schactler seconded. All voted yes. None opposed. Motion passes.

Highway 162 project – Maxine Hill

SR 162 Community Group (sr162traffic.org) has been working for the past 16 months. They are focused on a planned roundabout in the McMillian area (128th Street East). The road is a high truck traffic corridor. Department of Transportation (DoT) plans for a roundabout. Pierce County study recommends a traffic signal.

There are concerns that local farm businesses and their customers will have problems getting in and out of the properties. Also, properties will lose frontage including farmland.

Mr. O'Leary suggested the Ag Advisory Committee consider taking a position on this issue. Councilwoman Roach suggested bringing up the issue to the County Council's Economic Development committee.

SB 6335

Councilwoman Roach mentioned this bill and others. The Citizens' Alliance for Property Rights and the Washington Farm Bureau track legislative bills. The Ag Committee should follow these groups to stay on top of bills that may affect agriculture.

Pierce County Agriculture Program – Mike Poteet

Mr. Poteet gave a brief update on several topics. He continues to visit individual farms in Pierce County. He is also working on upcoming workshops planned for 2020 and beyond. Mr. Poteet continues to take calls related to permitting and regulations. He mentioned a project with the Mount Vernon Food Hub and Northwest Agriculture Business Center that may help farmers with food aggregation and sales. It is a farmer run entity. Pocket Gophers, Solar arrays, ARL criteria and incentives, and traffic impact fees were all briefly discussed as topics he is working on.

Mr. Poteet then reviewed the County Ag Program progress over the years and what the Agriculture Advisory Committee has accomplished in the past two years.

Pierce County Agriculture Program Plans for 2020 include:

- Agriculture Drainage Task Force
- Reduce approval times and improve consistency of permit reviews
- Address international codes for building and fire
- Continue to develop the program website and Farm Forum series
- Continue to visit 40 new farms a year.
- Liaison to other County projects.

2021:

- Code language for Ag-tourism, Right-to-farm, worker housing, and taxation for easement-held properties.
- Continue farmer site visits
- Develop farmer feedback program
- ARL/Zoning research
- County wide Ag Strategic Committee?

Muck Creek Bridge – Becky Weed

Gave brief update. Will start to work on submitting County permitting. Working with Mike Poteet.

Old business

Canyon Road Regional Extension Project. Mr. Picha made comments before the Pierce County Economic Development Committee during the Ag Committee report at the December meeting. Mr. Muir and Mr. Picha will contact other organizations to inquire on their policy toward the Canyon Road project.

Ag Drainage Task Force. A facilitator has been hired and members have been selected. The first meeting should occur by the beginning of March.

New Business

There have been outside discussions on forming a group of agencies and organizations that have agriculture programs or programs that touch farming and farming issues.

This team will take a comprehensive approach to supporting agricultural viability, and together will:

- identify existing programmatic and technical services for producers within the county,
- identify key gaps in programmatic and technical support for agricultural producers,
- develop an efficient, strategic and collaborative work plan that expands upon existing partnerships, and builds and strengthens partnerships with local and regional organizations (e.g. NABC, Puyallup Watershed LIO/ERP),
- create a shared strategy, including communication plans, towards meeting future agricultural viability needs for Pierce County producers.

The Ag Advisory Committee may want to consider being supportive of this effort.

Meeting adjourned