

LARIMER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2020
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: Sam Adams (liaison), Jennifer Bornhoft, Timothy Clouse, Beth Conrey, Jenn Cram (Staff liaison), Karen Crumbaker (liaison), Franklyn Garry, Travis Horton, John Kefalas (Commissioner liaison), Gail Meisner, Paula Petroff (Extension Staff), Kristin Ramey, Travis Rollins, Greg Schreiner, Jon Slutsky, Zach Thode, and George Wallace

Absent: Lynnet Bannion and Natalie Yoder

Guests: Don Threewitt, Lesli Ellis, Matt Lafferty, and Rob Graves

Meeting called to order and introduction of guests. Chairman Zach Thode called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. Guests introduced themselves to members.

II. Consideration of minutes from September 9, 2020. Jon noted minor grammatical changes to III. and V. George requested a change to item IV. Jenn acknowledged a carryover from the July minutes under III. That will be deleted. Beth moved to approve the minutes with corrections and Gail seconded. All were in favor.

III. Interaction with Commissioner Kefalas on Ag and Community related issues. Commissioner Kefalas shared the following:

- The two new Commissioners are being trained. The Planning Department will be assisting with training on matters related to Land Use applications.
- The Planning Commission and BCC had a productive worksession on the LUC2020 updates. Appreciate all the input the AAB has provided. On December 7 there is a public hearing to adopt the consolidated draft, which is available on the website.
- The BCC will adopt the 2021 budget on December 18.
- George asked if the estimated cost for the fire was in the 14-million-dollar range. Commissioner Kefalas noted that the estimated costs were 6.6 million with \$930,000 going to personnel costs. Need to confirm costs. Distinguish between short- and long-range costs. George asked the question related to the benefits of protecting farms and ranches, as that can be seen as money in the bank. **1/22/21 - Jenn confirmed that the County has budgeted 9 million dollars for costs related to the Cameron Peak fire. This amount includes the cost of moving animals, etc.**
- Zach noted that Richard Seaworth had reached out to him about County Employees out marking his property. Commissioner Kefalas responded that they were out doing GPS markings and communication had taken place.

- Zach asked about the proposed setback of 200-feet from agricultural lands. Matt explained that the setback is meant to provide a buffer between agriculture and development. It is intended for the development to provide the buffer, not the agricultural use. The setback/buffer can be reduced with berming and landscaping as appropriate. Matt also noted that this was just the first phase of Land Use Code updates and it would not be the last discussion with the Agricultural Advisory Board and agricultural community. Zach wants to stay in the loop, especially related to fees to promote intermediated sales.
- The Ranch is no longer being leased for COVID operations.

IV. AAB Terms, Reappointments, Thank You and Vacancies:

- Tim, Beth, Travis Horton, Gail, and Natalie all have terms that expire on November 30, 2020. All have reapplied and have been reappointed except Gail and Natalie. Both decided not to renew. Gail has served on the AAB for 12 years. Natalie is busy with her new business.
- A huge thank you to Gail for her contributions to the AAB.
- Per the ByLaws the AAB will include 11-15 members. There are currently vacancies open.

V. Updates to Bylaws 2020/2021 and Role of AAB:

- A copy of the Bylaws was shared with everyone for review and discussion.
- Zach noted that an update had been proposed to change the number of allowed absences in a year from 3 to 2.
- They had also discussed adding an Ex Officio membership, but that it was no longer needed since Bill Spencer was no longer participating.
- Would like to discuss the ability to hold executive sessions if there are projects that OLAB would like input from AAB regarding potential Agricultural Land purchases.
- Zach summarized the role of the AAB is to serve the BCC and provide input on matters related to production agriculture in Larimer County. Commissioner Kefalas would like to clarify what “advise” means. When is it appropriate for the AAB to make recommendations?
- Commissioner Kefalas noted that the new Commissioners will be looking for input from the AAB. Zach suggested a tour of Ag properties in Larimer County. Commissioner Kefalas agreed that would be a good exercise. Matt would also be happy to participate in the tour.
- Tim asked if Bylaws need to be updated to include language about virtual meetings? Lesli commented that language could be used from other Boards ByLaws that have recently been updated.

VI. Possible Mill Levy/Sales Tax to support Ag:

Zach shared his ideas for a possible Mill Levy to support Agriculture in Larimer County. This idea came because of reviewing the ballot language for the Open Space tax that was approved. 25% of the revenue from that tax should go towards supporting working farms and ranches.

However, Zach believes that the goals of Natural Resources may be different than the Agricultural Advisory Board and thus additional funding could help working farms and ranches to pay for Conservation Development closing fees, lining ditches, purchase of Transfer of Development rights (TDUs), etc. West Greeley has a good example of a similar program that could be referenced. Zach also brought up the fact that Larimer County does not really have any dedicated staff to support agriculture in Larimer County as Boulder County does.

- Matt noted that the County did have a successful TDU program for the Fossil Creek area. They chose not to develop a TDU Bank, but allow for an open market that drove the cost of the TDU. Matt also clarified the staffing situation for Boulder County related to the amount of agricultural land that is owned and operated by Boulder County.
- Commissioner Kefalas clarified that there were 4 areas that the Open Space Sales Tax fund were to be dedicated. One being protecting working farms and ranches. He has started discussions with Daylan Figgs with the Department of Natural Resources to better understand how funds are being spent in that regard. He would like to get a better understanding of how well we are utilizing those funds to protect working farms and ranches. Perhaps funds could be used for water sharing. He will look to staff to continue discussions with Natural Resources.
- Sam added that having another option is valuable as Conservation Easements are not always the solution to help protect farms/ranches.
- Frank noted that any ballot language would need to be very clear to educate people on how this new source of funding was different than the existing Open Space tax and how it would be utilized. This will require some further analysis. Perhaps there are templates that could be used for reference. This could be a Task Group exercise.
- All agreed that the proposed Mill Levy would need to complement the existing Open Space Tax.
- George added that this could also be included as an incentive for the Voluntary Ag District. It is important that the County discuss water sharing with the City of Fort Collins as well.
- Zach concluded the discussion with noting that he would like to have discussion points prepared to share with the Commissioners in the new year.

VII. Work Plan and Task Groups:

The following topics were discussed at the September meeting: Local Food Systems: How to increase Intermediated Sales, Water Sharing, Voluntary Agricultural District

- Local Food Systems – Beth asked if online sales were included. Zach noted that they should be. All agreed that the CSU Extension will be a good resource. Beth and Karen agreed to be on the group. Greg and Kristin are maybes. Amber Graves is also a good candidate and can be asked to join at the January meeting.
- Water Sharing - Zach would like to be prepared to go before the Commissioners for an official ask on this matter in March 2021. Need to identify what AAB wishes to do, the different options for water sharing and how a program for Larimer County might work. George added that post fire water security is important.

- Voluntary Ag District – Ongoing as part of LUC updates. Should be coordinated with Water Sharing.
- Greg noted that he was really interested in the Carbon process and credits and could put a presentation together easily based on all his research and documentation to date.
- George would like to assist Matt with the ACE zoning. Thinks this could be its own topic. Would like green light to start talking with businesses on E. Mulberry. Matt added that the ACE zone district was created not only for the existing businesses on E. Mulberry, but to allow areas in the County where new businesses could develop. The discussions need to be County Manager to City Manager about future annexation.

VIII. Announcements: Moving forward in 2021 Matt Lafferty will be the Staff Liaison to the AAB and Jenn will be his secondary.

IX. The next AAB meeting will be held on January 13, 2021 at 12:30 pm. The location and format will be determined later.

X. The meeting was adjourned at 2:43 pm.