

Date: Wednesday, January 10, 2024
Time: 12:30 PM
Location: Hybrid - In-Person: Lake Estes, 3rd Floor, 200 West Oak Street, Fort Collins or Virtual, Zoom Link: https://larimer-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RH1h0CrSf22lBZrLQw1cQ

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

The Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) met on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, at 12:30 p.m. in a hybrid setting in person and via Zoom.

The following Board members were present: Amber Graves, George Wallace, Martha Sullins, Carmen Farmer, Melissa Town, Kristin Ramey, Franklyn Garry, Brad Justice, Ryan Peterson, Audrey Welsh.

The following staff were present: Matt Lafferty, Danielle Reimanis, Laura Walker, Cary Weiner, Travis Rollins, Justin Currie, and Christina Scrutchins.

Board of County Commission present included: John Kefalas

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 8, 2023

Member Sullins requested the following amendments:

- Page 1. Approval of the Minutes Motion
 - o Amendment: Member Garry moved, and member Wallace seconded the motion to approve the September 13, amended minutes of the Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board. Motion carried (8-0).
- Page 4. Discussion Item No. 1 East Mulberry Plan update – Fort Collins Staff, paragraph 7, sentence 2.
 - o Amendment: The importance of clear communication of the annexation strategy was highlighted to address uncertainties and fears among enterprises.
- Page 5. Discussion Item No. 2 – Local Food Policy Council – Audrey Snyder Walsh.
 - o Amendment: Discussion Item No. 2 – Local Food Policy Council – Audrey Welsh.
- Page 6. Work Plan and Task Groups Item No. 2 – Food Systems Discussion, Discussion was included in Discussion Item No. 2 – Local Food Policy Council - Audrey Snyder Walsh
 - o Amendment: Discussion was included in Discussion Item No. 2 – Local Food Policy Council – Audrey Welsh.

Member Wallace moved, and member Sullins seconded the motion to approve the November 9, 2023, amended minutes of the Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board. Motion carried (8-0).

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Staff requested the following amendments:

- Staff Updates
 - o Item No. 5 – Jessica Callen’s (Jess) role and ongoing initiatives or concerns related to cooperative extension services.
 - o Item No. 6 – Update on the Water Master Plan – Danielle Reimanis

STAFF UPDATES

ITEM NO. 1 – INTRODUCTIONS (NEW MEMBERS)

Dylan Alsbach

ITEM NO. 2 – COMMISSIONER KEFALAS

Commissioner Kefalas provided updates on various matters, including budget and property taxes. A public meeting is scheduled to adopt mill levies, with a proposed mill levy credit aimed at reducing property taxes. Following this, all mill levies in the county will be certified, and property tax statements are expected by the end of January. The Commissioners will hold a board retreat on January thirtieth to review the 2023 work plan and establish priorities for the upcoming year. Additionally, a recent work session focused on climate initiatives, discussing the Climate Smart Future Ready Action Plan and the Internal Climate Action Resiliency and Education program (ICARE). While reductions in assessment rates and the mill levy credit will provide some relief for residential properties, commercial properties and agricultural land won't be directly impacted.

Member Wallace inquired about the progress of transitioning to extension versus remaining within the Community Services Umbrella. Commissioner Kefalas stated that the transition is advancing, with primary responsibility shifting to extension while still involving the Community Development Department. However, specifics regarding staffing and administrative support are yet to be finalized. Commissioner Kefalas emphasized the importance of communication among Extension, Community Development, Community Planning, and Natural Resources. Laura Walker mentioned waiting for policy finalization by the Commissioner's office for new guidelines. Commissioner Kefalas expressed uncertainty about the policy timeline, suggesting follow-up with Laurie Kadrach. Ultimately, the decision rests with the Board of County Commissioners, with Commissioner Kefalas prioritizing what is best for farm and ranching interests.

ITEM NO. 3 – BOARD PARTICIPATION ON 1041 APPLICATIONS

Matt Lafferty discussed the Board's involvement in reviewing various types of applications, particularly 1041 applications, which typically have significant impacts across the county. He mentioned a past example of the Thornton Pipeline application from a few years ago, where the Agricultural Board felt it was important to provide feedback to the Board of County Commissioners. Lafferty explained that while the County Planning Department processes such applications procedurally and takes them to different referral agencies for review, the Board of County Commissioners may request input from other Boards and Commissions, such as the Open Lands Board, the Agricultural Advisory Board, or the Environmental Board. However, if the Commissioners do not request input from a specific board, their comments are to be kept internal, and individuals can voice their concerns during the hearing process but not as representatives of the board. Lafferty mentioned a new Thornton application forthcoming and assured that the Commissioners will decide which boards and commissions are invited to comment on it. He emphasized that not being asked to comment as a board doesn't prevent individuals from expressing personal concerns at public hearings.

Commissioner Kefalas provided additional context regarding the 1041 permit application for the Thornton Pipeline, mentioning the upcoming deadline of February 1st to determine the completeness of the application. He also mentioned a joint work session scheduled for February 14th to review the 1041 regulations and process. Furthermore, he highlighted the commencement of the General Assembly session and suggested discussing the Ag. Advisory Board's role in weighing in on relevant legislation impacting farming and ranching. Matt Lafferty emphasized the importance of adhering to communication guidelines when

commenting on applications during board meetings and provided instructions for accessing the 1041 regulations. Commissioner Kefalas also announced a community conversation on February 1st, from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., at Avuncular Bob's T-Bar Inn, focusing on updates related to livestock issues at the Ranch, with Cary Weiner and his team from the extension presenting.

Matt Lafferty explained the significance of 1041 regulations, which cover matters of state interest affecting large areas of a county and are typically associated with public or quasi-public projects. These regulations allow the county to assess applications based on their overall impact, public benefit, and appropriateness of location. Previously, counties relied on Location and Extent reviews, where decisions were made by the Planning Commission and could be overridden by the public agency's board. Lafferty emphasized that 1041 regulations provide a more structured and comprehensive approach to land use decisions, involving the Planning Commission and ultimately the Board of County Commissioners. He illustrated this with examples such as major pipelines, road improvements, and water projects. An Agricultural Member expressed concerns about the burden of 1041 regulations on water projects and requested representation in the process. Commissioner Kefalas suggested addressing this question during the discussion of the watermaster plan, where Staff could provide more insight.

ITEM NO. 4 – BYLAWS

Matt Lafferty informed the members about ongoing efforts within the county manager's office to revise policies related to the operation and scope of Boards and Commissions, including the Agricultural Board. This revision aims to define each board's role more clearly and outline their responsibilities, such as providing advice or generating information. Once completed, the revised policies will lead to updates in the board's bylaws, which will then be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. Lafferty also addressed the question of training for new members, expressing willingness to meet with them to discuss relevant matters and arrange for legal guidance on what topics can and cannot be discussed. A member of the Agricultural Board emphasized the potential for conflicts of interest, particularly regarding involvement in projects like the Thornton Pipeline, and suggested training to understand boundaries. Lafferty acknowledged this and noted that members may be asked to refrain from commenting on certain matters depending on their involvement.

AMENDMENT AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 – JESSICA CALLEN'S (JESS) ROLE AND ONGOING INITIATIVES OR CONCERNS RELATED TO COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICES.

Cary Weiner provides an update on the Grant and Grow workshop organized by Jess Callen, Larimer County's Agricultural Natural Resources Specialist with Extension. The workshop, scheduled for February 2nd at the ranch, aims to educate agricultural producers about funding opportunities and grant writing. Recognizing a need in the community, Jess has spearheaded this initiative, and Cary seeks support in promoting it. Additionally, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union has shown interest in collaborating on similar statewide programs, potentially making Larimer County a model for such initiatives. Cary's update underscores the proactive efforts of Jess and the potential impact of the workshop on the local agricultural community and beyond.

AMENDMENT AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 – UPDATE ON THE WATER MASTER PLAN – DANIELLE REIMANIS

Danielle Reimanis discussed Larimer County's Water Master Plan during a meeting, highlighting its development and objectives. The plan stemmed from the county's strategic goals of enhancing rural infrastructure and watershed management. The presentation outlined the project's vision, goals, and risk categories, emphasizing stakeholder engagement and

data-driven approaches. The plan aims to address water supply sustainability, agriculture, and future growth challenges. Reimanis also provided insights into the timeline, funding, and stakeholder involvement. The presentation included discussions on risk criteria, water supply sources, projected growth, and stakeholder engagement strategies. The plan involves mapping and analyzing high-risk watersheds and implementing mitigation strategies. Reimanis presented the draft vision, goals, and risk categories, seeking feedback from stakeholders, including the Agricultural Advisory Board. The plan's goals include minimizing natural hazards, promoting water sustainability, enhancing water literacy, addressing supply-demand dynamics, and improving efficiency and conservation measures. The presentation concluded with a discussion on risk categories and criteria, including factors such as land use changes, population growth, climate uncertainty, and groundwater contamination risks. Danielle Reimanis explains that their consultant engineering firm is responsible for much of the technical work. She acknowledges that some criteria, like changes in land use, are not directly quantifiable data sets and require a gap analysis to identify relevant data and how it can inform risk categories. Reimanis then elaborates on specific criteria related to water rights, infrastructure risks, and education, highlighting their importance and relevance to the Agricultural Advisory Board. She presents a visual aid showing the criteria and the value provided as a result of the analysis, emphasizing that the technical engineers will assign values to describe the risk criteria and categorize them from extreme risk to negligible risk. Reimanis concludes by outlining upcoming events and inviting further discussion and feedback on the risks and risk criteria from the Agricultural Advisory Board.

The discussion encompasses water management, land use planning, and agricultural sustainability in Larimer County. There were concerns raised about risk assessment methodologies, emphasizing the importance of tying risk identification to outcomes for businesses and the community. Suggestions were made to engage with diverse groups such as realtor-builder associations and Planning Commissions to address issues like home affordability and urban sprawl. Integrating water planning with land use planning was emphasized, particularly regarding housing costs and water accessibility. The Ag. board members underscored the need to consider various farming practices and their impacts on the local food system. There was also discussion about the value of agricultural land and water rights, along with calls for proactive measures to conserve water resources. The role of different entities in water management and land use decisions was examined, highlighting the need for collaboration and effective management of water rentals. Overall, there was a recognition of the complexity of these issues and the importance of comprehensive strategies that engaged diverse stakeholders to address them effectively.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM NO. 1 – WORK PLAN

The discussion revolved around three main work plan items previously carried over from last year: improving county policies and codes to incentivize local food systems, working on the Voluntary Ag District (CCI), and engaging with active county projects such as the Water Plan, Climate Plan, and Solid Waste Plan. Members discussed the need to assess county policies and codes to support local food systems, potentially updating them to align with current needs. Concerns were raised about the progress of the Voluntary Ag District, with a focus on coordinating with Open Lands and seeking guidance from Shane. Commissioner Kefalas emphasized the importance of identifying a staff person to facilitate discussions between the Ag Advisory Board, Natural Resources, and other stakeholders. The board discussed the need for clear communication with OLAB and local producers to determine appropriate incentives for the Voluntary Ag District, considering factors like farm size and location. They also discussed the role of Extension in facilitating meetings with producers and the importance of conducting

meetings transparently and in accordance with county procedures. Matt Lafferty noted ongoing engagement with county projects related to water, climate, and solid waste, highlighting the board's role in providing input and staying informed. The conversation underscored the importance of collaborative efforts and clear communication channels to effectively address agricultural issues in Larimer County.

Action Items

ITEM NO. 1 – Election of Officers

Chair – Amber Graves

Vice Chair – Brad Justice

Secretary – Martha Sullins

ITEM NO. 2 – Posting of Public Meeting

MOTION

Member Justice moved, and member Peterson seconded the motion for the Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board designate www.Larimer.org as the place for posting notice of public meetings, and if exigent or emergency circumstances prevent the online posting at such location, public notice shall be physically posted at the bulletin boards located at the north and south entrances to the Larimer County Courthouse Offices Building at 200 West Oak, Fort Collins, Colorado, in accordance with Colorado's open meetings laws. Motion carried (10-0).

ADJOURN

With there being no further business, the hearing adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

FUTURE COMMUNICATION ITEMS

None.