

LARIMER COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
Minutes of January 12, 2022 Meeting

The Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) met virtually via Zoom. The meeting started at 12:30 p.m.

The following Board members were present: Zach Thode (Chairperson), George Wallace (Vice Chairperson), Kristin Ramey (Secretary), Beth Conrey, Timothy Clouse, John Cravens, Franklyn Garry, Amber Graves, Travis Horton, Maureen McDonough, Travis Rollins, Andy Pineda, and Greg Schreiner.

The following Board members were absent: none

The following officials and staff were present: John Kefalas, County Commissioner; Matt Lafferty, Principal Planner; Alyssa Martin, Planner I; Karen Crumbaker, extension; and Lesli Ellis, Community Development Director.

No guests were present

APPROAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved with the addition of a Climate Task Force update.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The November 10, 2021 minutes were approved with minor corrections as noted. The changes including additions to the agenda regarding drones in agricultural areas. Member Cravens approved the motion. Member Ramey seconded. All approved.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Updates from County Commissioner John Kefalas

Commissioner Kefalas gave an update on solid waste management. In 2018, the County adopted the Solid Waste Master Plan, and there have been Intergovernmental Agreements. Solid Waste Policy Council has made some adjustments for a variety of reasons. The project is moving forward. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) approved a Certificate of Designation regarding Engineering Design and Operations Plan (EDOP). It's important to extend the life of the current landfill that probably needs to be closed by 2024, with start of new facility north of Wellington by 2023. There will be a hazardous waste site. Original diversion goal was 40%, now 83% diversion to recycling and other.

It is on track for a composting system for yard waste. Food waste is more complicated because it needs to be enclosed system.

Committee members asked - Could food waste be used as animal feed? Is there an opportunity to be involved?

Director Ellis said she would reach out to Laurie Kadrich and Duane Penny to see if this topic could be addressed at an upcoming meeting.

Added Item to the Agenda: Positives of Climate Task Force and Concerns

- AAB provided feedback on planning areas for the Climate Task Force. They spent a lot of time on the questions, and are trying to figure out the questionnaire. At this point they do not feel like they are contributing meaningfully. Hopefully, the involvement will be more than the programs being sent out to communities. They don't yet see where agriculture would fit in based on the focus areas. There might need to be more specifics. Staff and Commissioner Kefalas will give some feedback to Heidi based on this discussion.
- At the Task Force, on Jan. 5, Heidi shared slides and survey went out to a number of people.
- The Task Force is intended to be a sounding board, and the Commissioner's understanding is that they adjust that based on feedback.
- Some members observed that US farmers and ranchers are in action to change the narrative of agriculture and farming and ranching being climate conscious.
- Members asked a question about whether we are working with neighboring counties? The answer is not directly.

Other Updates

- Former member John Slutsky was appointed to the Planning Commission. Board members thanked the commissioners for that appointment. He resigned his position from AAB.
- Kristin Stephens is the new Board of County Commissioner Chair for 2022.
- Chair Thode was preparing thank you cards for Jenn Cram and Jon Slutsky in an email and asked other members to sign them electronically. Those cards went out after the meeting.

Local Food Systems Update and Workshop with BOCC

The Local Food System Task force shared its draft report, with 18 recommendations to share with the Board of County Commissioners, grouped by:

- Support for agriculture
- Access to land and water
- Marketing opportunity
- Ease regulatory burdens
- Climate change

Discussion:

- Members would like to have a workshop discussion on this topic with the Commissioners.
- Could there be some follow up with grant funding to dig deeper?
- Commissioner Kefalas suggested that it might be helpful to prioritize these suggestions before presenting them to the full board. Additionally, it would be good to figure out what is actionable.
- The task force discussed having a week or two to polish, with AAB giving feedback to the subcommittee to narrow it down. They will vet and prioritize the ideas.
- Could the board narrow this to around seven items, as a majority of the board? They discussed an early February approval.

- Commissioner Kefalas also suggested considering timeframes (short vs. longer) and an introduction that explains the process and context, as well as looking at what is actionable
- Director Ellis and Chair Thode will look at schedules for a March BOCC meeting. (Note: That meeting was tentatively scheduled for March 9 and will be postponed to give a bit more time to finalize the report with the feedback provided.)

Voluntary Agricultural District

- The Committee discussed the Voluntary Agricultural District and possible vote to proceed.
- Vice Chair Wallace explained the idea and need for support to get started on actionable items and partner with others.
- Members asked questions such as how does it relate to getting water priority? What is the direction?
- Some members expressed that the board should not pursue the concept further.
- Others asked whether it should be left in the work plan or not.
- Commissioner Kefalas suggested that he follow up with staff to discuss this topic and how it might continue.

Agriculture Intern

- This is a new item for the AAB.
- Members explained that the County is effectively writing an RFP to get an intern. The application will be tidied up by Friday and submitted. The internship runs after the spring semester – mid-May through mid-August and can assist with supporting the board.
- Next steps – In February, CSU students apply based on their interest. It is possible that multiple interns will be interested and available to review after the mentorship team identifies top 3 choices.
- Member Cravens recommend approval. Member Garry seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- Members discussed a selection committee. On it will be Andy Pineda, John Cravens, Zach Thode, Kerri Rollins, and Lesli Ellis.

Work Plan

Water Sharing

- Members discussed that water sharing is important and should be a priority.
- Put something together about getting water. There is more that can be done about an allotment for farmers, including enough water to produce crops. The water is there and needs to be allocated (e.g., how to get to farmers this April.) Members observed that cities may not share any water because they will be concerned, they may not have enough.
- Consider a task force on water. Can they participate with City of Fort Collins as part of a regional conversation?

Volunteers for this project: Zach, Greg, Mo, Amber, Andy

Carbon sequestration was discussed but there were not volunteers.

Food waste and animal feed potential

This topic was discussed earlier. Volunteers: Tim, maybe Frank depending on what happens with agricultural districts.

Agricultural Districts

- The topic of agricultural districts may make sense as a 2022 item but needs further discussion. There were mixed perspectives on the board with some interested in continuing, others wanting to put this on the back burner, and others not sure.
- This topic is a bit more involved with staff time and may need clarity from producers.

Election of Officers

- Members discussed possible officers, and several expressed that they might be interested in running next year but do not have the bandwidth now.
- Zach Thode was nominated and accepted as chair with George Wallace continuing as Vice Chair. Member Schreiner made a motion to approve with Member Garry seconding. All approved.
- John Cravens was nominated as secretary. Member Conrey made a motion to approve, Member Ramey seconded. The motion passes unanimously.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:15. The next scheduled meeting is March 9, 2022.

John Cravens, Secretary

Zach Thode, Chairperson