

Date: Wednesday, March 13, 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_RHIIh0CrSf22IBZrLQw1cQ

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

The Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) met on Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 12:30 p.m. in a hybrid setting in person and via Zoom.

The following Board members were present: Amber Graves, Zach Thode, George Wallace, Martha Sullins, Audrey Welsh, Daylan Alsbach, Carmen Farmer, Melissa Town, Audrey Welsh, Dennis Lacerte, and Ryan Peterson.

The following staff were present: Matt Lafferty, Principal Planner; Lesli Ellis, Alex Sude, Duane Penney, and Jessica Callen.

Board of County Commission present included: John Kefalas

Guests present: None.

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Amendments:

- Discussion and Action Items No. 2 - LESA (Brad Justice) tabled to May 8, 2024.

Member Thode moved, and member Wallace seconded the motion to approve the March 13, 2024, agenda of the Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board as presented with the amendments.

The agenda was unanimously approved. Motion carried (11-0)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Amendments:

- Page 1. The following Board members were present and Page 2. Item No. 1 – Introductions (New Members)
 - o Amendment: Include Dylan Alsbach
- Page 2. Item No. 2 – Commissioner Kefalas
 - o Amendment: Change “Bill” to “Mill
 - o Amendment: Change “Lori” to “Laurie”
- Page 2. Item No. 3 – Board Participation On 1041 Applications
 - o Clarification: The 1041 process, which is legally defined and follows quasi-judicial procedures. The recommendation is to avoid input from other boards and commissions to maintain clarity within the process. While individual participation and

comments are encouraged during hearings for 1041 permit applications, it's suggested that they participate as individuals rather than as representatives of any specific board or commission.

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 - o Amendment: 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_RHllh0CrSf22lBZrLQw1cQ
- Page 1. Approval of Minutes from November 8, 2023
 - o Amendment: Correct spelling of name for Audrey Welsh.

Approval of the January 10, 2024, meeting minutes were tabled to May 8, 2024.

STAFF UPDATES

INTRODUCTIONS

None.

COMMISSIONER KEFALAS

Commissioner Kefalas provided updates and reminders on various planning and permitting matters. Firstly, there's a scheduled joint work session to discuss updates on the Water Master Plan. Additionally, seven dates have been set for land use hearings regarding Thornton's 1041 permit application, split between the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners.

There was discussion regarding the appropriateness of Thornton representatives meeting with multiple board members. It was clarified that such meetings should adhere to the board's bylaws, with individual meetings being the preferred approach to maintain transparency and avoid conflicts of interest. Commissioner Kefalas stressed the importance of avoiding ex parte communication concerning the Thornton Pipeline Project due to its quasi-judicial nature. He emphasized the need for procedural adherence to maintain fairness and impartiality in decision-making.

The meeting also touched upon recent community engagements, notably a well-attended session in Livermore regarding long-range planning. While some planning efforts were deferred, discussions on specific issues like traffic and road safety are set to continue. Efforts to improve dialogue with the Open Lands Advisory Board were discussed, highlighting the importance of involving relevant departments in meetings where pertinent issues are addressed.

Lastly, an invitation from the Department of Natural Resources to visit Chimney Hollow reservoir was mentioned, with a suggestion to extend the invitation to the board. The visit would provide insights into water storage and reliability issues, emphasizing the collaborative approach to addressing shared concerns among stakeholders.

STAFF UPDATES

o TRANSITION UPDATE (CARY WEINER)

Jessica Callen gave the Transition Update due to Cary Weiner not able to attend.

Jessica Callen serves as an Agricultural Natural Resource Specialist, a position involving close collaboration with Colorado State University (CSU) and the county. Her primary focus lies in comprehending the specific challenges encountered by agricultural producers within the county. Jessica works in tandem with CSU, the county, and local organizations like the Poudre Valley Community Farms and Northern Colorado Food Shed to devise strategies and provide resources aimed at alleviating these challenges for farmers and ranchers. One significant recent development involves the transition of the Agricultural Advisory Board's administrative oversight. Previously held within the Planning Department, it has now been moved under the purview of the Extension Department. This change is linked to a renewed emphasis on agriculture, coinciding with Jessica's assumption of her current role. Cary Weiner, another staff member, will take the lead in coordinating these meetings, with Jessica providing support.

One aspect under discussion was the location for future meetings of the Agricultural Advisory Board. Members have expressed concerns regarding parking accessibility, particularly for longer meetings. Suggestions were made to consider the Blue Spruce office, citing its advantageous parking situation and existing Zoom capabilities. However, other members have raised issues about meeting conditions at the Blue Spruce office, such as difficulties in hearing and glare from windows. This prompts further consideration and discussion regarding the most suitable venue for accommodating the board's needs effectively.

o WEB SITE AND SHARED CALANDER (JESSICA CALLEN)

Jessica Callen, as an agricultural natural resource specialist, provided updates on her ongoing work during a meeting. She focused on enhancements to the organization's website, particularly emphasizing the creation of a dedicated page for farmers and ranchers, which was previously lacking. This new section aimed to serve as a centralized hub for resources and information pertinent to the agricultural community. Jessica showcased the features of the farmer and rancher page, which included a calendar of upcoming events such as grant information sessions, produce safety training, and Rocky Mountain Farmer Union events. She encouraged attendees to suggest additional events for inclusion on the calendar, demonstrating a commitment to community engagement and responsiveness to the needs of farmers and ranchers. Furthermore, Jessica mentioned the inclusion of resources for soil health and support for new farmers and ranchers on the website. She expressed her intention to continually update and expand these resources based on feedback and emerging needs within the agricultural community.

Member Wallace raised concerns about preserving institutional memory, particularly regarding past products and documents generated by the board. In response, Matt Lafferty assured the group that files would be stored and managed by the planning department, with plans to transition them to Extension Services for ongoing maintenance. Member Sullins sought clarification on the role of secretary within the board, questioning whether they were responsible for taking meeting minutes. Matt Lafferty clarified that the secretary's role primarily involved board administration rather than minute-taking. Member Town and Commissioner Kefalas discussed the placement of the Ag Advisory Board on the county website and its relationship

with Extension Services. Jessica Callen suggested adding a link to the Ag Advisory Board on the website to facilitate access to additional information for interested parties.

Overall, the discussion highlighted efforts to improve communication, accessibility, and support for the agricultural community through the organization's website and administrative processes.

o GRANT AND GROW AND SOIL ACTION COMMITTEE (JESSICA CALLEN)

Jessica Callen provided a detailed recap of the "Grant and Grow" event, which occurred on February 2nd. It consisted of an agricultural grant informational session followed by a grant writing workshop. The event featured speakers from various organizations such as NRCS, USDA Rural Development, USDA Ag. Marketing Services, Colorado Department of Agriculture, American Farmland Trust, and Western. With 75 attendees, including 60 farmers and ranchers, the event attracted participants from Larimer County as well as Boulder, Washington, Jefferson, Douglas, Morgan, Adams, and Pueblo counties, indicating a statewide interest in grant opportunities for agriculture. Jessica announced plans to collaborate with the Regional Food Business Center to expand "Grant and Grow" into a statewide virtual event while retaining an in-person component to facilitate networking and collaborative learning among farmers and ranchers. She also discussed her involvement in the Climate Smart, Future Ready initiative, focusing on the soil health action. Jessica described the formation of a committee comprising representatives from CSU, NRCS, Rocky Mountain Farmer Union, Poudre Valley Community Farm, and others. The committee aims to develop resources and organize events to promote soil health practices among farmers. Quarterly meetings will address topics such as supporting new and beginning farmers in adopting soil health practices and exploring market opportunities for farmers implementing such practices. Jessica highlighted plans for a soil health demo day in July, potentially hosted at Todd Olander's Farm, where farmers and ranchers can observe cover crop and intercropping practices and engage with CSU researchers. She encouraged inquiries about the soil health action and emphasized her role as the contact person for further information, with the next quarterly meeting scheduled for June.

Member Thode mentioned that Secretary Vilsack might organize a field day, with Todd or himself as potential hosts. He also brought up the NR1 category of the Climate Smart, Future Ready initiative, hosted by the conservation district, focusing on natural resources, with Dylan and himself as members. Member Graves appreciated the inclusion of grant deadlines on the calendar, providing practical reminders for grant applications.

DISCUSSION ITEMS AND ACTION ITEMS

ITEM NO. 1 – SOLID WASTE UPDATE (DUANE PENNEY)

Duane Penney provided an update on the status of Larimer County's landfill, noting that it is nearing capacity. However, operational improvements have extended its life by a couple of years. To address the impending closure, a new landfill site is under development south of the Rawhide Power Plant and two miles south of the Wellington growth management area. This new site is expected to have approximately 70 years of capacity for unit 1 and an additional 25 years for unit 2. Road improvements for access to the new landfill site are currently underway and are expected to be completed by late 2023. The new landfill will feature modern monitoring systems and an

extensive liner system to protect groundwater. Additionally, plans include the construction of a 35,000 square foot transfer station capable of handling about 200,000 tons of waste annually. There is also potential for a construction and demolition (C&D) processing facility and recycling operations. Future diversion programs include single-stream recycling, green waste, household hazardous waste, white goods, mattresses, electronics, and tires. The board is currently evaluating partnerships with four companies - A1 Organics, Plasma Development, Biochar Now, and Antigeria - for waste diversion and emerging technologies.

ITEM NO. 2 – LESA (BRAD JUSTICE)

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) tool, which evaluates land based on soil productivity and other factors such as farm size, land condition, water availability, and development pressure. LESA was developed by the USDA and NRCS in 2001 and updated in 2019 with input from the Ag Advisory Board. The board expressed concern about the underutilization of LESA and discussed the need to make it a more effective tool for land acquisition, leasing, and development. Plans were made to review LESA, discuss its application, and potentially invite experts like Dailin and other natural resources professionals to further the conversation.

ITEM NO. 3 – LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (COMMISSIONER KEFALAS)

Commissioner Kefalas provided an update on several bills related to agriculture that are being considered in the state legislature. The board discussed how they can utilize their expertise to inform county commissioners on positions regarding agricultural legislation. They considered establishing a process to provide feedback on legislation during both the session and interim periods. Additionally, the commissioners work with statewide associations like CCI (Colorado Counties Inc.), CCAT (Colorado Counties Agricultural and Rural Taskforce), and CC4CA (Colorado Communities for Climate Action) to advocate for or against legislation. The board may identify members interested in policy analysis to assist in this process.

ITEM NO. 4 – LARIMER COUNTY PRODUCER SURVEY (JESSICA CALLEN)

Jessica Callen presented the Larimer County Producer Survey, which is being developed to understand the challenges and needs of farmers and ranchers in the county. The survey is modeled after one conducted by Boulder County and aims to gather baseline data on farming and ranching challenges. It includes questions about leasing, primary income sources, challenges, and potential solutions. Feedback on the survey is requested by the end of the week, with a potential push for a later release date to incorporate feedback. The survey aims to inform county departments, Colorado State University (CSU), and local organizations for better resource allocation and grant creation.

ITEM NO. 5 - WORK PLAN (GOALS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES)

The meeting briefly touched on the Work Plan, which typically outlines the goals, roles, and responsibilities of the Ag Advisory Board and its members for the year. While it wasn't discussed in detail during the meeting, the Work Plan serves as a roadmap for the board's activities and initiatives. It may include objectives such as providing expertise on agricultural matters, advising on policy, engaging with the community, and reviewing relevant programs and initiatives. The Work Plan is revisited and updated annually to reflect current priorities and initiatives.

ADJOURN

With there being no further business, the hearing was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.