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Date: **Wednesday, March 10, 2021**
Time: **12:30 PM**
Location: **Virtual Hearing - If you wish to participate please send an email to, beilbykm@larimer.org**

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD, MARCH 10, 2021, MINUTES

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

The following Board members were present: Zach Thode (Chairperson), George Wallace (Vice Chairperson), Kristin Ramey (Secretary), Lynnet Bannion, Timothy Clouse, Beth Conrey, John Cravens, Franklyn Garry, Amber Graves, Maureen McDonough, Jon Slutsky.

The following Board members were absent: Travis Horton and Greg Schreiner

The following officials and staff were present: John Kefalas, County Commissioner; Matt Lafferty, Principal Planner; Jenn Cram, Planner II; Daylan Figgs, Natural Resources Director; Meegan Flenniken, Program Manager Land Conservation; Travis Rollins, Resource Specialist II; Scott Schreiner, Appraiser II; Jennifer Bornhoft, CSU

The following guests were present:
Carmen Farmer, Colorado Open Lands; Natasha Lloyd, ReKaivery Inc; Audrey Snyder, Rekaivery Inc.

AGENDA

- **A.** CALL TO ORDER
- **B.** INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS
- **C.** APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 18, 2020 & JANUARY 13,2020 MEETINGS
- **D.** AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA
- **E.** COMMSSIONER KEFALAS UPDATE ON AG AND COMMUNTY RELATED ISSUES
- **F.** DISCUSSION ITEMS:
  - a. NATURAL RESOURCES PRESENTATION DAYLAN FIGGS, NATURAL RESOURCES DIRECTOR
  - b. EAST MULBERRY CORRIDOR UPDATE
  - c. UPDATES TO BYLAWS
- **G.** WORK PLAN AND TASK GROUPS
  - a. TOPICS PROPOSED SEPTEMBERS 2020: LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS - HOW TO INCREASE INTERMEDIATED SALES, WATER SHARING, AND VOLUNTARY AGRICUTURAL DISTRICT.
- **H.** ANNOUNCEMENTS
  - a. APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING COMMMISSION AND OTHER BOARDS
- **I.** ADJOURN

INTRODUCTIONS

Chairperson Thode introduced new board member John Cravens. Board Member Cravens provided a brief bio of his agricultural background and experiences.

Chairperson Thode invited guests Scott Schreiner, Natasha Lloyd and Audrey Snyder to introduce themselves and their purpose for attending the meeting.

Scott Schreiner indicated that he is with the County Assessor's office and was working as the Agricultural Land Appraiser and was seeking out data from local producers as part of the reappraisal occurring this year.

Natasha Lloyd and Audrey Snyder are co-founders of the local business ReKaivery Inc., which objective is to assist in the recovery of local food networks.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Members Slutsky and Wallace provided minor modifications to the minutes. Member Ramey made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 18, 2020 and January 13, 2021 meetings. Member Slutsky seconded. The Board unanimously approved the November 18, 2020 and January 13, 2021 minutes.

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Chairperson Thode addressed the need to amend and approve the meeting agendas, which would include potential additions to and subtractions from the agenda.
Chairperson Thode asked for changes to the agenda. Member Wallace asked for an addition to the agenda to have the Board vote on requesting the BCC to attend a tour of the AG area of the County. Member Slutsky asked that the agenda be modified to include a discussion regarding monthly meetings of the AAB. Chairperson Thode suggested adding time for Scott Schreiner to present his request for assistance in gathering data for the Assessor's re-appraisal efforts. Member Wallace moved and member Slutsky seconded the motion to accept the agenda amendments. Motion passed unanimously.

UPDATES FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONER KEFALAS

County Commissioner Kefalas provided a brief explanation regarding:

- County efforts regarding Oil and Gas Regulations and Sign Regulations;
- The Climate Smart Larimer County Framework being led by Commissioner Kefalas, and the potential need for a AAB member to be a participant on the steering committee;
- Overview of a presentation made to the Environmental and Science Advisory Board (ESAB) regarding the State of Colorado Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Roadmap, which included discussion related to carbon sequestration. He mentioned that whomever from the AAB that is working of the topic of carbon sequestration may want to present their findings on the subject to the ESAB as well; and
- Road improvements being made to Owl Canyon Road (County Road 70).

ACTION ITEM: POSTING OF MEETINGS

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Natural Resources Presentation

Chairperson Thode invited Daylan Figgs and Meegan Flenniken to provide a presentation regarding the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) activities associated with land conservation as it relates to agriculture.

Director Figgs opened the presentation stating that he would be addressing the work of LCDNR in the area of agricultural conservation based upon the new open space sales tax adopted in 2019.
He noted that the LCDNR is a land-based organization that conserves and stewards land and provides nature based recreational opportunities. It was also stated that 2/3's of the land conserved by LCDNR is working lands (grazing, production and the like).

Mr. Figgs indicated that conservation easements are a primary tool utilized in the land conservation process as they accomplish the highest conservation impact at about half the cost of fee purchase acquisitions, and with little management costs. He further commented that because the use of conservations easements is a negotiated process they only work with willing landowners and that such easements can lower residual land value, thereby creating opportunity for new or existing farmers to expand. He further noted that because of the negotiated process certain property rights may be retained by the owner, such as water, which then can be sold or uses for purposes other than agricultural activities.

Mr. Figg's continued the discussion indicating that the County wide survey referred to as Our Lands Our Future which provided insight as to how the citizens prioritized potential open space acquisitions. This study supported the conservation of agricultural resources but did not identify as the highest priority. The survey further provided direction for the formulation of the open space tax ballot language, which included the following:

- Acquisition of fee interest open space, wildlife habitat, parks, and trails,
- Acquisition of less than fee interest easements (conservation and agricultural),
- Acquisition wo water rights for use in connection with the above purposes, and
- Restructuring of the Open Land Advisory Board as a minimum of 9 at-large representatives, vs the past board that included liaisons from other boards.

Director Figgs also noted that many of the current practices of the LCDNR stem from the Open Lands Master Plan. This plan provides 13 priority land conservation goals, which include natural resources, wildlife habitat, scenic viewsheds, community separators, recreation, and agriculture. The plan further identifies the Buckeye and Wellington priority areas to focus on with regards to agricultural land conservation. Mr. Figgs discussed the Priority Areas map identifying key features of the map, he further addresses the results of the Our Land Our Future survey results.

Mr. Figgs provides information indicating that LCDNR has since 1996 conserved 53,000+ acres of land of which approximately 34,000 acres is comprised of working lands (ranchlands and cropland). It was further noted that 11,000 acres has been conserved in the Buckeye/Wellington areas, which included a variety of agencies.

Meegan Flenniken provided an overview of when the conserved lands are in the county and which lands are working lands. She then provided an recap of the LCDNR objectives, noting stewardship practices being employed by the department on conserved lands and lands owned by the LCDNR. Megan closed the presentation suggesting that the AAB further enhance the efforts of the LCDNR by:

- Making Conservation-interested landowner connections between the LCDNR or similar entities,
- Sharing the LCDNR landowner packet, and
- Sponsoring an event with the community regarding the variety of tools available to landowners regarding agricultural conservation.

Board member Graves asked about what types of events have been conducted in the pat and what they would look like if they wanted to put one on?

Meegan and Daylan indicated it would likely be a question-and-answer format that was led by the AAB.

Board Member Wallace commented the AAB could likely help organize an event around the Ag district concept. He also asked, if there is a person at LCDNR that does the outreach if someone is interested in land conservation opportunities?

Meegan stated that they have two land agents that do that kind of work and when appropriate they go meet directly with the interested landowner.

Board Member Wallace noted that we should acknowledge and honor those landowners that have placed easements on their property.

Mr. Figg's responded that there was a publication in the past that highlighted landowners that have made special efforts to conserve their lands.

Mrs. Flenniken also responded that the AAB may want to help conduct an event that showcases land conservation actions in the County that could be combined with informational sharing regarding how to participate in land conservation activities.

Board Member Wallace acknowledged the benefits of the big financial commitment of the County in the acquisition of the Malchow property and the sharing of water.

Mr. Figg's responded that there are many different models for addressing water sharing opportunities in the future.

Board Member Wallace pointed out that the Laramie foothills and Bellevue area are also considered Priority areas on the Open Lands Master Plan Map.

Mr. Figg's affirmed the observation of Mr. Wallace. Also noting that the LCDNR would consider any property in the County not just those in the priority area.

Commissioner Kefalas asked when the Our Land Our Future survey was conducted?

Mrs. Flenniken responded that the study was conducted in 2013-14 in partnership with municipalities because we share sale tax.

Commissioner Kefalas asked if there was opportunity to update the survey, and wanted to know more about the methodology of the survey (sample size, inclusivity)?

Mrs. Flenniken responded it was a mailed survey to 7500 households, and included various boards and commission, with final consideration and adoption by the BCC and PC. The survey was conducted by a professional private consultant and the LCDNR.

Chairperson Thode asked about the opportunity to get funds to acquire Transfer of Development Units (TDU's) rather than just acquiring conservation easements?

Mr. Figg's replied that the nature of this issue needs to be considered by the BCC.

Chairperson Thode noted that the AAB will push for TDU's as an incentive for ag districts. He further pointed out that considering the conversation around the climate action plan that there is some interest in the community regarding resource banking around carbon sequestration, water sharing, wildlife habitat and the like, he would like to ensure that conservation easements do not hinder a property owner's ability to achieve the value from those potential opportunities.

Ms. Farmer responded that there are motions being made in that direction, specifically regarding species and wetlands mitigation credits. However, this depends on the market, and we are just at the start of such activities.

Mr. Figg's supported the comments made by Ms. Farmer.

Chairperson Thode asked, how can communication between the AAB and OLAB be improved? He further provided an invite to the LCDNR staff to stay engaged by attending the AAB meetings, and suggested sharing meeting minutes or having someone from the AAB being on OLAB.

Mr. Figg's agreed with Mr. Thode and encouraged AAB members to apply to be on the OLAB. He also stated he would attend meetings if requested.

Chairperson Thode said we should start with sharing meeting minutes. He then asked about how they could be more involved in the water sharing topic and is there a person that could be assigned to assist in such coordination.

Mr. Figg's stated that this issue was a bit premature but could be investigated in the future.

Chairperson Thode responded that we need to have a person dedicated to dealing with the issues of land conservation and water sharing.

Mr. Figg's agreed to give it more thought.

Chairperson Thode and Board Member Wallace both emphasized the need for specific staff assistance especially as the subject of water sharing is elevated.

Ms. Farmer noted that conservation easements today offer flexible water sharing opportunities to ensure water security on conserved lands.

Chairperson Thode noted the Travis Rollins is excellent to work with on the management of County owned land, and then asked if on County owned lands is there a way or need for the AAB to engaged in the planning of long-term goals of those properties.
Mr., Figg's and Mrs. Flenniken responded that use of the NRCS in such activities is beneficial and that the ag lands strategies already speak to such issues. It was noted that they may ask for a person to assist in future lease discussions if they see the need.

Mr. Rollins stated that the more coordination on these activities the better, and that it would be beneficial to have the AAB involved.

2. Update on East Mulberry Annexation

Chairperson Thode asked Mr. Lafferty to give the AAB an update on the activities surrounding the East Mulberry Annexation.

Mr. Lafferty provided a response that the City Council discussed studying the issue of annexation of the East Mulberry Corridor. He further noted two things are going on. First the city is proposing to update the jointly adopted East Mulberry Corridor Plan, which has to do with the development of the corridor. Secondly, the City is studying the financial implications of annexing the corridor as the area lacks improvements and will be a potential impact on City resources.

Board Member Wallace asked if anyone sat down with the property owners in the area, especially the ag related property owners. Otherwise, attention will focus on issue like crime and the impact to the ag uses will be overshadowed.

Mr. Lafferty responded that we need to find a way to get the AAB plugged in to have the needed conversations.

3. By-Law Modifications

Chairperson Thode asked Mr. Lafferty to review the potential changes to the By-Laws for the AAB.

Mr. Lafferty reminded the AAB that the BCC is surveying the members of all Boards and Commissioner regarding their activities and needs. He further reminded them to respond in a timely manner so that the BCC can review their comments. The changes to the By-Laws as suggested at the January AAB meeting were presented.

Board Member Wallace pointed out the original mission statement included the minimization and loss of ag land and water and the preservation of the ag economy.

Mr. Lafferty pointed out the BCC is considering the focus of the various boards and commissions and such changes should come from the BCC as the result of their evaluation of the boards purpose. He also noted that the Staff will continue to do the minutes and the Secretary to the Board will help distribute them and get the signature of the Chairperson.

Board Members discussed options regarding meeting absences, which included ideas such as

- Retaining allowances for excused absences,
- Allowing two is a bit limiting as the Board only meets every other month, and
- Number of allowed absences should be a percentage of annual meetings

Board Members agreed to some minor word smithing amendments, as well as the general understanding that if someone is going to be absent, they should advise the Chairman, and that frequent absences would be handled by the BCC.

A Motion was made by Board Member Slutsky to approved changes to the by-laws as discussed.

The Motion was seconded by Board Member Ramey.

Voice Vote carried the motion 13-0.

<u>Work Plan</u>

Chairperson Thode discussed the Work Plan for the AAB indicating the need to agree to the Work Plan and forward a recommendation to the BCC for approval of the Work Plan, which includes the following:

- Local Food Systems - How to create intermediated sales
- Water sharing
- Voluntary Ag District

A Motion was made by Board Member Garry to recommend that the BCC approve the AAB Plan as discussed.

The Motion was seconded by Board Member Ramey.

Voice Vote carried the motion13-0

<u>Work Plan Task Force Members</u>

Chairperson Thode discussed the makeup of the Work Plan – Task Force members.

Board Members shared thoughts as to who should be on which task force groups, which resulted in the following:

Local Food Systems - Intermediate Sales

- Kristin Ramey = Lead
- Beth Conrey
- Amber Graves
- John Craven
- Maureen McDonough
- Lynett Bannion

Water Sharing

- Zach Thode = Lead
- George Wallace
- Amber Graves
- Travis Horton
- Greg Schreiner

Voluntary AG District

- George Wallace = Lead

- Timothy Clouse
- Travis Horton
- Jon Slutsky
- Zach Thode
- Frankyn Garry

Jennifer Bornhoft - Offered to provide coordination with people/services at CSU.

Other Matters

Chairperson Thode remined the AAB that Commissioner Kefalas would like a volunteer to serve on the Climate Action Committee – Board members indicated additional information for this request was needed.

Chairperson Thode open the Board discussion regarding future meeting options

- Board Member offered the following comments and suggestions:
- Meet monthly, except for July,
- Meetings are rushed at the End to cover all the board matters,
- Meeting locations could vary - long drive for some members,
- Conduct hybrid meetings (in-person with virtual connection),
- Move to evening meetings,
- Staff/Resources issues, and
- Provide food.

It was suggested that before coming up with a plan a poll of options should be conducted.

Mr. Lafferty agreed to send out a poll before the next meeting.

Chairperson Thode then moved the conversation to the idea of a tour of the Ag community with the Board of County Commissioners. All agreed that this was a great idea and suggested getting it planned. Mr. Thode and Lafferty agreed to coordinate and make arrangements.

Chairperson Thode introduced Scott Schreiner from the County Assessor's office.

Mr. Schriener, Appraiser, indicated that he was the staff member that works on agricultural valuations and appraisals. Properties are appraised every two years, ag based upon production values. Information that is relied upon is outdated. Therefore, they are conducting a survey of 500 ag producers to gather information on yields and expenses based upon water and chemicals. They are looking for better information and trying to create more contacts to create options for generating better information so values can be dialed in.

Chairperson Thode remind the Board of a past conversation with the County Assessor and agreed that coordination and sharing of information is needed.

Board Member Wallace addressed the possibility of tax incentives to help with Ag District formation.

Chairperson Thode introduced Natasha Lloyd, ReKaivery Inc.

Ms. Lloyd asked how her organization could assist with Local Food Systems- Intermediate Sales Team

Chairperson Thode suggested that Ms. Lloyd and Board Member Ramey get together and discuss how they can be of mutual benefit.

The next meeting was scheduled for **Wednesday, May 12, 2021, at 12.30 p.m.** (virtually via Zoom with invitation to follow).

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:15 p.m.
