

Date: Wednesday, March 09, 2022

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: Hybrid: In-Person, Lake Estes, 3rd Floor, 200 West Oak Street, Fort Collins; Virtual, Zoom Link - https://larimer-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_2RymYtVKTP2JlcAfbvn5Xw

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

The Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) met in a hybrid setting in person and via Zoom. The meeting started late due to technical difficulties at 12:40 p.m.

The following Board members were present (some online): 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; Alyssa Martin, Planner I; and Lesli Ellis, Community Development Director.

Guests present: Bob Overbeck, County Assessor; Duane Penny, Solid Waste; Kerri Rollins, Extension Office; Daylan Figs and Meegan Fleniken, Department of Natural Resources, and Rob Graves.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The January 12, 2022 minutes were approved with minor correction to Jon Slutsky's spelling. (Note that minutes do not need to be signed.)

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Updates from County Commissioner John Kefalas

Updates included:

- Linda Hoffman's retirement on April 6, 2022. There will be a celebration.
- Commissioners had an interesting tour with the Extension office and Brian Wilson with the CSU Energy Institute, Powerhouse 1, 2. They will continue the discussions about a winter farmers market. Kerri Rollins might be able to provide more details. It aligns well with the local foods task force recommendations.
- He attended the 4H carnival and enjoyed it.

- Discussions and progress on updating the Community Development work plan.
- Exciting things that Extension is doing.
- Bill in legislature related to pollinators did not advance past committee. One of the recommendations in the report is considering a resolution acknowledging the importance of pollinators and are open to that.
- Commissioners had annual board retreat regarding what was accomplished in work plan. One of his priorities was an ag specialist position.

Guest Topic Discussions

Zach Thode mentioned the idea of an assessors' office liaison with this board.

Daylan Figgs and Meegan Fleniken, DNR

Discussion on Open Space Lands:

- DNR staff provided feedback on the local foods memo and provided information on open lands operations and expenditures, and those seem to have been resolved.
- The committee discussed how open lands can be a resource for local foods
- Members wanted information about water. Homeowners at the end of Dry Creek Lateral Ditch are concerned over loss of water to development.
- The farm is currently leased by Paul Hicks, and DNR does not know if he will extend the lease.
 - If he continues to farm, it will be irrigated. If not, another RFP process will happen for someone else to irrigate and farm the land. Right now, water will still be delivered and will stay at a farm. The strategic plan will finish up in 6-8 weeks. Discussing more broadly DNR operations and not specific operations of each property. Possibly a conservation easement could be placed on the property. Another possible outcome is adding water shares or a lease term
- Discussed how the Local Foods Task Force has been trying to get access to land and water for farmers. Discussed how to develop that type of program and could apply to other DNR farms as well. DNR supports this idea.
- Discussed further general lease options and the process of a conservation easement through DNR
- Discussed the priority areas for conservation easements for DNR.
- Possible partnerships with larger operators such as Coors or Duprino
- Extension has previously held a farming and ranching course for new farmers. Could reach out for leasing potential. Karen has a list of contacts. Possibility of combining lists between DNR and Extension so purchasing has that list. Kevin Jablonski could recruit. AAB interested in helping DNR in whatever way possible.
- If members learn of interested property owners, send them to DNR for possible tax incentives and other tools.
- Commissioner Kefalas heard reasonable ideas and will ask Local Foods Task Force on how to integrate some of these ideas into actionable items (i.e., networking to spread information about tax benefits, voluntary rezoning, open house within farming community). Integrate some of these items into the food system plan

Duane Penny, Solid Waste

- Food waste is permitted to be used for animals in Colorado, handled by the Department of Agriculture.
- Solid waste is working on an organics management plan which details the types being generated for the entire county.
- They are looking at a compost facility as a solution.
- Data is being collected on how waste is collected and what is being done with it, data anticipated in two months.
- Hierarchy on handling different types of waste: #1 is source reduction (over manufacturing, food waste from grocery stores and restaurants), #2 feeding the hungry, #3 feeding animals, #4 industrial uses (composting, landfill)
- Will set up a meeting with some board members to discuss a food waste system and animal feed and will follow up with Lesli to schedule. **Volunteers: Frank, Amber, Kristin, Mo, Zach.**

Kerri Rollins, Extension Office

- Provide an update on CSU internship program.
- The top candidate accepted the position, Cesar Garduno and Kerri will be his supervisor.
- There is a poster session in October on Cesar's research illustrating the best practices in agricultural initiatives and looking at similar counties to Larimer.

Local Food System Report

- Report will be presenting to the Board of County Commissioners on April 18 at 10 am.
- It will be helpful to prioritize the issues before the meeting
- Road and Bridge will be working on Right to Farm signage for ten sites. Lesli is following up with Road and Bridge.

Finalize 2022 Work Plan

The committee had discussion to pick the final elements of the work plan.

Items for the 2022 AAB Work Plan include:

- 1. Local Food Systems - task force report to Board of County Commissioners and follow up**
- 2. Food Waste and animal feed potential**
- 3. Regenerative agriculture**
- 4. Ongoing engagement and coordination with projects being led under efforts in the county, related to water planning, forestry activity, and climate**
- 5. CSU internship coordination**

The following topics are tabled for now:

- Agricultural districts tabled in part due to lack of staff resources. George would like to discuss a commercial agricultural district in the future. Rezoning is tabled for now, but there will be part of the Community Development work plan later this year. There is a brief discussion with the Assessor on the hurdles with taxing and incentives with more needed outreach. A letter in the workplan can be included to explain the issue.

- Carbon Sequestration – not many ag producers visited the climate workshop a few weeks prior, substantial input is needed for the next steps. Will follow up on a USDA grant and a partnership and funds for climate smart commodities for agriculture and forestry. The funding would go to larger scale transformational projects. Heidi Pruess may have more information on grant opportunities. Two members were interested.

(Note: Zach Thode followed up after the meeting with a reminder that the CSU intern and outcomes needs to be on this work plan.)

The committee briefly discussed the Thornton northern properties. They are forming a group to identify solutions.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 pm.