

LARIMER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

January 11, 2017

Members Present: Jason Brothers, Timothy Clouse, Nic Koontz, Minerva Lee, Gail Meisner, Jon Slutsky, Ted Swanson, Zach Thode, George Wallace, Karen Crumbaker (liason), Brenda Gimeson (liason), Bill Spencer (liason), Travis Rollins (liason), Mary Beth Solano (Administrative Support)

Members Absent: Sarah Fox, Debra Herston, Val Manning, Greg Schreiner, Richard Seaworth, Jennifer Bornhoft (liason), Lew Gaiter (Commissioner)

- I. **Zach Thode**, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:38. Greg Schreiner was absent due to a family concern. A quorum was present so business could continue as by-laws prescribe.
- II. Both the September 14 and November 9, 2016 **minutes were considered and adopted** as written.
- III. **Membership updates:** Sarah Fox has resigned her position on the board. Mary Beth Solano was introduced as the new Administrative Assistant on the Extension Office staff, responsible for meeting set ups and taking minutes. Members introduced themselves and their connections to the AAB.
- IV. **Election of Officers:** The following slate of officers have expressed interest and/or willingness to serve in the following capacities. All were duly nominated, have agreed to serve, and were elected:

Chair: Greg Schreiner

Vice-Chair: Zach Thode

Secretary: Nicholas Koontz

V. **Current Business:**

- a. **AAB participation/connection to the Larimer County Fair Board:** Discussion took place in 2016 regarding how to increase connections/collaborations between Ag families and the Larimer County Fair Board, possibly including AAB participation on that board. Anyone can apply to be a member, and the forms to do so were at the meeting. The time commitment can be significant before and during the fair, so starting with a liason position was discussed. Gail Meisner

expressed interest in being a liason, but is unsure about full membership. Decision was tabled until more information can be obtained regarding the time commitment.

Action Item: Mary Beth will invite a member of the Fair Board to our next meeting to discuss the time commitment and/or other options for collaboration. Completed January 18, 2017.

- b. **Update on County Open Lands purchase of Malchow property:** Jason Brothers gave a synopsis of what's happened so far in this purchase/water share project. Several governmental agencies have cooperated to evaluate, plan and complete this complex process and it is working well so far. The tenants (and their neighbors) have been active participants in the process and have completed negotiations for a year to year lease that will keep the farm operation going and also support municipal water users down the line. George Wallace shared kudos to the county staff for their hard work on this project. Jason reported that "the word is out" and other land owners/municipalities are interested in learning about this model.
- c. **Update on Natural Resources Department public grazing bids process:** Travis Rollins shared that public bids for 5 year grazing leases are now complete on several area properties. 2017 negotiations have begun for Red Mountain, Eagles' Nest, Longview Farms and River Bluffs Natural Areas. All parties involved are contributing positively to negotiations.
- d. **Task Force Reports/Updates/BCC presentation preparations:**

Action Item for all members: The plan is to get at least two of these reports edited **with member input** and ready for full vetting at the March meeting and then schedule a presentation to the BCC through Brenda (hopefully a full hour slot) as soon after that as possible. It is also hoped that area legislators can be invited and attend that, or another presentation opportunity.

- 1. **IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE REPORT:** (Slutsky, Schreiner, Spencer, Wallace, Clouse) A hard copy of the draft report on Immigration was made available at the meeting and sent electronically to members afterwards. The following topics are included in the report. *(The items in parenthesis reflect the discussion held or questions raised during the meeting.)*
 - a) **The economic impact locally and statewide, and the dependence of agricultural operations/businesses on immigrant workers.** *(Should the word "immigrant" always be used, or just workers? How are geo-political/ international activities affecting this? What is the impact of social and generational mores around farm work? How can we make these problems/issues less likely to happen in Larimer County?)*

- b) **The types of visas or documents currently used by these workers and the associated problems faced by both employers and workers.** (*How many H-2A visa holders are in Larimer County?*)
- c) **Local law enforcement as it relates to immigrant workers.** (*“Sanctuary County” considerations and the influential effect of an elected sheriff*)
- d) **Immigrant workers and their families.** (*What is the impact on area social services? What are salary considerations?*)
- e) **Housing and land use regulations.** (*What is the actual need for accessory housing, or are families absorbed into the local inventory? If so, where and at what cost? How do regulations help or hurt immigrant and/or domestic workers?*)
- f) **Existing legislation, executive orders and ongoing legislative efforts.** (*How can the county affect or influence statewide legislative results*)
- g) **Other organizations working on immigration issues.** (*The Colorado Compact, Immigration Bill of Rights signees, etc.*)

*****It was noted that the same issues affect other agriculturally based industries i.e., Equine, Dairy, Cattle, Vegetable and Fruit farming operations, etc.**

*****It was also noted that mention of this report and its findings would be appropriately included in the Evolution of Agriculture task force report. How have immigration and labor issues contributed to the evolution of agriculture and the social structure in the area over the last 100 years?**

Action Item: Member feedback on this report is requested to George Wallace by January 18th.

2. **EVOLUTION OF AGRICULTURE TASK FORCE:** (Thode, Meisner, Herston, Lee, Seaworth) The purpose of this report is to demonstrate what has transpired in Larimer County agriculture over the last 100 years, and to put into perspective more recent developments. Zach Thode has started a powerpoint to share information on various types of economic impacts, water sources and usage, irrigation/yield/production results, food supply systems, and land values gathered thus far by the task force. Suggestions/ideas/questions provided by the board include;

- Include comparative taxation information across this time period
- Also show shorter, more recent time intervals and how much ag land is being lost to development each year
- Include definitions of terms included and how/when laws changed classifications of agricultural entities
- Is it possible to adjust prices/values included for inflation? Can we get that information from the Assessor's office?
- How does decreed water vs. purchased/leased water affect this information? Explaining the infrastructure of water delivery systems over time would be helpful. Show the interdependence between users and deliverers of water
- How to show collaborations between ag users and municipalities over time.
- How many CSA's are there currently (How do we define Community Supported Ag, exactly?) and what economic impacts have they had over time? Other data regarding CSA's?

Action Items requested by Zach or offered by members to support completion:

- Please share thoughts and edits for the powerpoint provided with Zach as soon as possible. If you need a copy, contact Zach.
- Can we invite someone from the Assessor's office to come to the next meeting to help us adjust land values for inflation? Brenda?
- Current pictures of hand laborers vs. machine to be provided by Nic Koontz
- Nic K. will collect and share information regarding economic impacts of locally grown products (Farmers' Markets, CSA's, etc.) possibly with information from Alison O'Connor, Extension Horticulture Agent for Larimer County.
- George Wallace offered to share some slides from another presentation that pertain.

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3. **RURAL BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT** (Manning, Swanson, Brothers) This group was formed based on a concern expressed in January, 2016, by Lew Gaiter regarding access issues to broadband in rural areas of the county and the resulting effect on families and their income. Questions from Commissioner Gaiter included, "How does access to reliable, high speed internet help agriculture? What would be the benefit to rural populations if we had fiber optics in rural areas?"

Ted Swanson reported that it has been hard for this group to meet and formulate a clear, efficient way to gather the data and information needed to make a determination on this topic. How to do a survey of needs? What would next steps be? Can we get a statistically valid sampling of current technology usage and needs? Would broadband cost more or not? Would it help rural residents feel more connected? Can we get CSU support to help gather information? The task force will discuss this further with Commissioner Gaiter at the next meeting.

VI. Upcoming Business: Discussion took place regarding this year's work plan and possible committees. The consensus was to complete the current projects/presentation(s) for the BCC and then develop the next work plan.

VII. Announcements: The annual meeting of the North Poudre Irrigation Company will be February 6, 2017 at 9:00 am at the Windsong Estate, at the corner of Hwy 257 and Hwy 14. Please share this information. It is considered important for members of the ag community to attend.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 8th, 2017 at 12:30 pm at the Larimer County Extension Office.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Beth Solano

Administrative Assistant

Larimer County Extension Office