

# LARIMER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

## Meeting Minutes

May 10, 2017

Present: Jennifer Bornhoft (liaison), Jason Brothers, Karen Crumbaker (liaison), Lew Gaiter, Brenda Gimeson (liaison), Nic Koontz, Minerva Lee, Gail Meisner, Paula Petroff (Extension), Travis Rollins (liaison), Greg Schreiner, Richard Seaworth, Jon Slutsky, Ted Swanson, Zach Thode, and George Wallace. Guest: James Thompson, Senator Bennet's office, Sam Adams, NRCS, and Terry Gilbert, Larimer County Community Development Director.

Absent: Tim Clouse, Debra Herston, Val Manning, and Bill Spencer (liaison).

I. Zach Thode called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. Introductions of guests were made. Greg came a few minutes later and resumed chairing the meeting.

II. The March 8, 2017, AAB Meeting Minutes were approved and accepted, with one minor typographical correction.

III. Interactions with Commissioner Gaiter on Ag and Community related issues. Commissioner Gaiter did not have anything to report to the Board. Gail ask for the Commissioner's comments on the AAB's task force presentations to the County Commissioners on March 20, 2017, on *The Evolution of Agriculture in Larimer County* and *The Report on Immigration*. Commissioner Gaiter reported the immigration presentation was "excellent". All the Commissioners gained a better depth of understanding on immigration issues and the impact immigration has on the agricultural community. He went on to say the presentation on the evolution of agriculture was valuable for the Commissioners to hear to reinforce the role agriculture has played in Larimer County's history. Greg thanked the committees for their hard work on both presentations to the Commissioners.

Adding to the discussion on immigration, James Thompson shared information from Senator Bennet and colleagues on the introduction of a bill to shield farmworkers from deportation. The Agricultural Worker (“Blue Card”) Status bill provides a one-time opportunity for experienced agricultural workers to apply for legal status if they show consistent employment in U.S. agriculture over the past two years (at least 100 days in each of the past two years), pay a fine, and are not ineligible due to criminal history. Farmworkers who maintain blue card status for the next three or five years, depending on the total hours worked in agriculture, would be eligible to adjust to a green card or legal permanent residency status.

Commissioner Gaiter asked the Board if there were any questions or concerns he could address.

Zach felt it was important to address drones flying in rural areas where they disturb livestock. Gail agreed flying a drone could potentially be dangerous to someone riding a horse. Is there an area such as open space where the public could fly drones? Travis mentioned drones could be flown in Larimer County Open Space with an approved permit. Jennifer told the Board drones could be flown at CSU’s Christman Field after an approved application process. Lew suggested the Board look into the impact of drones in an agricultural setting. The AAB agreed to create a task force to look into this.

Continuing the discussion on drones and the public perception that drones can be flown in rural areas without having an impact on livestock or farmers/ranchers, Commissioner Gaiter asked the Board to discuss either revising the Code of the West or creating a companion document to help educate the public on agriculture (i.e. drones, farm equipment on highways, cyclists, etc.). The Code of the West document was created by former County Commissioner John Clarke in the mid-1990’s to educate people moving into rural areas of Larimer County on what to expect from the level of services, agricultural practices, weather, etc. when living outside city limits. The Code of the West is handed out at rural real estate closings and is available from the Planning Department. [http://larimer.org/planning/planning/code\\_of\\_the\\_west/index.htm](http://larimer.org/planning/planning/code_of_the_west/index.htm)

To help educate people visiting or driving through rural areas in Larimer County, Richard suggested creating educational signs to be posted next to a beet field, for example, to help people learn about agricultural practices within the County. Lew thought this may be worth exploring.

IV. Current Ag. Commodity Prices. Greg reported that commodity prices are coming down. Richard added beet prices are in the red, with sales being lost to sugar from Mexico. We

need to get back to a fair trade; farmers cannot compete with governments. An additional concern is with the management of sugar factories and that many factories in the U.S. are old and creating problems. The sugar processing plants in Fort Morgan and Scottsbluff are behind in technology. The Farm Bill needs to address these issues to support the U.S. sugar industry. Ted reported the hay prices are down.

V. Update from Nic Koontz regarding Loveland Ready Mix plant. Due to concerns the county will approve a proposal by Loveland Ready Mix Concrete to build a gravel pit and concrete batch plant in Laporte adjacent to land Poudre Valley Community Farms (PVCF) had under contract to purchase, PVCF decided not to extend the contract on the land. PVCF will instead look for another suitable parcel to purchase. The Great Outdoors Colorado grant Larimer County Open Lands received for a conservation easement on the property and the funds raised by PVCF will be transferred to another parcel. Depending on the location of the new land, Native Hill Farm may not farm the land. Native Hill Farm planned to farm the land in Laporte. Additional information on PVCF can be found at: <http://poudrevalleycommunityfarms.com/>

At the March AAB meeting, George suggested after the proposal by Loveland Ready Mix is submitted to the County, the AAB could make comments. Commissioner Gaiter ask members of the Board if they wanted to comment on the proposal, they do so as citizens, not as an Ag. Advisory Board Member.

VI. Update from Senator Bennet's Office on the Farm Bill. James asked to update the AAB at a future date. He handed out a copy of the May 9, 2017, letter from Senator Bennet and 23 U.S. Senators, asking the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Ag Subcommittee and the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations to support fully funding at or above the FY 17 level the Farm Service Agency's loan programs, particularly direct and guaranteed farm operating loans, as well as farm ownership loans. These loans help beginning, small and other underserved farmers. The 2018 fiscal year budget request by the President would reduce USDA funding by 21%, harming programs like these.

VII. 2017 Task Force Ideas and Conversation. Commissioner Gaiter suggested two topics the AAB could focus on in 2017. Greg and Brenda asked for other ideas from the members. Brenda will compile the ideas and team members, and send it to the AAB members in a separate document.

VIII. Announcements. Gail asked AAB members to consider hosting a teacher as part of Colorado Agriculture in the Classroom Food, Fiber and More Summer Institute program June 19-23, 2017. June 22 offers a hands-on farm experience and would be the date they are looking for farmer hosts. Contact Maria Miller at 970-593-0619 or 419-203-1739, if interested in hosting a teacher.

Brenda announced the North Front Range Regional Wasteshed Coalition is looking to form a Stakeholder Group to assist with their efforts on regional planning as they know that in the next decade, the Larimer County Landfill will need to be replaced. This is a continuation of the past meetings for which they had several public meetings to gather ideas. The group is looking for participation from someone in the Ag community and has requested a member from the AAB be on the Stakeholder Group. There will be approximately 5 meetings this year in the evening and the first meeting is scheduled to take place near the end of May. Brenda is looking for a volunteer for this group. Gail and Richard agreed to share the representation for the AAB on the group. Brenda will follow up with further information to those two individuals.

Greg would like to speak on farm tours for kids at the July meeting.

IX. The next AAB meeting will be held on July 12, 2017, at 12:30 p.m. at the CSU Larimer County Extension Office, 1525 Blue Spruce Drive, Fort Collins, CO.

X. The meeting was adjourned at 2:53 p.m.