



# Food System Committee

Tuesday, June 27th, 2023

4:30-6:00 PM

Zoom and in-person

## Minutes

### **Members Present:**

Name	Sector	Present
Margaret Gerard	Local Sales Farming	X
Nikki Oleson	Processing/Distribution	
Riley Sweeney	Food Access	X
Noelle Beecroft	Nutrition/ Public Health	
Sean Hopps	Labor	X
Trevor Gearhart	Natural Resources	X
Rhys-Thorvald Hansen	Whatcom Food Network	X
Paul Burrill	Fishing	X
Rob Dhaliwal	Export Sales Farming	X

**Others Present:** Ander Russell, Cheryl Thornton, Sam Norris Fred Likkel, Sarah Rose, Laura Ridenour, Kate Steensma, Dakota Stranik

**Call to order:** Riley started the meeting at 4:36 pm.

### **Land Acknowledgement**

### **Determination of Quorum**

Quorum

### **Approval of minutes**

Paul motioned, Margaret seconded, all Approved

### **Public Comment**

Members of the public were invited to share about themselves.

### **Review of Farm Bureau and Whatcom Family Farmers suggestions to the food system plan**

Riley reviewed the process with the committee:

- 1) Ali reads off the proposed edit
- 2) Open discussion (anyone (public and committee members) can talk)
- 3) Call for a motion to implement the edit
- 4) Discussion is limited to voting (committee) members
- 5) Call the question and vote

The edits considered were as follows:

#### **2.5.1**

Last meeting, the committee agreed to consider combining 2.5.1 and 2.4.2. The proposed combination was: Increase the number of acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to engage more agricultural producers and landowners to plant native trees to enhance wildlife corridors, improve water quality, and protect fish-bearing streams and rivers with consideration of balancing CREP and enough working farmland; encourage the Whatcom Conservation District to utilize available state and federal funds to supplement CREP.

Members of the public and the committee discussed the CREP program. Rhys motioned to reject the combination, Sean seconded. Members of the committee voted to reject this edit, and the motion passed, with Rob abstaining. The language was maintained as originally written as two separate actions (2.4.2 and 2.5.1).

### **2.4.3**

The proposed change is: 2.4.3 Explore the development of a **flexible and reasonable** “working buffers” program: working buffers are an approach to riparian conservation that combines stream restoration with low-impact food production in a way that incentivizes sustainable stewardship of the buffer area by the landowner (**I believe the discussion was that this may not be legal**).

Margaret motioned to approve this edit. Trevor seconded. Motion passed.

### **2.4.4**

Proposed change: Ensure public landscape maintenance by the county adheres to best management practices—including integrated pest management, no-spray road maintenance, and the use of native plants—and does not negatively affect food production and water sources. **Evaluate and update as best management practices change**.

Rob motioned to approve. Sean seconded motion. Motion passed.

### **3.1.4**

Proposed change: Collaborate with tribes to explore opportunities to increase our fisheries resource (i.e., salmon run size, and **wild and enhanced salmon**) in Whatcom County.

Paul had proposed this addition and described to the group what wild and enhanced salmon are and how this practice is happening in Alaska without any damage to traditional “wild” salmon. Ander stated that the Nooksack Tribe and Lummi Nation are co-managers of the fisheries resource with the WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife and suggested collaborating with Fish and Wildlife too.

Rob motioned to approve, Margaret seconded. The motion passed, with Rhys abstaining.

### **5.2.4**

Proposal is to strike this part: Develop food waste management programs, including potential programs that connect restaurants with farmers who would use food waste as livestock feed.

The justification is that this has not been legal, per state laws. Fred, Rob, and Kate provided discussion about pre-consumer waste (i.e. waste from brewing beer), which is allowable, but post-consumer is very difficult to do legally, as food waste includes meat and potentially plastics which can be harmful to livestock.

Margaret asked if there should be something else added about other options for using food waste in livestock feed. Laura stated she agrees and that the committee could explore this during the update to the Community Food Assessment.

Margaret motioned to approve. Paul seconded. Motion passed.

### 5.3.1

Proposed edit: **Build on the work many farmers are already doing to** promote adoption of farm management practices that maximize soil carbon storage and increase water and nutrient availability.

Rhys shared an alternative framing that incorporates feedback from the Farmers edits, but maintains original intent: “Build on existing efforts, and support cross-sector collaborative efforts to increase the adoption of land management practices that maximize soil carbon storage and increase water and nutrient availability.”

There was discussion about this action being specific to agriculture (Objective is explicit to agriculture). Ander stated they liked the edit, as this could mean incorporating land that is not already farmland. There was additional discussion about changing the language per County Council’s charge to include more export farmer perspective versus changing the meaning of the language. Ultimately, the members of the public contributed that it didn’t really matter how the language was worded, as maximizing carbon storage is the goal across the food system.

Rob motioned to adopt the original proposed edit: **Build on the work many farmers are already doing to** promote adoption of farm management practices that maximize soil carbon storage and increase water and nutrient availability. Trevor seconded. Rob, Trevor, Paul, and Riley voted to approve, Rhys voted no, and Sean and Margaret abstained. The motion passed.

### 5.3.5

Proposed edit: ~~Reduce~~ Consider the risk of devastating impacts of extreme weather and natural disasters **and by encourage** food producers to diversify their products **when economically feasible.** (rationale is that this is already happening at the state)

The group discussed the difficulty of doing this, but good language to have. Sean proposed an edit: maintain the “reduce” and add “encourage”. There was discussion about how sometimes it’s not economically feasible to diversify crops (farmers on the call attested to this) and Ander made a point that it was all producers, not just farmers. There was discussion about how the word “consider” felt like no action. Cheryl suggested changing “consider” to “evaluate”. Everyone agreed that was good language change.

The new proposed edit was: **Evaluate** the risk of devastating impacts of extreme weather and natural disasters **and encourage** food producers to diversify their products **when economically feasible.** Rhys motioned to approve this change. Sean seconded. Motion passed.

There are two more edits to work through, but the committee decided to meet again, instead of extending this meeting.

**Next meeting:** July 11<sup>th</sup> from 4:30-6:00 pm

Riley Adjourned the meeting at 5:59pm.