

King County Farm Initiative

by Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary

On Monday, May 1, 2017, the Area Council held its regular monthly meeting. Topics included: (1) Farm Initiative, and (2) Regional Economic Strategies.

Farm Initiative

Randy Sandin, Resource Product Line Manager of the King County Department of Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER), discussed proposed changes to the County's Agriculture Code.

As part of the recently approved King County Comprehensive Plan 2016 four-year major update, code changes were considered for agriculture-dependent uses to support viable and sustainable Agricultural Production Districts (APDs). This was part of County Executive Constantine's "Food Initiative."

The intent of the proposed code changes is to reflect the changes in agricultural businesses in which farms are getting smaller and marketing/processing goods is more often done on-site. In addition, it is proposed agriculture no longer be mixed with manufacturing, retail, and general/business services.

Four new land-use definitions have been proposed: Agriculture--Raising of crops or livestock or the production of agricultural products, or both; Agricultural Products--Horticultural, etc.; Livestock; Feed or forage; Christmas trees, hardwood trees grown as crops and harvested within fifteen years of planting; and Turf, sod, seed and related products; Agricultural Activities--Uses that pertain directly to the commercial production of agricultural products; and Agricultural Support Services--Activities that are directly related to agriculture and directly dependent upon agriculture for their existence, but are undertaken on lands that are not predominately in agricultural use.

The proposed code changes pertain to properties directly adjacent and within 600 ft of Agricultural Production Districts (APDs). In the Area Council's region there are no APDs.

An Agricultural Technical Review Committee will be authorized to review proposals to expand or modify agricultural activities and to site agricultural support services. The expectations are: a streamlined review process that is quicker and provides cost savings. For further information please contact Randy Sandin at Randy.Sandin@kingcounty.gov.

Regional Economic Strategies

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC--www.psrc.org) is updating and expanding its Regional Economic Strategies (RES) to sustain the region's economic vitality and global competitiveness. It released a "final draft" of the RES on April 14 (see: <https://www.psrc.org/our-work/regional-economic-strategy>).

The Area Council's Economic Development Committee reviewed the draft RES and developed a set of detailed comments for the full Area Council consideration. The Committee stated the RES consists of four major "Goals": (1) Sustain a high-quality of life; (2) Open economic opportunities to everyone; (3) Compete globally; and (4) Connect the region to the world. There are a set of "Strategies" listed to achieve each goal, as well as a detailed description of "What Needs to Happen?" to followthrough on the Strategies.

Of particular interest to the Area Council are those Strategies and Actions that either directly or indirectly impact the Rural Area. These include: (1) Preserve rural lands and rural character ("Keep the Rural Area Rural"--our motto) by ensuring urban and urban-serving facilities remain in urban areas; (2) Sustain and help grow our local rural economies by protecting farmlands, forests, and open space; and (3) Find equitable mechanisms to maintain rural transportation infrastructure that is increasingly used by urban commuters to travel to other urban areas.

The Area Council discussed the Economic Development Committee's comments and voted on a final set to submit to the PSRC prior to its May 14 deadline. As with all detailed comments the Area Council develops and submits to various government agencies, these will be posted on our website.

The Area Council has been engaging with PSRC to ensure the Rural Area has a voice in a variety of regional growth management and transportation planning activities. Now that engagement includes the update to the RES.

Next Area Council Meeting

Monday, June 5, from 7:00 - 9:00 PM, at the Fire Station located at the SE corner of SE 231st St & SR-169 intersection. All members of the Public are welcome to attend.

Meetings are held the first non-holiday Monday of each month. A Public Comment period at the beginning of each meeting provides an

opportunity to voice issues of concern to Area Council members and government officials in attendance.

Your Area Council serves as an all-volunteer, locally elected advisory body to King County on behalf of all rural unincorporated area residents living in the Tahoma School District. Please visit: www.greatermaplevalleyareacouncil.org.

*** NOTE: Four positions are open on the 16-member Area Council. If you live in the Tahoma School District outside the City of Maple Valley (see Service Area Map on our web site), you are invited to apply to become a member by sending a letter of interest to GMVUAC, P. O. Box 111, Maple Valley, WA 98038 or attend our next monthly meeting. ***