



MEETING MINUTES

Conservation Land Bank Commission Meeting December 17, 2021 Virtual ZOOM Meeting

Commission Members in Attendance:

Jim Skoog, District 1, position 1
Sandi Friel, District 2, position 2
Brian Wiese, at large, position 4
Miles Becker, District 3, position 3

Doug Strandberg, at large, position 5
David Meiland, at large, position 6
Christa Campbell, at large, position 7

Commission Members Absent: None

Land Bank Staff in Attendance: Lincoln Bormann, Peter Guillozet, Eliza Habegger, Erin Halcomb, Doug McCutchen, Aaron Rock, Kayla Seaforth, Amanda Wedow, Jacob Wagner, Tanja Williamson

Land Bank Staff Absent: Shauna Barrows

County Council Liaison: Christine Minney

County Manager: Absent

Public in Attendance: 24 individuals over the course of the meeting.

Topic	Key Discussion Points & Agreements
Call to Order 8:31 am	Sandi Friel, chair, called the meeting to order.
Public Comment 8:32 am	There was none.
Adoption of Minutes 8:33 am	The draft November 19, 2021 minutes were reviewed. There were corrections. Minutes were approved.

<p>Council Liaison 8:37 am</p>	<p>Christine Minney reiterated the Council declared a state of emergency after the epic rain event in November which opens the door to federal money for damage repair. Orcas Island was acutely impacted.</p> <p>The biennial budget passed on December 7. Also, the Council extended the current moratorium on vacation rentals in all UGA's in hamlets and activity centers while they await recommendations from the planning commission on the future of vacation rentals in San Juan County.</p> <p>Employee recognition and appreciation was December 14 and Christine congratulated Charlie Behnke on celebrating 5 years with the County.</p> <p>Specific to commission vacancies Christine related that the Prosecuting Attorney's office clarified that any Commissioner having served a partial term and a full term (4 years) is still eligible reapply to serve. At this time there are three confirmed applications for the positions. The applications will be forwarded to the chair of the Commission. Christine noted that Council is interested in any recommendations coming the Commission. Sandi asked if the end of December is the application deadline. Christine thought so but would double check with Ingrid. Lincoln noted that he didn't think there is a confirmed deadline, but the Commission hopes to have all seats filled by the January meeting.</p>
<p>Chair and Commissioner's Report</p> <p>Selection of 2022 Officers 8:43 am</p> <p>Acknowledgement of Doug Strandberg</p>	<p>Sandi asked the 2022 officer's nomination committee for their recommendations. Sandi Friel was nominated for second term as Chair; David Meiland was nominated for Vice-chair; and Jim Skoog was nominated for Finance Officer. All nominees were voted in unanimously.</p> <p>Doug Strandberg retired from the Commission. Sandi thanked him for his good work over the last 12 years, as did Lincoln and other commissioners.</p>
<p>Director's Report 8:53 am</p> <p>San Juan Island</p> <p>Lopez Island</p>	<p>Lincoln reported there are currently three acquisitions up in the air and it doesn't look like any of them will close by year's end.</p> <p>Hauschka Properties – Background: These two 40-acre parcels include the top of Cady Mountain adjacent to the Cady Mountain Preserve, and separately, the parcel adjacent to Mount Grant Preserve and the Town of Friday Harbor's Trout Lake property. Current: There are signed PSAs on both properties. Lincoln continues to work on access easement details for both.</p> <p>Higgins Property - Background: The last unprotected parcel on Watmough Bay, this 11.5-acre tract has over 2,000 feet of shoreline on the Bay and Rosario Strait, and is a high priority salmon recovery area. The upland area features the oldest house on Lopez dating back to the 1870's and a remnant homestead. This is also likely a significant cultural heritage site for the Coast Salish. The property will be going on the market with an asking price likely to be \$2.5M. Current: Lincoln said Larry Higgins contacted him to talk more about a caretaker possibility for some of the family members. Lincoln agreed to hold off on closing in order to discuss the</p>

Lopez Island continued	<p>opportunity. He said although it's not part of the purchase and sale agreement it could be beneficial to both the family and Land Bank in trying to caretake the property. He noted there are quite a few issues to look at for it to work, including crafting a lease. He hopes to have the acquisition wrapped up by the end of January.</p> <p>Christa asked if there was any obligation for the Land Bank to bring the building to habitable condition for family caretakers and whether this scenario is toying with the idea of a life estate. Lincoln said there is no assumption of a life estate. This would be a 2–3-year caretaker role, stemming from an idea that came up when the Conservation Fund was going to purchase the property and work to resell to the Bureau of Land Management within that hopeful three-year period. Lincoln agreed with Christa that there would be details to work through in terms of the lease and the condition of the residence. Sandi asked regarding lease process if it's over 2 years. Lincoln said it would be under 2 years with an opportunity to of renewal. Lincoln noted that having caretakers on the property who are familiar with the property and the structure will help with management issues.</p>
Public Comment	<p>Tracey Cottingham shared a fun photo and thanked Amanda Wedow for organizing a planting party at Lopez Island's Channel Preserve and thanked Eliza Habegger for growing the plugs.</p> <p>Steve Ulvi voiced his desire to keep bigger picture views in the forefront. He highlighted that our remote County is very susceptible and vulnerable to disruption. Climate change is upon us and he feels the mandate can be interpreted broadly to be a strengthening and preservation of community well-being and resilience. He would like to see acquisitions and stewardship be directed to more utilitarian needs in the future. Steve suggested looking at larger parcels near UGAs that are large enough that there can be some lease or temporary use for recycling and composting facilities. Sandi suggested including this as a future agenda item.</p>
Break 9:10 am – 9:15 am	
Public Hearing Draft Agricultural Policy 9:16 am Public Comments	<p>Kathy Morris asked if the Agricultural Resources Committee (ARC) had any comments and/or suggestions, and if so, where can they be found. Sandi commented that the ARC wasn't able to meet prior to today's meeting. They will send in any comments next week. Kathy followed up with a question asking how the lack of ARC input will affect the later meeting regarding Coffelt Farm Preserve. Sandi stated that while disappointing, the Commission needs to move forward with the planning meeting for Coffelt. She noted that Coffelt is a unique holding from all the properties. Sandi asked if Charlie had anything to share. Charlie agreed with Sandi's remarks and noted ARC members had an opportunity to submit comments individually.</p> <p>Bruce Gregory said he sent in a response and asked if any of the Commissioners had questions for him. Sandi thanked him for his in-depth comments and for being a resource.</p>

<p>Draft Ag Policy cont. Public comments continued</p>	<p>Faith Van de Putte, coordinator of the ARC, thanked the Commission for the hard work and thoughtfulness put into this guiding document and highlighted how important it is for the ongoing agricultural viability in the County. Faith said the work the Land Bank does in preserving agriculture land and keeping it available for production is important, especially in the changing nature of agriculture. She noted the need for flexibility in conservation easement (CE) language. David asked Faith for an example regarding the changing nature of agriculture.</p> <p>Faith responded that the traditional situation where a farm is passed down through generations is becoming far less common, and that many farmers are nearing retirement age. New cooperative farming models have emerged, where there may be more intensive and diverse farming on smaller acreages. However, the cost of land is prohibitive, and these kinds of operations require more housing to succeed. Faith also noted that the use of hoop and green houses to extend the growing season were important, but may be prohibited in CEs for aesthetic purposes. There was discussion.</p> <p>David asked Faith if constraints on infrastructure and buildings that have been written into CE's are problematic. Faith said yes. She noted in farming, depending on what's being produced, there is often a lot of need for protecting things from the elements, yet those structures may be prohibited.</p>
<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Returning to the document, Christa commented that she appreciated the summary of the county comprehensive plan regarding agricultural use. She would like to flesh out the idea of "fair and equitable" and what that means. Regarding upholding conservation values, she would like stronger language than "supporting and encouraging." As for adjusting the lessees rate based on contribution, she stated that she believes the Land Bank cannot legally do that. Overall, Christa liked the policy and appreciated all the work that went into writing it and the way it pulls together the stewardship and management plan and the County's goals for ag.</p> <p>Sandi asked for clarification regarding adjusting the lease rate based to account for work undertaken by the lessee. Lincoln explained that the value of whatever work was done would have to be objectively quantified.</p> <p>There was discussion regarding the County's bidding process. Sandi asked for staff to clarify what the process will be and incorporate into second draft.</p> <p>Sandi noted Bruce Gregory's comments resonated with her and agreed that she would like to see stronger language in the document. In particular, she said she believes there needs to be "bottom line" policies in place with measurable goals.</p> <p>She noted that as a public agency, the Land Bank is in a unique position of setting an example and displaying model practices. She continued to say that if the Land Bank raises the bar higher and then educates other farmers on model practices, and also encourages those practices on private land, then the Land Bank could achieve some of its objectives of preserving agriculture without investing any money in those private lands. She would like the Land Bank to set the bar high by leading by example.</p>

<p>Discussion continued</p>	<p>Also, in the leasing portion, Sandi noted there is a reference to a third-party advisory committee. She said as it is written, it conflicts with county policy and needs to be re-looked at.</p> <p>Doug agreed with Sandi's concern regarding the third-party advisory committee. His suggestion was to delete the entire advisory committee blanket requirement and instead institute it on a case-by-case basis, as has been done with Coffelt Farm. If not deleted, he recommended at least including the phrase "at the discretion of the Land Bank."</p> <p>Brian agreed with Doug's suggestion regarding the advisory committee. Brian also agreed about setting the bar as high as possible, but also agreed with Faith's comments about flexibility and change. Brian noted that he sees the document as guiding principles, and, with regard to soil quality, prefers the term "encourage," rather than "require" or "mandate." He also opposed a requirement on the Land Bank to monitor the condition soils.</p> <p>Brian cited the mandate, noting its stated purpose to acquire and preserve ag land, not to run ag operations. As far as monitoring soil standards, he believes we should not acknowledge existing improvement standards, but should set specific standards in a lease. It's not the Land Bank's job to monitor.</p> <p>Christa respectfully disagreed. She would like to see a certain amount of monitoring, which she feels is different from management. She doesn't think it is the Land Bank's job to run a farm but that it does need to partake in monitoring the quality of certain resources to be sure they are maintained through the term of a lease. She agreed with Bruce and Sandi on a preference to see stronger words than "encourage."</p> <p>David agreed with Brian and also with Jim, preferring more flexible language in order to work across varied situations.</p> <p>There was discussion regarding language of guiding document vs. policy.</p> <p>Christa noted she doesn't think quantifiable measures need to be spelled out, but that policy language should be strengthened with supporting documents to outline how the Land Bank plans to monitor the soil, as well as what the soil is being monitored against. The details don't belong in the document, she said, but the commitment does.</p> <p>The public hearing discussion of the draft Ag Policy will resume during the January 2022 meeting where the Commission will review a second draft including updates from staff and ARC comments.</p>
<p>Future Agenda Items 10:18 am</p>	<p>Sandi suggested climate related items for the retreat. Lincoln suggested moving the retreat to February. Everyone agreed.</p>
<p>Meeting Adjourned 10:22 am</p>	<p>Chair, Sandi Friel, adjourned the meeting.</p>
<p>NEXT MEETING</p>	<p>The next LBC meeting is scheduled to take place January 21, 2022. It will be an extended meeting.</p>