

O'Donnell, Mary Beth

From: Orjiako, Oliver
Sent: Friday, May 29, 2015 11:03 AM
To: O'Donnell, Mary Beth
Subject: FW: testimony for the record?
Attachments: Farm tour_Food system testimony May 26 2015_FINAL.doc

For comp plan index! Thanks.



From: Heather Tischbein [<mailto:htischbein@wa-net.com>]
Sent: Friday, May 29, 2015 10:57 AM
To: Euler, Gordon
Cc: Orjiako, Oliver
Subject: testimony for the record?

Gordy,

I attended the BOCC meeting but had to leave at 12:15 so didn't get to read this statement into the record. I handed it to the woman who supports these meetings and she said she'd make sure the councilors got a copy. I'm not optimistic that any of them would actually read it.

Regardless, can this be included in the GMA record or is that closed for now? I can't remember.

Heather

May 26, 2015

David Madore
Tom Mielke
Jeanne Stewart

County Councilors,

I am here today to put an exclamation point to the farm tour that Councilor Madore participated in this past Friday. Thank you, David, for taking the time to learn more about agriculture in Clark County.

The story of April Joy Farm that Councilor Madore heard on Friday was testimony to the need for parcels of farmland large enough to support the diversified farming practices of the 21st century—those stewardship practices that are grounded in rigorous understanding of ecosystems management, soil science and fertility management, and in the use of technology to improve efficiencies of labor, conservation of water and protection of wildlife. A way of farming that builds community among farmers and eaters, both rural and urban.

I was also especially glad that you were able to meet Amanda Osborne, VP for Food and Farms at Ecotrust, and to hear her summary of their food infrastructure gap analysis which suggests that a local food economy, seen as a supply chain with adequate infrastructure from farm to table, looks like an emerging market.

<http://ecotrust.org/publication/regional-food-infrastructure/>

The fact that our own Jeff Harvey, CEO of Burgerville, was an advisor to this project speaks to the credibility of this research and its importance to our understanding and decision-making about how to support agriculture and a robust local food economy. The Ecotrust report speaks directly to the infrastructure gap that Bill Zimmerman described so poignantly in his testimony on May 12, 2015, re the farm-to-school grant proposal the county health department is submitting to the federal government.

When I read the Ecotrust report along with the 2007 Globalwise Analysis of the Agricultural Trends and Conditions in Clark County, Washington, the 2008 Food System Council assessment, Exploring the Clark County Food System, and the 2011 CREDC Clark County Economic Development Plan I saw an interesting arc of possibility emerging...one that points towards a future scenario of flourishing farms, a vibrant local food economy and improvements in public health through improved nutrition.

Even though the Globalwise report painted a fairly dismal picture of the viability of agriculture in Clark County in 2007, there was a proviso:

"Consumer demand can alter the dynamics of the market and change the course of an industry. Demand for locally produced food and other agricultural products is probably the most encouraging prospect for Clark County farmers." (page v)

Fast forward to the 2011 CREDC report and the possibility of a change in consumer demand for local food appears. From what I understand about trends in demographics, the types of companies and workforce “talent” that the CREDC plan suggests recruiting represent just the kind of consumers who will further the demand for local food that we are already seeing across the county and in our community...the change in consumer demand that the Globalwise report suggests can change the course of an industry.

In fact, the January 2015 report, Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: A Report to Congress, issued by the USDA Economic Research Service states:

“Producer participation in local food systems is growing, and the value of local food sales, defined as the sale of food for human consumption through both direct-to-consumer (e.g., farmers’ markets) and intermediated marketing channels (e.g., sales to institutions or regional distributors), appears to be increasing.” (page 1)

I urge you to take a fresh look at what’s happening in Clark County in terms of agriculture and food production for local consumption. A good place to start would be with updating the reports the Food System Council undertook years ago. Complement this update with a food infrastructure gap analysis in Clark County along the lines of the report Ecotrust did for the state of Oregon.

With more current and comprehensive information, we will be better able to undertake the analysis necessary to determine what future scenario for agriculture in Clark County best serves the long term and diverse interests of our community and what land use decisions support that preferred future scenario.

In my opinion, we also need to better understand how to facilitate the intergenerational transfer of land in ways that accommodate the needs of land owning families to manage their land assets and that make it financially possible for new and/or beginning farmers to be successful in their farming endeavors. Land use decisions that increase the market value of rural agricultural lands are a known death knell for farming in any community. Please make yourselves familiar with ag-land preservation “tools” that have been suggested to you by Warren Neth and others that could be implemented to maintain the affordability of farmland for farmers.

We need your leadership in creating the future scenario for agriculture in Clark County that we as citizens in an urban-rural community would like to see for ourselves and our children.

Sincerely,

Heather Tischbein
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