

O'Donnell, Mary Beth

From: Tilton, Rebecca
Sent: Friday, October 17, 2014 10:52 AM
To: Barnes, Ed; Madore, David; Mielke, Tom; Silliman, Peter; Sijak, Oliver; O'Donnell, Mary Beth
Cc: LaRocque, Linnea
Subject: Written Testimony re: Comp Plan Update
Attachments: Carol Levanen comments_101414.pdf

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CP 16#0339

Hello,

Attached please find written comments submitted by Carol Levanen during the Board's Hearing of October 14, 2014 (public comment time).

Thank you,
Rebecca

Rebecca Tilton, Clerk of the Board
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Clark County Board of Commissioners
P.O. Box 5000
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**Re: Washington State Department of Agriculture - Future of Farming
Strategic Plan 2020 and Beyond - 2008 Executive Summary (For the public record)**

The following information and excerpts were taken from the Future of Farming report, sponsored by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. This report gives good insight to the limited agriculture that exists in Clark County and why. The Growth Management Act, in essence, directs counties to designate and preserve lands that have prime soil and the growing capacity to support long term commercially viable resource lands, considering proximity to markets, already developed land and the consideration of a more valuable use for the land. In Clark County, there is very little, if any, land that meets that test, other than as small lot hobby farming.

The Future of Farming Project Steering Committee members were appointed by the Directors of Agriculture as authoritative industry representatives. Members were from Mt. Vernon, Okanogan, Seattle, Carnation, Coulee City, Yakima, Ephrata, Enumclaw, Mosses Lake, Oakville, Rockford, Elma, Pullman, Shelton and Pasco. There were no representatives from Southwest Washington, including Clark, Cowlitz and Skamania.

1. The report states that Future of Farming participants reported regulations as their biggest obstacle.....smaller operations face special disadvantages due to regulatory complexities and many farmers explained the regulatory burdens discourage their children from taking over the farm, discourage investment in value-added opportunities and discourage new entrants from establishing farms.
2. The fifth noteworthy resource to protect is long term capital for investment in perennial plantings, facilities and equipment and short term credit for operations.
3. Many processors are now part of multinational organizations with many alternative raw product sources. and will continue to locate in Washington only as long as it makes business sense to do so.
4. Increasingly, the agriculture system of all counties and regions of the world are becoming integrated into one global "food system".
5. Farmers and agribusinesses certainly believe that regulation has become a major hindrance to their profitability and survival. They disagree with the "business friendly" ratings that Washington has received,
6. Fifty percent (50%) of Washington total land is owned by the federal, state and county governments. Most housing and other development is on former agriculture land.
7. A number of programs already exist at the federal, state, and local level, either to sustain farmers in farming or to maintain land in farms. (A recent public record comment by CCCU states that the federal government would only consider loans for farming on six (6) acres of land in Clark County, according to a specific federal formula)

8. The Report stresses the loss of *Prime* farmland to non agriculture uses.

9. *Water* is a critical ingredient of agriculture production. According to the 2002 census, over seventy-five (75%) of Washington harvest by value was from the 11.9% of Washington farmland that was irrigated.

✓ 10. Like all other businesses, agriculture needs long-term capital for land, buildings, and durable equipment. It also needs long term capital for investments in crops. It needs short term operating capital to cover recurring expenses such as labor, utilities, and feed.

11. The grower may not receive final payment for orchard crops until two or more years after the first variable costs of the crop

✓ 12. Farmers and agribusinesses have one major asset that they can use as collateral for long term loans: *their land*.

13. In 2002, 32.3% of real estate debt was supplied by the Farm Credit system. The debt to asset ratio can be expected to rise.

✓ 14. Agriculture is not recognized as a career opportunity. Agriculture class size has been dropping, which further encourages educational institutions to reduce or eliminate their investment in agriculture education and instructors.

✓ 15. Industry representatives consistently voiced a concern about the increasing average age of farmers, due in part to the lack of young people entering the industry.

✓ 16. Most economic activities will only take place if the value created by moving a product from point A to point B exceeds the cost of transportation.

17. One ton of freight can be carried 202 miles by rail, per gallon of fuel, 514 miles by inland barge, but only 59 miles by truck.

✓ 18. Respondents agreed that agriculture needs to close the perception gap between agriculture realities and the publics' understanding of the agriculture situation.

✓ The perception gap needs to be closed in Clark County, also. When the Farm Home Administration moves from Vancouver, to Brush Prairie and finally to Chehalis, in Lewis County, it's a sure sign they are no longer needed in this county to provide agriculture. funding. Small parcel hobby farms is the only way that agriculture exists in Clark County.

Sincerely,



Carol Levanen, Ex. Secretary
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