



**King County**  
Rural Forest Commission

## **Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting Thursday, September 21, 2017, Preston Community Center**

Commissioners present: Nate Veranth, forest landowner (Chair); Rex Thompson, forester (Vice Chair); Dick Ryon, forester; Laurie Benson, Washington Department of Natural Resources; Andy Chittick, forest landowner/sawmill operator; Amy LaBarge, forest ecologist; Steven Mullen-Moses, Snoqualmie Tribe; Monica Paulson Priebe, Green River College; Brandy Reed, King Conservation District; Bernie McKinney, Green River Coalition; Kelsey Ketcheson, Washington State University Extension; Daryl Harper, forest landowner

Guests: Li Hsi; Wendy Davis; Ben Davis; Steve Horton; Mike Lasecki, King Conservation District

King County Staff: Richard Martin, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD); Eric Beach, WLRD; David Kimmet, Parks and Recreation Division; Linda Vane, Commission Liaison

Chair Nate Veranth called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

### **Motions**

Motion 1-0917 That the minutes of the July 20, 2017 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2-0917 That the amendments to the King County Administrative Procedures be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Staff and Agency Reports and Announcements**

*Rural Forest Commission* – Linda Vane reported that the process of appointing two new members to the commission was nearly complete.

*King County Forestry Program* – Richard Martin briefed the commission on the progress made on a forest carbon sequestration project on forested land owned by King County. He reported extensive research had shown that it would take as long as 20 years to generate positive carbon credits on county-owned forestlands to offset enough of the county's carbon emissions to meet our goal of carbon neutrality or to have carbon credits to sell. He explained that this had to do with the type of forest cover on county lands. He said that the county was evaluating the potential for developing a program for private lands that would involve forest restoration geared toward improving carbon sequestration on those lands. The enhanced forests would store more carbon while helping achieve the county's Strategic Climate Action Plan goal to optimize forest cover by 2030. A discussion followed.

Richard also announced that the Forestry Program's Forester II position had been filled.

*King Conservation District (KCD)* –Brandy reported on the inauguration of a process to evaluate the KCD's [rates and charges system](#). The purpose would be to prepare the KCD for a new assessment in 2020. The KCD would be looking at the effectiveness of their programs and what

they will have accomplished by 2019. Brandy explained that as forest health management is one of the KCD's programs, would invite the Rural Forest Commission to contribute to the strategic planning process. Brandy recommended that the commission members review the Commission's 2009 report, [Actions Required for King County to Conserve Rural Forests](#).

### **Update of the King County Rural Forest Commission Administrative Procedures**

Linda Vane, Commission Liaison

Linda proposed two technical changes to the Commission's Administrative Procedures, which were adopted by the Commission in 1998 and revised in 2016. The new changes would update the process for certain remedial actions. Linda answered questions from the commission members.

The Commission approved the revisions unanimously.

### **Proposed joint meeting with Agriculture Commission**

Linda Vane, Commission Liaison

Linda proposed a joint meeting of the Commission with the County's Agriculture Commission in 2018. She explained that the County's Forestry and Agriculture programs along with the Rural Forest Commission and the Agriculture Commission had their genesis in the 1996 [Farm and Forest Report](#). The recommendations contained in the report were based on land use studies that revealed a trend of conversion of agricultural and forest lands to other land uses. Linda explained that many of the policies, programs and regulations that guide land use today are designed to reverse that trend and conserve resource lands.

As 2018 would be the Commission's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it seemed a suitable time to evaluate goals and objectives for achieving the goals of retaining the forest land base and encouraging a strong rural economy, according to Linda. A sharing of ideas and perspectives with the Agriculture Commission could be a useful part of that process, she suggested.

The Commission brainstormed approaches for organizing such a joint meeting.

### **Proposed KC Code updates**

Nate Veranth, Commission Chair

Nate summarized the discussions to date regarding potential updates in King County Code. Recent meetings had focused on consideration of the benefits and risks of allowing temporary worker housing and accessory dwelling units in the Forest Production District (FPD). At its July meeting the Commission recommended that the County consider allowing housing in the Forest Production district for forest workers that is similar to the temporary farmworker housing that is allowed on properties used for agriculture. At the same time, the Commission recognized that agriculture and forestry are very different land uses with different levels of labor intensity, according to Nate.

Nate next summarized the discussions to date regarding the question of whether the County should allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in the FPD. He said that while the Commission generally could see value in allowing ADUs, there were still a number of unanswered questions about the potential for negative impacts of such housing units. An extended discussion followed. The topic was tabled until such time as staff could fully research the technical questions raised by the Commission.

In the second section of the code change discussion the Commission turned to the topic of regulations that affect land uses associated with small-scale sawmill operations (21A.08.080 Wood Products Except Furniture) and forest management respectively.

Nate opened the discussion of the sections of KCC 21A.08.080 related to sawmills. Among the comments made during the ensuing discussion were:

- The key question is whether the limitations in code would keep a sawmill from developing into a fully integrated operation; that it would keep the footprint small. These limitations provide for that. They would keep a sawmill from developing into a regional facility.
- It is not clear under what conditions a permit would be required. Would you need a permit to mill your own wood that is grown on site or logs that you bring in from another location and mill for your own use?
- It is not clear in the code the circumstances under which one can sell “wood products.” It is implied but is not explicitly allowed.
- There should be an allowance for drying “products grown on-site with portable equipment.” There are now solar kilns and vacuum kilns for example.
- Permits are needed to ensure that you are doing the work safely and are handling the waste correctly, keeping workers safe, addressing fire risk, etc.
- The threshold of 150 thousand board feet for triggering a conditional use permit for logs milled off-site should be bumped up or removed entirely. Some of the larger portable mills can easily turn out 2,500 to 3,000 board feet a day.
- The number of logging trucks coming in and out would be an issue.
- It is unclear what the 150 thousand board foot (bf) threshold means. You can come to a board foot volume by scaling the logs or by scaling the lumber. It is unclear here what is being referred to. For example, a self-loading log truck might have 3,500 bf of log scale volume on it; you put it through a band saw mill and now you have 5,000 bf of lumber.

Nate concluded the discussion. Staff thanked the group for their comments.

Lastly, Brandy Reed provided an update on efforts to improve regulations pertaining to forest management activities under County jurisdiction. While most forest management activities are regulated by Washington State Department of Natural Resources, the state does not issue permits for activities that take place within a tree length and-a-half (150 feet) of structures. This means that forest management activities within the 150 feet are regulated by the County, which under current code would require a Clearing permit, she explained. Brandy said that the KCD had run into some problems implementing wildfire fuels reduction activities with rural landowners because of the County's broad definition of "clearing."

Brandy reported that the KCD and County staff had been working together to develop a definition of "vegetation management" that would make it possible to undertake actions as forest health improvement practices without a permit. She invited Eric Beach to provide details about the work.

A discussion, including questions and answers, followed Brandy's report.

**Public Comment**

Li His and Steve Horton made comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

**Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on November 16, 2017, at the Preston Community Center.