

**Natural Resources Committee**  
**4/2/2008**  
**7:00 a.m.**  
**GFCC Conference Room**

**Attendance:** Tom Bundtzen, chair; Gale Skaugstad; Libbie Martin; Roger Burggraf; Josephine Papp; John Papp; Bill Brophy, Cal Skaugstad, Jason Turner, David McDowell; Gretchen Kerndt; Pete Mayo; George Hitz; Joanne Kuykendall; Cassie Pinkel; Dana Novak; Virgil Severns; Tami Seekins; Mark Eliot; and Michelle Gibson

1. **Call To Order.** Tom Bundtzen called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.
2. **Roll Call for NRC Members**
3. **Introduction of Guests**
4. **Review of 3/12/08 Minutes.** Motion to Approve: Bill Brophy; second: Roger Burggraf; passed: yes.
5. **Review and Discussion of pending NRC Resolutions.**
  - a. Resolution in support of SB 229 about Tanana Valley State Forest, and rough on draft on resolution related to the Water Quality initiative, and also want to do one on BIOS building, and include something on TVC.
  - b. Motion to move forward on these: Roger Burggraf; second: Bill Brophy; passed: yes.
6. **Program: Farming in the Tanana Valley, a 2008 Review, by Josephine Papp, Virgil Severns, Pete Mayo, and Gretchen Kerndt**
  - a. Josephine Papp talked about growers as being a major part of agriculture in the Tanana Valley. The Farmer's Market got started about 1976 or so during the Bicentennial in a push to develop Farmers' Markets. Rudy Domke, a strawberry grower, decided to help push that idea. He got a little market going during the fair with a booth, and some people would drop off vegetables. But the fair is not where people go to buy vegetables. Things developed from there, with help from Janet Baird, Fair Manager at that time, and big pusher of Farmer's Market. Another person was Ray Morgan with Cooperative Extension, Division of Agriculture. A lot of groups around town worked to make the Farmer's Market a reality. There were a lot of growers—Chuck and Elaine Hawk, Cindy and Steve Tack, as well as the McKees on CHSR with their slaughterhouse—would come with a refrigerated truck and sell meats out of the back. It had a strong beginning, with ups and downs, but flowing along pretty good right now. Have an average of 50 – 80 vendors, and a membership of 140.
  - b. Virgil Severn and his family have the Rangeview Farm, and brought along a squash leftover from last summer. With proper storage, there are a number of Alaskan crops that could be sold year round besides squash, like potatoes, carrots, and cabbage. They first started selling to local stores like Ray's Supermarket in the Northward building, Foodland, Gavora's, etc. Big stores now require vendors to carry millions in liability insurance. Realize big companies have a real concern and there are things that require them to have insurance but doesn't make it easy for local vendors to sell to them.

- c. Gretchen Kerndt owns “Basically Basil” She said just switching the market to another location made a huge difference. More health conscious people shopping at the market for locally grown items. People have a subscription to produce from her garden. Seeing a change in local restaurants that are wanting to provide locally-grown food to customers. Local people asking a lot more for it.
  - i. Same kind of liability issues? Yes, supermarkets now have actually gone to \$3 million for liability insurance, and want UCP and bar codes. Not worth the time and effort. Have to be able to supply a lot of quantity—here it is more of a specialty here to the market consumer
- d. Pete Mayo and his wife run Spinach Creek Farms, where they grow and sell carrots. They sell on a subscription basis, and to one local restaurant. All of us in the business category of small farm. Over last 10 – 20 years, a lot of people try to go big, and that doesn’t work. Northern Lights Dairy exception of very successful large business. Potential for large business with potatoes and carrots, but don’t seem to be able to make it for one reason or the other. Selling directly to the customer seems to be doing really well. Grew 20 tons of carrots this year. Grow Ithaca—hybrid carrot—it’s been discontinued, and have been searching for a replacement ever since—have a two year supply of seeds. Store carrots for about three months and sell them in the fall. Potential for a lot more people to run side businesses and not cause a problem in the market.
- e. John and Josephine Papp grew potatoes, and are retired. This is great land for growing good potatoes because of the long hours of daylight and cooler temperatures. Heat is the enemy of most vegetables. Get better broccoli, cauliflower, and potatoes. Just scratching the surface in the Farmer’s Market. Also personal touch. Don’t get a lot of help from the Borough for tax break on farm type land.
- f. Discussion: David McDowell, John Papp, Tom Bundtzen, Pete Mayo, Cal Skaugstad, Tami Seekins, Roger Burggraf, Virgil Severns, Bill Brophy, Libbie Martin, Gretchen Kerndt, Dana Novak
  - i. Is there a preferred location for growing?
    - 1. Yes, in the flat lands and south slopes—better angle to sun on the south slope and dryer. Most places in flats have sandy soil—wicks quickly, but lots of water.
  - ii. How many Farmer’s in the Tanana Valley?
    - 1. Quite a few in Delta—don’t know.
    - 2. A lot of hay farmers, and a lot of people give more than they can eat from their big gardens. Would guess somewhere around 50 farmers.
  - iii. Going to have a lot of organic fertilizer out of hatchery. If we can’t give it away, we have to pay to put it into the sewer. Would like to make good use of it. It will be slurry that can be put in a water tank.
  - iv. Legislature made the first Tuesday of May State Ag day--May 6<sup>th</sup> this year—Fairbanks Soil and Water go into the schools to promote it. Great to promote Alaska Ag day at Chamber.
    - 1. Schedule 30-second announcement and newsletter article.

- v. Interesting to see progress of Agriculture since first came up to Alaska. Had large scale potato farming, and just about everyone had a garden. Alaskan vegetables very flavorful. Had problem up here with dumping surplus milk from lower-48. Now, big niche market.
  - 1. Give Calypso Farm a good plug because they are doing a fantastic job in education.
- vi. Use clear plastic to warm soil when planting. It works like a greenhouse, so get better root growth. Greenhouses have been more supportive of family operations—five that have been successful in green house growing. Potential there for doing much more than already are.
- vii. Claire Lammers growing crabapples, plums, cherries, and pears. Carol Phillips grows apples and crabapples. Grown on Siberian root stock—just the root stock. Most of the eating apples are Canadian. Many varieties, although small are still very sweet.
- viii. Garden ever since up here, in recent years more trouble with early frost than previous years.
  - 1. Have had late frost in early summer and late spring frost— 2 – 3 years ago every farmers had a problem with early frost.
- ix. What's needed for storage?
  - 1. Bed-root cellar helpful—squash and pumpkins need insulated building.
  - 2. Used a back-hoe to dig a whole, then conex, back-filled, then insulated. Maintains 34 – 35 degree temperature very well.
- x. Comments in comparison to lower-48 in regards to herbicides, pesticides, fertilizer additives?
  - 1. Fortunate in low number of insects—root maggot main one difficult to control. Other than that, aphids are a problem some times in lettuce, and every few years there is an outbreak of red turnip beetles.
- xi. Seed potatoes taken by Chinese and Taiwanese at one point from here, now done from lower-48. Don't have the facilities to produce the amounts required here.
- xii. Program at GML about average temperature going up 4-degrees—problems with pests that never used to have? Any consequences?
  - 1. Growing season longer, and summers cooler than 50 years ago—used to have very hot temperatures; now frosts are coming later. Haven't noticed pests.
  - 2. University doing studies on climate change impacting agriculture in Alaska—growing season have actually extended.
  - 3. Moose problem is the biggest pest for vegetable growers.
- xiii. What do you need from the Chamber to help you out?
  - 1. Education of youngster's in school, and would like to see the Farmer's Market give leeway to kids to set up booth of own and sell.

2. One of the latest buzzwords is to buy local—good for the economy.
  3. Calypso Farms does hands on in schools and kids run CSAs over the summer.
  4. Spread the word.
- xiv. When is the Farmer's Market open?
1. The Saturday before Mother's Day.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Gibson