



# Heritage Farm Sustainability Plan Open House Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 24, 2024, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm  
In-Person and Virtual Meeting via Webex

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**Committee Members:** Matthew Baum, Teresa Meyer, Kristine Perry, Rob Freed, Bill Cline, Zorah Oppenheimer\*, Ila Westergard, Mark Wreath\*, Michelle Vasquez-Stickley\*, Tanika Siscoe\*

**Clark County:** Rocky Houston, Lynde Wallick, Amy Arnold, David Stipe, Michael Chau, Justin Morgan, Evelyn Ives, Kaley McLaughlan-Burton, Hailey Shannon, Erica Fuller, Pete DuBois, Sue Marshall

**Guests and Other:** Margot Gresham, Thom McConathy, Laura Eldwood-Klein, Sharin Kenski, Ringo Michel, Justin O’Dea, Karel Ostrand, Linda Mather, Diana Dempsey, Judie Stanton, John Jay, Lisa Bayautet, Annavon Dielingen, Charles Ralleg, Nancy Felget, Mike Klein, Sandy Brown, Curtis Knopp, Larry and Nancy Rapp, Nancy Morgan, Bill Drummond, George Vaughn, Jordan Boldt, B. Nordstrom, Kevin Moran, Kirk Gresham, Heather Tischbein, Sue Willette-Goodwin, Marrin Hascall, Shason Tabor, Simon Bawn, Teresa Street, Ed Yorty, Gary Garth, Joe Zimmerman, Steph Clark, Rex Austin, Katheryn Schaffer, Juliann Heppler, Darby Heppler, Heidi Moran, Pat Schroeder, Don Schroeder, Peter Fels, Ann Foster, Austin Kleinert-Strand, Bethanie Collette Davis, Darrin Fuller, Elise Astleford, Hillery Krebs, Jean M. Avery, Jude Wait, Julia Maglione, Kathy Bender, Lyn Ortiz, Maria Harris, Mary Hurley, Michele Huffman, Monica, Zazueta, Peggy Haugen, Pragadeesh Madhanagopalan, Rachel Freston, Robbin Summers, Sharon Kenoski, Terry Koper

\* Not Present

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## 6:30 PM Welcome & Mingling

David Stipe welcomed folks to the room and indicated the meeting would begin.

## 6:34 PM Hybrid Presentation – Introductions

David Stipe introduced various people in the room, including himself, Rocky Houston, the Community Engagement and Inclusion Staff, as well as the Heritage Farm Steering Committee folks. David explained that this meeting is being held both in-person and online via Webex and explained how folks could participate online.

David discussed that this Open House is based on the public engagement results from the Heritage Farm Sustainability Plan and reviewed the Agenda.

## 6:38 PM What is Heritage Farm?

David discussed the history of Heritage Farm, where it’s located, who has inhabited the property, its planning history, and what the adopted 2020 master plan addressed. David also discussed the public participation process for the sustainability plan, its vision, and what the plan will not do

which includes recommendations for selling the property, removal of the agricultural practices at the site, and/or elimination of Washington Status University Extension Services at the site.

**6:41 PM Plan development update**

David discussed the sustainability plan’s timeline and updates indicating the next steps are to revise the plan based on feedback from the Open House and the Public Comment period.

**6:44 PM Public Engagement Results**

David discussed the public engagement process that has occurred and how to still participate. David also discussed the community survey results from November 2022 to January 2023 indicating that 1,130 people participated. He reviewed the types of questions that were asked, and the top priorities based on those results for the master plan improvements, suggestions for new activities and/or programs, and funding sources to explore. David also discussed a few of the recurring themes from the results and reviewed the community leader interviews questions and their feedback.

**6:54 PM Plan overview**

David discussed the financial analysis that has occurred as well as the site analysis that was performed indicating this data led to three plan alternatives. David explained each alternative and its programmatic cost recovery elements indicating that Alternative 3 is the preferred plan. David reviewed alternative 3 in more detail discussing the programmatic elements for agriculture, education, recreation, and cost recovery as well as lease adjustments.

**7:14 PM Next Steps**

David discussed the next steps for the sustainability plan which include improving relationships and communication with the existing farm partners, improving on inclusion and equity in farm access, exploring additional farm partner relationships, finalizing the land lease program, developing a fee for service program, analyzing cost sharing and operations relationships, developing a first phase for public access improvements, developing a safety and security plan, and exploring additional revenue options. David also reviewed the plan’s timeline indicating the Public Comment period will run through February 2024, then it will go to the Parks Advisory Board in March 2024, then to the Councilors for adoption in Spring of 2024, and afterwards the implementation process would be ongoing.

**7:19 PM How to provide feedback**

David discussed how to provide feedback by either using the comment cards in the room to leave with staff, noting that public comments will be accepted through February 23, 2024; to email the county at [PWParksProjects@clark.wa.gov](mailto:PWParksProjects@clark.wa.gov); or email Lynde Wallick, at [Lynde.Wallick@clark.wa.gov](mailto:Lynde.Wallick@clark.wa.gov), to request to be added to the mailing list to receive updates and meeting notifications.

**7:20 PM Q&A Session – David Stipe & Rocky Houston**

David explained the process for this activity asking folks to limit their questions and/or feedback to one minute.

**Questions and Answers:**

<b>Question:</b>	Will there be a SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) determination?
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<b>Answer:</b>	David said that SEPA would not be necessary for this type of plan, but this will be addressed in the first phase of development and then again during the implementation process.
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<b>Question:</b>	Can you give us an idea of what one of your guiding principles are?
<b>Answer:</b>	<p>David said the guiding principles that are in the plan reiterate the Guiding principles that are in the Master Plan, then they add the public access and financial sustainability piece. David read the guiding principles from the draft Sustainability Plan, which are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Celebrate Clark County’s agricultural heritage.</li> <li>2. Maintain Washington State University’s presence on the site through programs, research and office facilities.</li> <li>3. Showcase and promote sustainable agricultural and building practices.</li> <li>4. Support agricultural research that supports sustainable farming practices.</li> <li>5. Enhance community wellness and inspire life-long learning.</li> <li>6. Promote community volunteerism.</li> <li>7. Integrate a variety of activities and resources that provide community access.</li> <li>8. Reflect sound fiscal policy in decision-making matters.</li> </ol>

<b>Question:</b>	Could you elaborate about his Metropolitan Park Fund (MPD)? As I understand it, there’s metros in Portland and I’m aware of community parks and things like that, but is this a new category? Is this something that hasn’t been done? How is this being applied now?
<b>Answer:</b>	<p>David said it’s not a large chunk of money when you consider the overall MPD budget. The county has several buckets of money that as a division, they reply on, like Park Improvement funds (PIF) or real estate excise tax for park development. The county would use REET (Real Estate Excise Tax) to do the development of the first round of public improvements.</p> <p>Rocky said that in 2005 the voters approved of the Metropolitan Park District (MPD). It’s a taxing district where there’s a levy and property owners pay tax into the MPD funds to help operate, maintain, and develop recreational natural resource assets in the district; that district is essentially the unincorporated urban growth area of the City of Vancouver which Heritage Farm falls into.</p>

<b>Question:</b>	What else is being funded by the MPD funds at present? Is this something that you are inventing?
<b>Answer:</b>	David said they already exist, both the MPD fund and the real estate excise tax. He said the funds are currently being used to do maintenance and operations at all the community and neighborhood parks. Any park within the MPD boundary or serves the MPD relies on the excise tax for its operations and maintenance. Parks outside of the MPD boundary are General Fund properties, like Lewisville Regional Park or Lacamas Regional Park. Those properties don’t fall within the MPD boundary, so they are in a different bucket of money.

	Matt explained that when the county has an operational need to supply, they must utilize its single employee at the farm. When Heritage Farm becomes a part of the MPD, now he can send a crew to the farm for the needs.
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<b>Question:</b>	Is the skill set of the person doing the farming activity a lot stronger than skill set of the mass of people you would be bringing in?
<b>Answer:</b>	David said the county has a number of equipment operators that would be able to operate the farm equipment. They may need to learn some specifics about operating the farm equipment, but they can operate heavy equipment overall. Having more people to do simple tasks like mowing frees up the Farm Specialist to do the work that's more farm-specific so there's a benefit to having more manpower.

<b>Comment:</b>	I wanted to comment about the aspect of the community and awareness and friendliness of the farm. I have lived right next door to the farm for 9 years and last years was the first time I ever stepped foot on the farm because it was so forbidding looking, with the barbed wire on top of the fence all the way around. I think that is something that could be remedied.
<b>Response:</b>	David said he believes her experience is at the heart of Council's desire to increase the public access at the property. The county's goal is to make it more welcoming and at the same time, provide the security that is currently in place there for the farm operations.

<b>Comment:</b>	I was involved in saving the farm from being developed into houses in 2006 and I feel good about this. I encouraged them to put in community gardens and want to keep those. I have more faith this time but am skeptical given its history. I wanted to say praise to the Food Bank and all the volunteers, to Justin O'Dea, to Sue Marshall, Temple Lentz, Julie Olsen and that we need to hold our Clark County Council aware that this is important.
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<b>Question:</b>	In relationship to the accessibility and walled off/fenced off aspect of Heritage Farm, how is Hazel Dell Park going to be incorporated into this plan?
<b>Answer:</b>	David said in the Master Plan for Heritage Farm there's a single connection proposed to Hazel Dell Park. The county is in the process of reviewing the Master Plan for Hazel Dell Park to improve its accessibility, so they are exploring making those connections as the first opportunity for public access. The county plans to discuss this with the farm partners in March to review some of the safety and security concerns about making those connections and about with trails on the property.

<b>Comment:</b>	I want to offer the opportunity to learn from the agricultural community and stress the importance of soil conservation and good farming practices. I also want you to know there's more to Heritage Farm than a need to just fix something, that the "why" or "how" needs to be considered.
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<b>Comment:</b>	I'm new to Heritage Farm, as a Master Gardener. I took the course there and just love the farm. I'm really sorry that it does look imposing but now that I've been there, Sandy and others have had a lot of theft, damage and vandalism so that's why it's not open and accessible to everyone. It's great that they're trying to make
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	it more accessible in a way that protects the farming because the equipment is really important.
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<b>Question:</b>	Between now and February 23, 2024, the Public Comment period, how is the best way to be effectively heard? And of the three key things, are they equally weighted or is one more important than the other?
<b>Answer:</b>	<p>David said the county hasn't weighted anything. He believes the county can meet all the guiding principles and enhance the farm and awareness about it. He said the best way to communicate is via email to <a href="mailto:PWParksProjects@clark.wa.gov">PWParksProjects@clark.wa.gov</a>. You can either provide feedback or if you have specific comments or questions, the county will do their best to answer all of those.</p> <p>Rocky said to comment about what you like, what you don't like, what did the county miss, or what ideas do you have? Then staff will review that and make the sustainability plan a better product.</p>

<b>Question:</b>	How do we work the list – is that what we want to comment on or is that going to be in the proposals/the plan?
<b>Answer:</b>	David said the sustainability plan is nearly completed and that the county is at the point of wrapping it up, so if there's comments about something they missed, those are good ones to have. David suggested making comments of your priorities or feedback on the next steps – are we moving in the right direction, putting the correct priorities at the top, did we miss some programmatic elements, or are there cost recovery items that were missed but that are viable. This plan is just the starting point.

<b>Question:</b>	<p>I have two questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Once you receive all the public comments and put some of them into the plan, will there be an opportunity for the public to see the final plan that will be presented at the Parks Advisory Board and to the County Council? If there's more opportunities for public comment, it would be nice to know if there were changes to the plan from tonight to those meetings.</li> <li>2) Once the Sustainability Plan is adopted and we move forward and you start making changes on that plan, how will that be communicated to the community and what involvement will they have at that point?</li> </ol>
<b>Answer:</b>	<p>#1 – David said it will be a part of the agenda at the next Parks Advisory Board meeting and will be posted, within the posting requirements, which he believes are seven days before the meeting itself. Then the Agenda and presentation materials will be put on the Parks Advisory Board website. The county will also route those to the Steering Committee members, the Parks Advisory Board members, and the interested party folks. There will be more opportunities for public comment at various meetings, including the Parks Advisory Board, at the Council hearing and during another Public Comment period.</p> <p>David added that what the county did for the Steering Committee after their review was highlight the substantive changes.</p>

	#2 – David said the county will keep the Council informed, as well as the Parks Advisory Board, the farm partners, and any interested parties so if there are substantive changes, the county will communicate those. If you follow the next steps, the best place for you to find the Sustainability Plan is when the county is putting together the Capital Improvement Plan to see if any money was put towards Heritage Farm.
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<b>Question:</b>	Are you going to be keeping the Heritage Farm Advisory Committee?
<b>Answer:</b>	<p>Rocky said the Heritage Farm Advisory Team was appointed by Council and there’s a process it has gone through for the recommendations; the county is waiting on that process. Once the county has the appointments, the intent is to have a formal Advisory team again. He said to contact Matthew Baum if you have any questions.</p> <p>David said in the absence of the Heritage Farm Advisory Team meetings, the county is meeting with the farm partners on a quarterly basis. He said the topics for the March meeting are a farm operations update, to have a listening session to discuss safety and security, and to discuss the opportunities from Hazel Dell Park side.</p>

<b>Question:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Once you take this plan to Council, assuming they approve it, are you also expecting them to authorize funding to implement it?</li> <li>2) So, if you already have funding for it, are you trying to get rid of \$170,000 in expenses?</li> <li>3) If approved, where is the maintenance funding, operations and maintenance, going to come from that you’re talking about if the Council does not allow you to maintain what you implement?</li> </ol>
<b>Answer:</b>	<p>#1 – David said there are funds in the Capital Improvement Plan to make public access improvements to Heritage Farm in the 2025-2026 budget.</p> <p>#2 – David said the money is coming from different buckets, that there are capital dollars that cannot be used for operations and maintenance and that the county doesn’t want to overburden the operations and maintenance department.</p> <p>#3 – Rocky said the county isn’t trying to get rid of an expenditure, they are trying to put it into a different bucket of money so they can continue to do the work and look at other avenues that haven’t been explored yet.</p> <p>David said that operations and maintenance requirements at the farm is a topic that is discussed regularly and that the Capital Improvement Plan represents a vision for implementation of new facilities and replacement of older facilities to help keep the balance.</p>

<b>Question:</b>	Has there been any consideration given to the certification programs for equipment so that volunteers could operate some of the equipment and offload some of the workload?
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<b>Answer:</b>	Rocky said that having volunteers operate county equipment is a tricky situation that involves the Risk Management department and other departments as well. He said there is WSU equipment at the farm, but they have their own process. He said this will be taken into consideration.
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<b>Online Question:</b>	The conservation easement and Legacy Lands was mentioned as being layered in the stack of guidance with the master plan and sustainability plan – can you explain?
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<b>Answer:</b>	Rocky said the county is working with their legal department on a conservation easement to address the long-term commitments for the farm to stay as-is. Once this is finalized, it will be presented to Council for review and adoption.
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<b>Online Question:</b>	Would the community outdoor classroom concept be only available for those school districts in the Metropolitan Park District (MPD), like Vancouver School District and Evergreen School District only?
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<b>Answer:</b>	Rocky said Heritage Farm is a community and county asset so any school districts that are interested should contact Matthew Baum. He said the county will then work through its process with the Heritage Farm Advisory Team to look at what the programming and scheduling will allow.
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	David said that if the county uses public funding to develop the outdoor classroom, it will be available to the public.
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<b>Comment:</b>	It's great to hear about all the planning and the time and effort that's being put into this whole thing, but the proof will be whether it gets implemented properly. The most encouraging thing I've heard so far is that Council has finally decided that the farm is not business and that you can't expect it to have ROI. It's a public asset so it's going to need support.
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<b>Online Question:</b>	Last year I thought you indicated that the parks designation could be in new additional money, not just shift the too-thinly spread "color of money" which sounds inadequate, whether general and/or parks budget?
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<b>Answer:</b>	The community park designation does not increase additional revenue responsibilities. The other cost recovery options included in Alternative 3 are intended to increase long-term funding for projects or other needs for the farm.
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<b>Online Question:</b>	Have you analyzed the deficiencies of the farm operations and partner now? Equipment issues, organizational capacity to even do what they are supposed to do by their mission? Staffing, tools, funding and labor – see the research projects for a prime example.
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<b>Answer:</b>	To the extent possible, Clark County will support farm partners to advance their missions and their efforts to accomplish their missions.
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<b>Online Question:</b>	Can public access be monitored, guided, scheduled – a curated type rather than free will, all-access, and at any time on the site/trails?
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Answer:	Improvements to the farm will include both controlled and uncontrolled access, to meet the goals of the adopted master plan. The County will meet with farm stakeholders to discuss safety and security concerns and develop improvement designs to address these concerns.
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<b>Online Question:</b>	Would the outdoor classroom be a parks budget investment? Is it in the parks improvement budget?
Answer:	Publicly available outdoor spaces would be developed through a planned capital improvement project that would be funded through the 6-year Capital Plan which is updated annually through a public process. If a farm partner developed an outdoor classroom on a leased portion of the property, it would need to be funded and developed through funds the farm partner has or obtains.

**7:58 PM Meeting Concludes - David Stipe**

Submitted by Amy Arnold, Secretary