



Heritage Farm Sustainability Plan Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 14 2022, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
In-Person and Virtual Meeting Via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members: Erik Harrison*, Teresa Meyer*, Kristine Perry, Rob Freed, Bill Cline, Zorah Oppenheimer, Ila Stanek, Mark Wreath*, Marcela Venegas Munoz, Tanika Siscoe*, Jazlyn Faulstick*, Cowlitz Tribe member*

Clark County: Rocky Houston, Lynde Wallick, Amy Arnold, David Stipe, Matthew Baum

Guests and Other: Clark Worth, Katie Wilson, Sandy Brown, Jim Kautz, Heather Tischbein, G Mc, Peggy, Jean Avery, Russ Wegner, Dr. Milada Allen, Jean Huettis, Jackie Lane, Jude Wait, Robin Summers, Pete DuBois, Emily Straw, Lynn & Larry Grell, Lea Bain, Candy, Jodee Nickel, Wynn Graich, Brian Nelson, Valerie Spring, Barbara Nordton, Deon Schroeder, Ben Fisher, Mona Fuerstenan, Lisa Bayautet, Glen Yung, Bill Drummond, Gordon Jackman, Lily Geunenbeck, Jack Bernhardsen, Alex Burdziki, Denny Kiggins, Kirk Gresham, Carol Wiseman, Shanon Pesut, Bill Zimmerman, Joe Zimmerman, Linda Nutter, Michael Jewell, Gary Bolth, Michele Huffman, Kristine Perry, Rick/Julie Mosley, Jordan Boldt, Stephanie Clark, Sandy Pruet, Maggie Butler, Chester & Charlotte Hiun, Marjorie Ray, Diane Dempser, John Presson, Kristin Pratt, Keith Scott, Jason Keupper, Kimberlee Elbon, Richard & Pam Hogg, Meed West, Karen Palner, Carole Langsdorf, Laura Lacy, Lynn Gersich, Mark Boldt, Ed Rosales, 1-530-919-4060, 716-390-4182

* Not Present

5:30 PM Welcome

Katie Wilson of Consor introduced herself and reviewed the guidelines and agenda for the meeting, instructing the online participants how to join in on the comments or questions portion.

5:30 PM Introductions – Agenda

Rocky Houston introduced himself and stated why the meeting is taking place – to connect the community with the current farm users, to discuss any updates to improve the sustainability plan, and to discuss implementation of that plan.

5:32 PM Sustainability Plan Development

Rocky reviewed why Clark County is developing the sustainability plan indicating that we are trying to sustain this farm and its benefit to the community in the future. He listed the history in brief, noting that we went to Council regarding the farm, and they gave us two things to focus on:

- 1) How do we improve community access to the property? and;
- 2) How do we make the farm more self-sufficient to be able to continue to offer the same programs and opportunities for the community?

Rocky reviewed the timeline indicating that hopefully by Fall of next year the County will have the plan presented and adopted by Council so that we may move forward on implementation elements.

Rocky introduced Matthew Baum as the Operations Supervisor for the Heritage Farm Steering Committee, taking over for Erik Harrison. Rocky also listed the current Steering Committee members.

5:39 PM 2020 Master Plan Update

David reviewed the history of the Master Plan listing that it was adopted by Council in March of 2020. David also reviewed the revisions between the 2010 Master Plan and the 2020 one, listing various additions to aid in public access improvements at the property. These additions include a multi-use trail, a boardwalk through the wetlands, a trail connection to Hazel Dell Park, a multi-use building, an outdoor classroom, and interpretive areas.

David indicated that the County is working with their Clean Water partners on the wetland enhancement project to prevent impacts to future use of the farm site due to regulatory buffers created by the wetland enhancement. He noted that the 2023-2028 Capital Improvement Plan includes a project to improve public access to the site.

5:44 PM Community Survey

Katie said the community survey started in November 2022 and will be open until January 6, 2023. She said the purpose of the survey is to collect information regarding the Master Plan and what improvements listed there are the most important to people. Once the County has that data, it will help to build an implementation plan that reflects the community's values and needs so spending can be prioritized accordingly. The survey also wants to know what new programs people would like to see at the farm to attract new visitors to the property.

There have been over 1,000 responses so far and Katie encouraged people to take the survey and/or share it with others if they have not already done so. She also reviewed the profile information of the respondents who have participated, listing an overview percentage of people who have or have not visited the farm. Another way to participate is to join the farm's stakeholder list or to fill out a comment card providing us with your feedback and contact information.

The next Open House will be in the Spring of 2023; the date has not been set yet. To stay tuned as to when it is, please join the stakeholder's list and we will send updates and information about the project.

5:47 PM Questions & Answers Session – 25 Minutes

Katie reviewed how this portion of the meeting will occur – that if you have a question, to please raise your hand and she will hand the microphone to you where you can state your name and ask your question. For the online participants, please type your questions into the chat feature and Lynde will read them aloud to the group.

Questions and Answers:

Question:	Are you planning to sell out any portions of the farm for development?
Answer:	Rocky answered no – the County does not plan on selling any portion of the farm and are not looking to re-develop any of it. We are looking to continue it as a farm.

Question:	<p>1) Are they using sewage sludge from the wastewater treatment plant on this farm?</p> <p>2) Are they using fluoridated water on this farm?</p>
Answer:	<p>#1 – Rocky indicated that the County doesn’t have that answer tonight but will look into it. Rocky further explained that there are restrooms – porta potties with handwashing stations – on the property now, and that there are toilets in the administrative building currently.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">County Update – Staff followed up with a County records search, Clark Regional Wastewater District (CRWD) and WSU staff. CRWD and WSU are not aware of any disposal of wastewater sludge at the Heritage Farm site. Wastewater sludge is not typically disposed of on sites established for food production. It is unknown if this could have occurred when Clark County did not own the site.</p> <p>#2 – Rocky indicated that the farm has well water for irrigation.</p>

Question:	What is the sustainability plan? It looks like you already have a Master Plan. Can you explain the difference?
Answer:	David indicated that Council had asked the County to improve public access which is a component of the Master Plan. Council also wanted to find ways to make the farm more financially sustainable to reduce the general fund obligations associated with operating a farm.

Question:	<p>1) What changes might impact our ability to grow the plants and raise the funds we do at the farm?</p> <p>2) As you open portions of the farm for public access, what do you anticipate doing to secure facilities like ours so that the public doesn’t start helping themselves to some of those plants that we are growing?</p>
Answer:	<p>David indicated that a lot of what is being asked has yet to be determined by the sustainability plan development yet. He said the County does not know specifics and that it is a part of the Steering Committee’s responsibility when they are working to draft the sustainability plan.</p> <p>David said with regards to the security and safety at the farm, those elements would be addressed during the design development process regarding any public access improvements.</p>

Question:	What is the plan to permanently protect the farm as agricultural land so that it could not ever be developed for residential or commercial purposes to protect the entire property in perpetuity for food production?
Answer:	Rocky indicated that the County’s plan is to continue it as a farm.

Question:	<p>1) Are the plants grown here GMO plants (genetically modified organisms)?</p> <p>2) Does the food go to Food Banks, churches or food that’s sold in the farmer’s markets?</p> <p>3) What is the history of the farm? How did you gain the property here?</p>
Answer:	<p>#1 – Rocky indicated that the County does not have this answer and will investigate this further.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">County Update – Staff followed up with WSU staff. WSU is not using GMO plants at Heritage Farm. It is unlikely that any other user groups are using GMO plants, as these options are not typically available in produce types of crops that are typically grown at the farm.</p> <p>#2 – Rocky indicated that it depends on who’s growing the food. Heritage Farm has community gardens, and those people oversee where that food goes. The Food Bank is also a tenant on site and food is grown there for them. Rocky is not sure if the food grown here goes to the farmer’s markets are not.</p> <p>#3 – Rocky, Lynde and David indicated that the property was forfeited to the County by the Anderson Family in lieu of back taxes. That it operated as a Poor Farm for folks who were unable to pay their taxes or take care of themselves; that these folks were able to come to the farm, live there and work there. The property has gone through organizational transitions with different agencies within the County since then.</p> <p>If you would like to know more about the farm’s history, this information can be found on the website or on the Friends of the Farm’s website. You may also email Lynde or the Public Works Parks email address for information.</p>

Question:	<p>A participant had a statement to share – They said there’s a very important sentence in the Deed for Heritage Farm, that whatever happens in the planning shall be drawn with the WSU Extension.</p>
	<p style="padding-left: 40px;">County Update – Staff followed up on this statement. The Deed does not have a restriction for continuing with WSU at the Heritage Farm site. There is an Interlocal Agency Agreement that continues today voluntarily allowing Clark County and WSU to continue the relationship at Heritage Farm.</p>

Question:	<p>Will there be ADA accessible raised beds at Heritage Farm?</p>
Answer:	<p>David indicated this is a big part of the County’s public access improvements plan and depending on the wetland project, the County will focus in improving access to some of the parks of the property that are problematic.</p>

Question:	Regarding the recreational spaces, are they forgone and going to happen, or are they still in discussion?
Answer:	David indicated that the County's Master Plan is being developed and that the diagrams represent certain programmatic elements; that they might not be in the exact location they are currently in but represent a vision for what might occur in the future. He further explained that if additions or subtractions wanted to be made, the County would have to do a master plan revision process.

Question:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Regarding the 2025-2028 Capital Improvement Plan and the work on the trails and picnic areas, are you actively putting budget proposals together for that? 2) Or will it be a part of the discussion with the Sustainability group? 3) How do they go together, or are they separate?
Answer:	David indicated that once the County has a Sustainability plan, we will start working on this in more detail. He mentioned that he does have a layout for the Northeast corner of the property to make sure the wetland project doesn't impact any of the development opportunities for recreation or other amenities associated with the site.

Question:	Does the planning session for Heritage Farm consider that it is a farm and not a park?
Answer:	Rocky and David indicated that the County must follow the guidelines in the 2020 Master Plan; that the Plan was adopted by Council and includes some recreational and educational elements. They indicated that we will continue to work with the public regarding this though and that some of the guiding principles of that Plan are that the property continues to be used for agricultural purposes and to teach people about that.

Question:	How is and will the farm be paid for?
Answer:	Rocky indicated that currently the farm is a General Fund property and that's how it is funded. That could change over time though as the County looks at the Sustainability plan and other funding streams.

Question:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do other parks turn a profit? 2) Why should Heritage Farm turn a profit? 3) Do other parks have sustainability plans?
Answer:	<p>Rocky indicated that in Clark County, it depends on where you are at. He said that the County's parks systems are divided into two different funding streams, and it is supported either through a levy with the Metropolitan Park District (or the Greater Park District as it was formally called) or with General Fund parks. Outside of that, the County does charge some fees for parking rentals, field rentals and things like that.</p> <p>Rocky indicated that the Plan initiative is not to make a profit, but to look at how to improve our business practices on the property, to reduce the dependency on the General Funds and to make it more sustainable.</p>

Question:	A participant had a statement to share – They explained how they worked at the farm and how it was the best job they had; that Heritage Farm is a learning facility, and we need to keep it.
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Question:	A participant had a statement to share – The property is a very important historic resource as well as a place for educational opportunities for future farmers of America; it was saved to not be developed for a subdivision.
Answer:	David responded indicating that he sees Heritage Farm as an important site and as a place for everyone that has a focus on agriculture; that he sees it as a park that interprets the importance of food and food systems. Regarding the property's historic preservation, David indicated that any planning done will encompass the contributing aspects of the site that make it historic.

Question:	A participant had a statement to share – The farm needs to double in size because we are going to have food shortages. We have fertilizer shortages, and we don't need any more recreational items.
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6:29 PM Visit with User Groups

7:00 PM Adjourn

Submitted by Amy Arnold, Secretary