

Clark County Agricultural Preservation Advisory Committee (APAC) Meeting #9

Sixth Floor Training Room of the Clark County Public Services Center
1300 Franklin St., Vancouver, WA. November 24, 2008, 6 to 8 p.m.

Meeting Summary

In attendance:

Committee members: Mike Posey, Lorrie Conway, Anne Lawrence, Sunrise O'Mahoney, Denise Smee, Ingrid Dankmeyer, Doug Steinbarger, Tom VanLaeken, Bill Zimmerman, and Rhidian Morgan.

Staff: Patrick Lee, Legacy Lands Program Manager

Facilitator: Adrienne DeDona, JLA

Introductions, Agenda Overview:

Facilitator Adrienne DeDona kicked off the meeting with a review of the agenda.

Denise Smee announced that the Conservation District is working on a special assessment of \$5 per tax lot that would provide for agricultural assistance, farm preservation, conservation grants, water quality, livestock and a variety of items discussed in the draft Farm Preservation Strategies report. There is a public hearing scheduled before the Board of Clark County Commissioners on December 16th to discuss this issue. Contact Denise directly for more information.

Debrief Open Houses

The group discussed the open houses held on November 5 at the Camas Library, November 10 at the CASEE Center and November 12 at the Public Safety Complex. Clark County placed advertisements in the Camas Post-Record, The Reflector, and the Columbian newspapers. Each paper ran a story regarding the open houses. The draft Open Houses and Survey Summary Report and Public Comments document (see attachment A) was provided as a handout and was used as a guideline for this discussion. The following comments were made by the group as part of the Open House debrief:

- Most of the people who attended the open houses were farmers.
- There was general opposition to the transfer of development rights.
- Water rights were discussed as an obstacle for preserving farmlands. Creation of a water district might have more weight in assigning water rights for agricultural purposes much like water trust organizations whose mission is to transfer water rights in order to augment in-stream flows for fish issues.
- Clarence Petty was not able to attend the meeting, but he had sent a comment expressing that the report did not address issues regarding the local horse community and their importance as an industry in Clark County.

Review and discuss Online Survey results

The draft Open Houses and Survey Summary Report and Public Comments document (see attachment A, beginning on page 8) was distributed to the committee. The following comments were made by the group as part of their review of the survey results:

- There was support for establishing a revolving loan fund, but there needs to be some clarification within the final report that indicates how this program might operate. At one point a program called the Production Credit Association, or PCA, existed in Clark County that provided a revolving loan program to farmers. This model could be useful to explore for future use.
- The viewpoints expressed within the survey are not statistically valid because they only represent a small spectrum of perspectives in Clark County. The County did conduct a statistically valid survey earlier this year that reviewed conservation issues. Pat will send that to the group to review how it might be folded into the report.
- There was a lot of support for the Clark County Fresh logo and coordinated marketing effort. The group felt like this would be easy to accomplish and should be a high priority in order to demonstrate Clark County's investment to this effort and ability to take action.
- Given the recent development in the City of Battle Ground related to the possible policy decisions related to excluding farming practices within City limits, it was requested that the right-to-farm ordinance be extended to urban areas.
- The lack of people attending the Camas Open House (there were only 2 people in attendance vs. approximately 30 at each of the other two open houses) could have been attributed to the shortage of farmers in the area (see graph in attachment A on page 15).

Review and discuss the draft map of agricultural areas in Clark County

The group reviewed the public's response to the draft map of agricultural areas in Clark County that Denise Smee created to be used at the open houses. Several people indicated on the map where they were currently farming. Adrienne asked the group how they envisioned using this information as part of the final Farmlands Preservation Strategy report. The group discussed the following important points that resulted as an outcome of the map:

- There are not a lot of large, contiguous agricultural areas in Clark County. Most are fragmented by some other type of use.
- But, there is still a lot of land zoned and/or being used for agricultural purposes. However, we do not know what is being held for non-agricultural development.
- Land leases for agricultural purposes make it difficult to determine the agricultural operator since current use taxation is parcel and owner specific.
- The draft map of agricultural areas in Clark County does have a basic shape that validates the County's current use map.
- The Open House Summary should include a section that covers the draft map of agricultural areas in Clark County and what was learned from this exercise.

Next Steps & Final Notes:

To help inform the discussion at the next meeting, APAC members were asked to review the Open House and Survey Summary (attachment A) and the draft Farm Preservation Strategies Report (attachment B) and respond in the following ways:

1. Let us know if there needs to be any revisions to the Open House and Survey summary (this document will be included as an appendix to the final Farm Preservation Strategies Report). Specifically, does the summary of General Themes and the Sample Responses present an objective picture of the input received?

2. Let us know if there needs to be any revisions to the Farmland Preservation Strategies Report based on the public comment received and/or your own opinion. This could include adding new strategies that were not addressed in the report, deleting strategies, more fully explaining strategies and requesting that the committee as a whole discuss specific strategies at the next meeting to be sure final reports fully reflect committee opinion(s).

Contact Adrienne DeDona or Pat Lee directly with any questions or concerns. Feedback should be provided on or before December 10th.

The next meeting will be held on December 16th. At the next meeting the group will review and discuss any possible revisions to the draft Farm Preservation Strategies Report and the remaining steps to complete this group's charge, including reporting out to the Board of Clark County Commissioners.