

**Clark County
Agricultural Preservation Advisory Committee
(APAC) Meeting #5**

Sixth Floor Training Room of the Clark County Public Services Center
1300 Franklin St., Vancouver, WA. July 15, 2008, 6 to 8 p.m.

Meeting Summary

In attendance:

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

Staff: Patrick Lee

Facilitator: Doug Zenn & Adrienne DeDona, JLA

Introductions, Agenda Overview & Review Meeting Summary #4:

Facilitator Doug Zenn kicked off the meeting with a review of the agenda and introductions.

As part of the agenda overview, Doug provided the group with a review of the project timeline:

- First third of the project (March through May) – orientation of the group to the project, background information and special presentations.
- Second third of the project (June through August) – strategy development and land identification
- Last third of the project (September through December) – refine products. Some options to consider are: gathering community feedback, talking to Commissioner Stuart before finalizing the draft, and establishing priority strategies.

Survey Results Overview:

Adrienne provided a handout summarizing the draft farmland preservation strategies survey.

This included the draft language that was established based on the discussions by committee members at the last meeting along with the strategies that had yet to be discussed.

The committee reviewed the summary of the discussion from the last meeting and agreed to the following changes:

- New, combined strategy - The group wanted to recognize coordination with other Counties in the southwest Washington, such as Skamania, Cowlitz, etc. with regard to marketing. A regionally-centered name for the logo and marketing efforts could be created, such as "Lower Columbia" fresh.
- Doug Steinbarger pointed out that Cooperative Extension Service is an outdated term. When referring to the Cooperative Extension, the language should be WSU Clark County Extension service.
- There was some discussion about moving strategy #9, securing health insurance, to the consolidated strategies under the 'farmbudsman' position. It was pointed out that the Washington State Farm Bureau facilitates this for most counties but that the state Insurance Commissioner has determined that "border counties" such as Clark and Walla Walla will be accommodated through the state of Oregon, but this is prohibitively expensive. It was suggested that the farmbudsman could help lobby for health insurance for farm workers through the state of Washington.

The group discussed the remaining draft strategies yet to be covered.

High Ranking Draft Strategies (high ranking strategies were supported by more than 80 percent of the participants):

- Strategy #25 – Provide opportunities for the farming community to review and provide input on proposed policies and regulations that have substantial impact on farmers prior to adoption. *The group agreed to keep this strategy and amend it to include the creation of a Farm Commission in order to review and provide input on proposed policies.*

Medium Ranking Draft Strategies (medium ranking strategies were supported by between 60 and 80% of the participants):

- Strategy #12 – Develop a mentoring program (as part of farm link activities) which would provide an opportunity for experienced farmers to share their knowledge and resources with new farmers. *The group agreed to eliminate this item because it wasn't a high enough priority.*
- Strategy #14 – Establish a revolving loan fund to assist farmers. *The group agreed that this item would be kept and they would identify a partner organization or community foundation within the community that may already be doing this type of work. There was a strong preference that this be a private fund in which farmers invest their own money and take out low interest loans that are below the earning rate for the fund.*
- Strategy #21 – Assist in establishing permanent sites for local farmer's markets. Strategies may include the use of county land, acquisition of sites, or negotiation of contracts with public and private landowners that are willing to donate sites. The advisory committee was divided on this issue. *The group agreed that that this item be kept for the moment, but revisited at a later date. If it is retained, attention must be paid to functionality and practicality of sites based on availability of water and sewer hookups, parking, and ease with which farmers may access sites for put-up and take-down of booths. It was also underscored that the focus of such sites should be farm products, not other artisan and craft products.*
- Strategy #23 – Pursue regulatory reform, with a particular emphasis on the cost of building permit fees and the time it takes to acquire building permits for farm-related structures. *The group agreed that that this item be kept.*
- Strategy #24 – Allow temporary housing for farm workers. *The group agreed that this item should be kept, but modified to include permanent housing indicating that obtaining short-term leases for housing is difficult and recognizing that some agricultural workers are full-time Clark County residents.*
- Strategy #26 – Revise the County's Right-to-Farm ordinance. The group agreed to keep this item.

Medium/Low Ranked Draft Strategies (low ranking strategies were supported by less than 60% of the participants):

- Strategy #5 – The next major funding initiative for the purpose of acquiring open space or resource lands, should include a sizeable amount of funds to acquire additional development rights in Clark County. *The group agreed to keep this item.*
- Strategy #6 – Allow greater flexibility with regard to farming related commercial uses. *The group agreed to keep this item and to explore criteria to support it.*
- Strategy #8 – Develop a cost sharing program to help farmers meet environmental regulatory requirements. *The group agreed to keep this item with some modification, including development of criteria for consideration.*

- Strategy #11 – Fund an endowment that would provide grants to conduct specific research, technical assistance and education programs that would benefit local farmers. *The group agreed to keep this item but combine it with strategy #14 (a local revolving loan fund program). The group noted that Washington State University extension in Mt. Vernon and Oregon State University in Corvallis provide services at the present time, but it is desirable to bring such services closer to home.*
- Strategy #20 – Develop a base of information about the regional and national use of farmers’ cooperatives and associations. *The group agreed to keep this item and combine it with the role of the ‘farmbudsman’.*
- Strategy #22 – Provide support for community supported agriculture (CSA) and subscription farming. *The group agreed to combine this item into the farmbudsman’s role with some modification to include other types of farming.*
- Strategy #27 – Develop a farm tour program. *The group agreed to eliminate this strategy as a formal program since it was already occurring through other venues.*

Identification of Priority Lands

The group gathered around a map of Clark County and discussed which areas could be identified for preservation as valuable or priority farmlands. Participants were provided with orange dots to place on areas in the map that could be listed as priority farmlands for preservation. The group began to identify some lands for consideration and will continue the discussion at the next meeting. Pat will review the lands selected by the group and refine boundaries relative to requirements of existing state farmland protection programs.

Some of the issues discussed by the group during this conversation were:

- Perhaps there should be a moratorium on growth. When is it reasonable to put a stop to growth in the area?
- The Urban Growth Boundary will continue to move.
- Losing agricultural land impacts everyone in the region.
- It’s difficult to reverse zoning.
- A common vision should be established between agriculture and development over the next 10 years.
- The group should develop criteria for identifying lands for agricultural preservation, such as whether it’s existing agricultural land, access to water rights, etc.
- The group requested that Pat look into the ability to obtain information on what agencies have requested to purchase water rights in order to see areas that are targeted for growth and development.

Next Steps & Final Notes:

The committee reviewed assignments to undertake before the next meeting.

- Review the proposed draft language for the strategies as discussed at the last two meetings and provide comments.
- Review all of the revised draft strategies in a survey tool and rank in priority order.

At the next meeting the group will resume the discussion on identifying priority lands, including developing recommended criteria for consideration of preserving agricultural land.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 18. The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.