

**Clark County  
Agricultural Preservation Advisory Committee  
(APAC) Meeting #6**

Sixth Floor Training Room of the Clark County Public Services Center  
1300 Franklin St., Vancouver, WA. August 18, 2008, 6 to 8 p.m.

***Meeting Summary***

**In attendance:**

**Committee members:** Lorrie Conway, Bill Zimmerman, Tom Van Laeken, Dan Roix, Sunrise O'Mahoney, Ingrid Dankmeyer, and Rhidian Morgan

**Staff:** Patrick Lee

**Facilitator:** Adrienne DeDona, JLA

**Guest:** Gordy Euler, Clark County Rural Lands Task Force

**Introductions & Agenda Overview:**

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

**Special Presentation – Rural Lands Task Force:**

Gordy Euler gave a presentation on the Rural Lands Task Force and provided the group with the attached list of recommendations that were a result of the group's effort. The following is a summary of the group's discussion:

- The 2004 and 2007 Comprehensive Plan Update focused on the urban areas. In 2007 the Board of Clark County Commissioners requested that there should be an effort that focused on establishing a rural vision.
- The development of the rural vision will be accomplished in two phases. The first phase involved the work of the recent task force made up of residents from Clark County's rural areas.
- The Rural Lands Task Force copied the GMA's definition of rural character as a starting point.
- The Rural Lands Task Force met five times and set up a booth at the Clark County Fair to solicit feedback on the list of recommendations. They received 585 responses. They will compile those responses and make a presentation to the Board of Commissioners to establish the next steps for the project.
- There is some overlap between the Rural Lands Task Force and the APAC. It could be possible that both groups go to the public around the same time to request further input. It could be possible that each effort complimented each other.
- The County's policy on the future of Agriculture should be discussed as part of both efforts as well as determining the mix of rural zoning types.
- It is possible that a result of each effort could be the creation of Agricultural Districts.
- It is also possible that a result of one or both efforts could be the creation of an Agricultural Commission.
- The APAC is not bound to support the efforts and outcomes of the Rural Task Force.
- The members of the APAC that were present at the meeting generally opposed smaller lot sizes for forest and agriculturally zoned land. The sentiment was that smaller lot

sizes wouldn't allow commercial agriculture to expand. It was also mentioned that there were thousands of available five-acre lots and little need for more.

### **Draft Strategies Prioritization:**

Adrienne provided the group with a handout that summarized the results of the survey that APAC members were asked to take in order to rank the draft farmland preservation strategies in high, medium or low priority. The attached report summarizes the results of the survey. At the time of the meeting only five APAC members had responded. The following summarizes the discussion that took place at the meeting with regard to prioritization of the draft farmland preservation strategies:

- Strategy 1 – Ranked high priority by members present at the meeting and by those that took the survey.
  - ✓ The functions of the farm ombudsman should be prioritized.
  - ✓ There should be a high level of funding allocated for this strategy
  - ✓ There was a concern about whether or not a demonstration farm would result in the current plan the County has for the 78<sup>th</sup> Street/WSU property.
- Strategy 2 – Ranked low priority by members present at the meeting but those that took the survey ranked it as a high priority.
  - ✓ Strategy 2 and 4 are intimately related
  - ✓ There are a number of existing tax incentives – would rather receive a good price for their product.
- Strategy 3 – Ranked medium priority by those that took the survey but members at the meeting ranked the priority medium and low.
  - ✓ A concern was raised that there should be an improvement in the services and programs provided to farmers through the WSU Clark County Extension Service. There currently isn't enough focus on services to farmers.
- Strategy 4 – Ranked high priority by those that took the survey and by members at the meeting.
  - ✓ Concerns were raised by the group regarding if the farmer no longer had an interest in farming they land – this would need to be addressed in the development rights policy.
  - ✓ It would be the County's responsibility to manage this program.
- Strategy 5 – Was ranked high priority by those that took the survey and by those at the meeting.
  - ✓ It was requested by the group to change the language of the strategy to “Use existing publicly owned land or acquire existing or historically productive farmland to create a lease-back program to farmers.”
- Strategy 6 – Ranked high priority by both those that took the survey and by members at the meeting.
- Strategy 7 – Ranked high priority by members who took the survey and by some members present at the meeting.
- Strategy 8 – Ranked medium priority by both those that took the survey and by members at the meeting.
  - ✓ There is a need for small grants and seed money for projects.
  - ✓ Also need a local farm credit bureau.
- Strategy 9 – Ranked medium priority by members who took the survey. Some people ranked it high and some low at the meeting.
  - ✓ Concerns by members were that the focus should be on farmers, especially smaller farmers.

- Strategy 10 – Ranked high priority by members who took the survey and those at the meeting.
  - ✓ It was suggested by the group to use more detailed language for this strategy and any resulting policy as to not allow developers to take advantage of this opportunity.
- Strategy 11 – Ranked high priority by members who took the survey and those at the meeting.
  - ✓ The group also suggested using language for this strategy that wouldn't allow developers to take advantage of this opportunity (developing housing on agriculturally zoned land).
- Strategy 12 – Ranked high priority by members who took the survey and those present at the meeting.
  - ✓ The overall goal of the right to farm ordinance should be to protect farmers – not just large scale agriculture and those on the urban fringe.
- Strategy 13 – Ranked high priority by members who took the survey and those present at the meeting.
  - ✓ This strategy should be linked to strategy 4.
- Strategy 14 – Ranked high priority by members who took the survey and those present at the meeting.
  - ✓ This strategy should be linked to strategies 10 and 12.
  - ✓ There should be criteria established to address prevention of non-agricultural uses.
- Strategy 15 - Ranked high priority by members who took the survey and those present at the meeting.
  - ✓ There is a need for this, but which agency will meet the need?

### **Water Rights Update:**

Pat Lee provided a group with an update on Water Rights as requested by the group at the last meeting. The following summarizes the discussion by the group:

- The Washington State Department of Ecology manages the waterways in Clark County. They are currently inviting public comments on the rule making process for Water Rights until September 21.
- There are currently no water right reservations for agriculture, but there are available rights in Clark County. The proposal in the WRIA plans is that the Department of Ecology should establish an expedited process to transfer existing agricultural water rights from properties not using them to properties where an agricultural water right is needed to start or expand agricultural operations. Clark County will take a strong position in support of this process.
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- Part of the proposed rules is identifying some areas to be closed to future water rights appropriations.

### **Public Outreach:**

The group discussed how and when they would like to approach the public with its work to date. The following summarizes the discussion by the group:

- Pat Lee will spend some time between now and the next meeting fleshing out the draft document.
- Pat will try and schedule Commissioner Steve Stuart for the next meeting (Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>) in order to review the group's progress with him prior to going to the public.
- The mapping exercise should be part of the discussion with members of the public.
- There should be some criteria developed for selection of priority farmlands.

- The group determined that the target audience for public outreach should be farmers and the general public.
- The survey questionnaire should ask people where they live.
- The group determined that a presentation should be made at the next Farm Bureau meeting (November 6<sup>th</sup>).
- The group determined that there should be a questionnaire booth at BiZi Farms every weekend in October.
- Other options to explore were having a questionnaire at the WSU Harvest Celebration on September 20<sup>th</sup> and at the local Harvest dinner on September 19.
- There was also some suggestions to have a standing survey/comment box at the agriculture equipment dealers as well as e-mail a questionnaire to lists that APAC members may have.
- Advertising will be sent to the Columbian via a press release to advertise the opportunities to provide input by visiting one of the questionnaire stations or going to an online survey.
- JLA and Pat will draft a questionnaire for the group's review and feedback.

**Next Steps & Final Notes:**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 16. The group suggested setting a tentative meeting date for September 30 in order to prepare for the public outreach in October. The November meeting will focus on refining the draft document in order to incorporate the public comments. The December meeting will focus on wrapping up any loose ends prior to finalizing the document.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.