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**CLARK COUNTY**  
WASHINGTON

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**COMMUNITY PLANNING**

**Staff Report and Recommendations to the Clark County  
Historic Preservation Commission**

TO: Clark County Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Jacqui Kamp, Planner

DATE: Aug. 29, 2017

FILE: **HST #2017-00003, DESIGN REVIEW: Certificate of Appropriateness for proposed new split rail fence and interpretive elements for cemetery boundaries at Clark County Poor Farm (78<sup>th</sup> Street Heritage Farm)**

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**I. SUMMARY**

The **Clark County Poor Farm** is located at 1919 NE 78<sup>th</sup> Street, Vancouver (Tax Assessor's Parcel # **148084000**). The property owners, Clark County, have applied for a Certificate of Appropriateness for a new split rail wood fence to enclose the cemetery and the placement of interpretive elements. The cemetery was platted in 1913 as 150 feet (west to east) by 300 feet long (north to south). The wood fence is proposed to be constructed on the north, south and east boundaries, while a security fence will be placed along the property's boundary line and will become the cemetery's west boundary. The existing chain link fence that dissects the cemetery is to be relocated and/or removed. There will be a 10 foot wide maintenance access provided that coincides with the 18 foot wide road that is shown on the 1913 cemetery plat.

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to remove the chain link fence that runs through the middle of the cemetery to be relocated to the western property line; to install a new split rail wood fence around the proper north, south and east boundaries of the cemetery; and they are requesting direction or comments as to the placement of the cemetery interpretive panel (Attachment B). The applicant has also proposed an additional interpretive element regarding the historic accurateness of the wood fence as it will be a new feature added to the cemetery and not a structure that was originally a part of the cemetery. The sign would state this fact.

**II. BACKGROUND**

The Clark County Poor Farm and Cemetery is an historic resource located at the Clark County 78<sup>th</sup> Street Heritage Farm, formerly occupied by Washington State University. It was listed in January of 2013 in the National Register of Historic Places and listed in September of 2013 in the Clark County Heritage Register (Attachment D).

The property dates back to 1871 when a local resident who owned the original donation land claim settled a \$400 county judgment by deeding the county 100 acres of land. This property became the Poor Farm and a building was erected to house the poor.

By 1873, Clark County had begun operating a farm on the property to help address the physical needs of poor, homeless, elderly, and mildly handicapped men and women. Poor farm residents grew crops, maintained orchards, and raised livestock until the 1940s. To the extent their health would allow, residents were expected to provide field and housekeeping labor, and provide care for other residents. Rules were strict and accommodations minimal. Some of the farm products grown on site were passed on to the county-funded hospital and some were sold.

In 2008, Clark County resumed ownership of the farm property after 59 years as an agricultural experiment research station run by Washington State University. In 2009, an extensive public outreach process developed a Concept Plan which served as the foundation for the development of a Master Plan for the site. The community's guiding principles for the site identified in the Master Plan include: inspiring lifelong learning and engaging visitors in the site's history; celebrating Clark County's agricultural heritage; and building community pride in its past, present, and future.

In 2010, the county received a grant from the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation Commission to complete an Intensive-level Documentation of the Clark County Poor Farm Buildings and Poor Farm Cemetery Remote Sensing Project (Attachment C). The documentation of the buildings and site concluded that it was eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The remote sensing project identified the correct area of the cemetery using ground penetrating radar which proved that the existing chain link fence was dissecting the cemetery, not enclosing the cemetery. The eastern half of the cemetery had been subject to agricultural practices for more than 50 years. The consultant further found that the interments in the cemetery conform to the plat diagram and that the plat generally represents an accurate view of burial locations. The concluding recommendation was to move the fence around the cemetery to represent the proper boundaries in order to properly protect the integrity of the burials.

### **III HISTORIC NAME**

Clark County Poor Farm

### **IV. COMMON NAME(S)**

78<sup>th</sup> Street Heritage Farm

### **V. BOARD RESPONSIBILITY**

Under Clark County Ordinance 40.250.030(G) Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Clark County Historic Preservation Commission has the responsibility for conducting design review of Register properties within the County and for jurisdictions with which there is a valid interlocal agreement.

### **VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

The Clark County Poor Farm historic property includes approximately 99 acres in the Hazel Dell vicinity between NE 78<sup>th</sup> and NE 68<sup>th</sup> Streets to the north and south and between NE 19<sup>th</sup> and NE 24<sup>th</sup> Avenues to the east and west, approximately 0.5 miles east of Highway 99 and 0.7 miles east of Interstate 5. Hazel Dell is a community of around 19,500 people, located approximately four

miles north of Vancouver in unincorporated Clark County, although the Poor Farm site has a Vancouver address and zip code.<sup>1</sup> The property is comprised of two separate tax lots that are all currently owned by Clark County: the 78.92 acre lot which contains all Poor Farm and Experiment Station resources, the bulk of the farm landscape, and the cemetery near the southwest corner of the property, and the 20 acre Hazel Dell Park at the southeast corner of the property.

**For the complete physical description, please see the nomination.**

## **VII. STAFF REVIEW AND COMMENT**

### **Design Review Criteria:**

The design review criteria are listed in the adopted rules and procedures of the Clark County Historic Preservation Commission (April 8, 2008). The standard used is that of the Secretary of the Interior.

#### Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

- 1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure or site and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purposes.**

**Findings:** The removal of the chain link fence from the middle of the cemetery and the installation of the split rail fence to demarcate the correct boundaries of the cemetery will provide a visual awareness of the location of the cemetery. As the cemetery has no visible markers and currently has a chain link fence dissecting it, many do not realize its boundaries. The fence and interpretive signage would assist in providing visitors the location of the cemetery and historical information about the site.

- 2. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.**

**Findings:** Although a fence did not originally surround the cemetery, metal markers once stood to indicate graves. Over time those have rusted away or have been buried beneath the surface. The cemetery was part of the open fields of the property, however over time the delineation of the cemetery versus the rest of the farm became blurred and the security fence was placed incorrectly. A simple split rail fence and interpretive signage will not destroy the original qualities or character of the site. The proposal to include signage that explains that the fence is not original will assist in explaining the reasons why a visual fence is necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Hazel Dell CDP, Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010," Demographic Profile Data, 2010.

[http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC\\_10\\_DP\\_DPDP1&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1&prodType=table)

(Accessed April 19, 2012)

- 3. All buildings, structures and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.**

**Findings:** The intent of the split rail wood fence is not to create an earlier appearance but to provide a simple, least intrusive barrier to enclose the cemetery so visitors know where it is located. Other options were considered by the applicant and they have chosen to go with the split rail fence for various reasons which include costs, its high visibility to demarcate the boundary, and easy maintenance. In addition, staff received feedback earlier on from the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation that if a fence had to be placed on site, than a simple split rail would be best. The applicant has also proposed to provide information on or near the fence that explains to visitors that a fence was never originally located at the cemetery and why there is one now.

- 4. Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right and this significance shall be recognized and respected.**

**Findings:** The only change that has occurred over time is the placement of the chain link security fence which needs to be moved to appropriately demarcate the cemetery boundaries.

- 5. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.**

**Findings:** N/A

- 6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications or features, substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.**

**Findings:** N/A

- 7. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.**

**Findings:** N/A

- 8. Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archeological resources affected by, or adjacent to any project.**

**Findings:** The Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) Commission have informed the county that an archaeological permit be submitted prior to the commencement of the work (60 day process). They have further requested that

the county cut the chain link fence off at the surface and be filled over rather than pulled out and that a buffer of 500 feet from the current cemetery boundaries should not be disturbed, including plowing and discing without a permit from DAHP and a professional archaeological monitor. The county and DAHP will be discussing these requests further and coordinating an approach.

9. **Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, materials, and character of the property, neighborhood or environment.**

**Findings:** N/A

10. **Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.**

**Findings:** Although not a structure, the fence is not permanent and could be removed in the future if deemed necessary.

## **VIII. STAFF CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff believes that the proposal meets the applicable criteria as stated above.

In accordance with CCC 40.250.030 and the Clark County Historic Preservation Program Rules and Procedures, and the findings stated under the design review criteria above, staff recommends that the commission approve the certificate of appropriateness application for the proposal as submitted.

**NEXT STEPS:** If the commission approves the Certificate of Appropriateness application, the conditions, if any, will have to be filled out on the Certificate and signed by the Chair at the meeting. This document will be forwarded to the Clark County Permit Center. If there are conditions, the applicant/designated agent will have to sign the conditions of approval form.

**APPEAL PROCEDURES:** If the owner/applicant or other interested parties disagree with the Commission's decision, an appeal to the Board of County Councilors depending on location of jurisdiction.

## **IX. ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Clark County Poor Farm (78<sup>th</sup> Street Heritage Farm) Certificate of Appropriateness application and proposal
- B. Cemetery Interpretive panel
- C. 2010 Documentation and Remote Sensing Report
- D. 2013 Clark County Poor Farm CCHR Nomination