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Public Works Parks and Lands Division

STAFF REPORT

To: Clark County Planning Commission

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From: Kevin Tyler, Acting Division Manager

Date: May 16, 2019

Subject: 78th Street Heritage Farm Master Plan Update

PROPOSED ACTION

Recommend approval of the master plan update to County Council.

BACKGROUND

The 78th Street Heritage Farm Master Plan was initially adopted in April, 2010. Several components of the master plan have been implemented on the property, while several have not. Updating the master plan is an important step in seeking non-county funding to continue to implement the plan. With changes at the farm and in the community since adoption of the master plan, Clark County seeks to ensure the plan reflects today's priorities. Part of this effort requires a comparison between desired programs and facilities and the master plan's vision and guiding principles.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The plan update was initiated with a Council work session on August 29, 2018. Other than directing that a silo, imported from a farm in Clark County, not be reconstructed on the site, Council provided no direction regarding facilities proposed in the master plan. Council, however, was concerned with ongoing general fund commitments to support the farm. Council stated that major capital improvements at the farm will require outside funding and also urged staff to explore ways to move the farm towards financial self-sufficiency.

A contract was executed with Conservation Technix to assist with public involvement through the update. Primary tools included:

- Three public stakeholder meetings (January 9, February 28, and March 28, 2019) of the Farm Advisory Team, a group consisting of the Farm Advisory Committee, the Friends of the Farm Foundation, major partners active on the farm and Clark County staff.
- Two community meetings (January 31 and April 10, 2019), one to solicit ideas and the second to review recommendations.
- An on-line survey questionnaire that was available between January 18 and March 15, 2019. Seven hundred and ninety five (795) surveys were submitted.
- A distribution list of 274 e-mail addresses to keep interested parties apprised of progress with the update.

A second council work session was held on April 24, 2019, to review the draft plan. No significant changes were directed. Council again reiterated the need to move the farm toward financial self-sufficiency. Council members asked about the Friends of the Farm and Master Gardeners Foundations regarding contributions made, financial and otherwise, towards the farm. Council also advised to move cautiously on the farmers market concept, so as not to compete with private interests in the county.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED MASTER PLAN CHANGES

The update acknowledges changes that have occurred at the farm since the 2010 adoption, including:

- 1) Hazel Dell Park expansion was anticipated to be five acres immediately north of the existing park. Boundary Line Adjustment BLA 2015-0060 moved the expansion to five acres west of the existing park adjacent to NE 68th Street.
- 2) The 2010 plan anticipated the Community Learning Center would be located on what is now the Hazel Dell Park expansion area. Some elements of the learning center may now be relocated to the multi-use flex building along NE 78th Street. Other elements, such as a community meeting space, may not be needed because Luke Jensen Sports Center has been constructed providing an alternate location.
- 3) The poor farm cemetery located on the hill sloping down to NE 68th Street has had its boundary more accurately identified and fenced, extending the cemetery footprint to the east.
- 4) The Living Farm shown in the 2010 master plan has been constructed as an example of “green” building techniques on an alternate property purchased specifically for that purpose.
- 5) The silo, imported from a farm elsewhere in Clark County, is in disrepair and will not be reconstructed. It is not one of the recognized historic attributes of the farm.
- 6) A new parking lot has been constructed west of the main administration building along NE 78th Street.
- 7) An additional greenhouse and a high tunnel have been constructed.

Several concepts in the 2010 master plan are affirmed, and a few modifications are proposed including:

- 8) An interpretive trail will be aligned as much as possible on the perimeter of the property to minimize conflicts with farm operations and to avoid wetlands, while still maintaining accessible slopes. The trail will still access historical features of the farm for interpretation.
- 9) The central gravel road with its “interpretive node” near the community gardens will be shifted from a public walking trail to more of a designated farm lane primarily for tractor and maintenance access. The interpretive node with an overview of farm operations will be shifted to the south, further up the hill.
- 10) Access through Hazel Dell Park via NE 68th Street will be articulated in the master plan for Hazel Dell Community Park at a later date.
- 11) A scenic viewpoint will be constructed on the higher ground of the farm to take advantage of mountain views.
- 12) The multi-use structure including flex space continues to be proposed east of the greenhouse complex along NE 78th Street.
- 13) Enhancement of Cougar Creek and wetlands on the property will be a priority in the coming years.
- 14) Administratively, Clark County will continue to use a formal farm proposal process to allocate land for agricultural and other activities. The Farm Advisory Committee reviews all proposals for consistency with the vision and guiding principles for the farm.

- 15) Existing creek crossings used for the trail and farm operations access will be maintained, and a new boardwalk over Cougar Creek will be constructed near the multi-use building.
- 16) A small amphitheater and outdoor classroom will be constructed.
- 17) Important planning studies have also been completed since adoption of the 2010 master plan including:
 - a) The Interpretive Trail Plan identifies interpretive themes and sign designs.
 - b) The Farm Preservation and Maintenance Plan assess the existing condition of the historic structures on the site, and makes recommendations and cost estimates, for preservation, adoptive re-use or reconstruction.
- 18) Farm Advisory Committee recommendations of interest include:
 - a) Restore one of the smaller current buildings (milk house or garage) for small classroom space.
 - b) Restore one of the houses (hog barn, bunk house, equipment shed) on the hill and the garage area for historic displays of past and current farming practices. Include locations around the interpretive trail that highlight farming practices and history. Hold living history tours, similar to Fort Vancouver, with historic period actors leading the tours and activities.
 - c) Develop a marketing tool highlighting the various programs and groups operating at the farm and promoting volunteer engagement. Marketing possibilities support the increased use and partnerships at the farm. A combination of tools could be used including social media, digital tools, software applications, farm information center, etc.
- 19) Heritage Farm has been placed on the Clark County Historic Register, the Washington Historic Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The master plan cannot be accomplished all at once. It is recognized that major capital elements will require outside funding and market demands may dictate shifts in proposed facilities over time. The plan seeks to maintain some degree of flexibility to allow for new directions.

Short term financial steps include:

- 1) Work closely with non-profit entities active at the farm to introduce new public use amenities to the farm, such as the trail and viewpoint, through grants and volunteer efforts.
- 2) Increase marketing, particularly through social media.
- 3) Review existing lease provisions and fee structures.
- 4) Work with the Friends of the Farm Foundation to strengthen their capacity to support the farm.

Longer term financial steps include:

- 1) Host additional special events at the farm with a fiscally neutral or profitable sponsorship and vendor structure.
- 2) Support Friends of the Farm Foundation in building a broad membership including donations, a sponsorship base, and stewardship endowment.
- 3) Engage public private partnerships in constructing significant new capital improvements, such as the multi-use building, in order to broaden programs and public access to the farm.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend approval of the master plan update to County Council.