

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ABBREVIATED MINUTES
December 13th, 2012
4:00 – 5:30 pm

Present:	Adam Liljeblad	Matt Barnes	Jed Little
	Ethel MacDonald	Jenny Tollefson	Mary Manning
	Gary Knudsen	Gabe Millar	Maureen Bookwalter
	Jeff Stevens	Beth Hahn, Park Brd Rep	
	Bert Lindler	Tim Aldrich	

Also Present: Jackie Corday, Open Space Program Mgr, Jean Zosel, E.D. of Garden City Harvest and Greg Price, Manager of River Rd Farm for GCH

Final Evaluation of Garden City Harvest River Road Farm

Jackie began by updating members on her meeting with Nancy Heil and County Attorney James McCubbin in regards to the River Road Farm as it is a unique first of its kind project. First was the issue of the project meeting the intent of the 2006 Open Space Bond language, i.e. did it fit within one of the stated purposes: "conserving working farms." Jackie went over the GCH stats and hand-out Jean and Greg had provided OSAC members that shows how productive the 3 acres are and the aerial photo that shows how the gardens are laid out. That information, and the fact that this has been an established successful farm for 15 years led to James concluding it met the bond intent.

Next, we reviewed zoning and what was a permitted verses conditional use. The property is zoned RT10, which allows for 4 dwelling units/acre. The existing community garden and residence is in zoning compliance and that wouldn't change by selling to a non-profit. They can use the house for a garden caretaker residence or rent it without needing any approvals, but if they want to use it for an office or educational center, then they will need to seek approval for a Conditional Use. They cannot use the house for GCH's whole organizational office – that would require a rezone to a commercial zone that allows for offices as the main use.

We then went over the concern about how to ensure the land continues to be farmed as a community garden. The City would not consider paying \$100,000/acre for farmland unless it had a huge community benefit like the current programs at River Rd Farm. After much discussion about deed restrictions, James recommended using a conservation easement instead. He also recommended not restricting the house use as the City's contribution of \$200,000 could be justified by restricting the 3 acres of farmland and excluding restrictions on the approximately .25 acre area that the house and detached garage are on. This would be easier for both the City and GCH to manage.

We then went over an email sent that day from Jean to Jackie regarding the farm's history:

The property was once owned by Eleanor Hait and her family. In the 1940's, Eleanor and her first husband built the house. They raised livestock and had a large vegetable garden on the property. In those days, this was out in the country. In fact, not too many years ago, Russell Street marked the west edge of town. The area west of Russell and east of Reserve was mainly truck farms. While Eleanor was not a truck farmer, she was certainly very acquainted with them and was a part of that "community."

There is great soil and water at River Road Farm – Prime if irrigated. In fact, the irrigation infrastructure was built into that area - many, many years ago - specifically for the development of agriculture. It was a costly venture, done with horses and plows, but that's why farming was able to be so successful in that area. Keeping the River Road Farm healthy and productive is a return on that public investment.

Jean also shared with members an expense chart for the purchase of the property, which will total about \$442,000 (\$420,000 purchase price, boundary relocation fees, city sewer hook-up, closing costs, and attorney fees).

After giving these updates, OSAC members still expressed concern over how to keep the land farmed in perpetuity. Jackie said she will continue pondering that issue as she will be drafting the conservation easement.

Members then focused on reviewing the Final Evaluation criteria for the River Road Farm. Everyone scored the project high enough to make the recommendation to Council to contribute \$200,000 towards the purchase by GCH.

We then adjourned and met up at the Tamarack for our holiday celebration.

