

Notes from Design Charette 4/22/09 at FMS
Charette leader: Dave Christensen

Pre-Tour from 6:30-7, led by CLSR board member Dennis Horton
85 people in attendance

CLSR Board President Steve Wilson called session to order at 7 pm

I. Steve opened with thank yous:

- ✓ Bellingham Parks & Recreation (Rae Edwards & Marvin Harris from Parks were in attendance).
- ✓ Bellingham City Council, for unanimously approving proposal over other two possibilities
- ✓ Bellingham Mayor's Office, for Small and Simple Grant that made the charette possible
- ✓ Resources for Sustainable Communities for their non-profit sponsorship
- ✓ South and Edgemoor Neighborhood Associations
- ✓ Dave Christensen, for offering his assistance with charette design and facilitation
- ✓ Participants in tonight's meeting for coming tonight to give their input

Steve also gave a brief history of the Park and Caretakers House

The end goal of work tonight and over the coming days with the design team is a site plan to present to the City, which is needed for both the house remodel permits and the garden development.

III. **Marvin Harris from Parks** spoke about gift of Park from Charles Larrabee; noted that uses of parks around the country has changed over time, including converting old caretakers' houses to new uses. House was last occupied by a Caretaker in the 1960s . Was a hostel in the 90s.

IV. **Steve introduced Jackie Lynch**, who said building can be used for planned educational, leisure, gardening, recreational public purposes without a conditional use permit , parking, how are trails going to be put in to avoid erosion and landscape. Jackie brought regulations. Someone asked what about a Caretaker? She said this was possible.

V. Dave Christensen took over chair of meeting 7:15

Introduced Alison Kutz-Troutman to give visual introduction with a slide show to get creative juices flowing

Dave moved to giant plan of site, described its geographical features, movement of sun across the site, location of structures. Dave explained that we can't do new structures closer than 50 feet from steep bank, which limits area for building on the site. Showed location of water line; explained that house was used for single family residence, did not have high need for water; as we increase use of structure, will need to be more safety conscious with regard to fire (e.g. sprinklers & fire hydrant). Has small water line and is on sewer.

Dave turned mike over to Danny Stratton to talk about soil: About 10 years ago, City did geotechnical borings. Found about one foot of silty soil, with clayey sand below, and shallow water table about 6 feet down. This may impede drainage.

Dave pointed out that we are limited to 5000 square feet of impervious surface without triggering stormwater treatment requirements. Danny indicated that soil would support paving for parking. Site is 1.4 acres. Dave noted that only connections to the main part of the Park is sidewalk and Interurban Trail.

Someone asked if we could just use the parking in the main Park or FMS for parking, rather than use any of the site for parking. Dave pointed out that at a minimum we will need ADA parking on site, plus will need a long ramp or some other access to the house for accessibility.

Dave then discussed CLSR's pre-application meeting with the City. Building Services says we need 8 x 17 ADA parking spot, plus 8 feet for van, so a total of 16 x 17 feet. If there was residential use in the basement, we will need automatic fire sprinklers (including new 6 inch water line with backflow protection).

Someone asked if permit process could be fast-tracked? Dave responded that if the building were a designated historic building, City would have more flexibility in interpreting and applying building regs. We can list just the exterior shell or can list whole building.

Parks indicated at the Pre-application meeting that there is no ADA requirement for trails.

Someone asked about whether City would fast-track the project if this was an LID (low impact development) project. Dave suggested talking to a city council person, because there is currently no such process.

With regard to parking, amount of parking required depends upon uses of building, e.g., educational, recreational, etc. The last established use of the building was as a hostel, which use required 4 parking spots. The building is therefore vested for 4 parking spots, which can be deducted from the parking requirement for any new use we add. Since we can have the parking anywhere within 500 feet of use, we may be able to use Fairhaven Park parking, but it is not clear whether FMS is close enough. Marvin from Parks said Fairhaven Park parking is used up during the intense summer use period, so they would encourage us to work with FMS. Dave also pointed out that we may be able to apply for a waiver of parking requirement.

Anything within 200 feet of creek is within shoreline/critical areas review. Someone pointed out that we can build small sheds (120 sq. feet) without building permit. Public Works requires review by police department for crime prevention design. Public Works says we must verify water service. Jackie Lynch says that they have determined there is a water line on our side of line, so we will not have to cross the public highway to install a water line.

VI. CREATIVE SESSION 8:00 pm

Someone asked how site will be administered. Steve Wilson said we haven't got there yet. CLSR will sign the lease, but it has yet to be determined.

What is best about the site?

- a. sun
- b. don't want to cut down trees but maybe we can limb them up or selectively limb to let light through
- c. one of neighbors in condo on other side is concerned about noise pollution from Park; would strongly object to removal or even limbing of trees. Noise increased dramatically after 2 trees came down
- d. several people said they have been able to garden around trees, no problem
- e. someone pointed out that trees are really on northeast side of site, and that we should wait until garden is in to decide whether to remove trees
- f. 10-12 feet of slope, should there be terracing?
- g. Someone suggested using it for events; Marvin at Parks said they'd prefer not on a regular basis, but would be OK for occasional celebrations

Anything we need to mitigate?

- a. Catch basins have failed in front of the house, will need to be fixed
- b. Danny Stratton suggested setting an example of dealing with stormwater on site
- c. Someone suggested a pond to take advantage of water pooling there

Is anyone already doing what we are planning?

- a. Alison responded, saying the Extension is doing gardening, but they have no Pea Patch site for teaching
- b. Danny Stratton asked if we envision the site as an educational demonstration garden (show of hands showed strong consensus on this point) -- Michael Chiavario said we'd be educating each other -- someone in the audience suggested maybe both -- but someone pointed out that there are many of "Pea Patch" gardens in Bellingham already
- c. Someone suggested a Food Bank garden
- d. Dave asked if there are other facilities like this around the country; someone described Inner Veil, in Vermont, which is a 360 acre farm with farmers leasin space and community educational sites.
- e. Dan Bornman suggested that the garden strive for nutritional self-reliance, rather than focusing on feel good plants that don't add much to nutritional value. Says can grow enough food to feed person on 1,000 sq. ft., but no one believes it so we should show them—there was strong agreement from the group on this idea.
- f. someone said it sounds like we all want this to be place of inspiration -- we should focus on inspiring others to take the idea to their own homes and neighborhoods

What should we have here?

- a. Mary Teessdale talked about permaculture, wants to incorporate permaculture (using design elements in ways that benefit each other, so little energy is required from persons tending the garden) into the garden. Suggests inviting public to install garden according

to permaculture principles, to teach them. Danny Stratton suggests groups of 20-30 people as ideal for work parties, bigger than that can be ineffective. Mary points out that topography is great, can make swales along topography lines to capture water and use those swales to water adjacent plants

- b. What about a small amphitheatre? Amphitheatre might be a good place for children to take notes, and workers to rest. Or some other space so long as is big enough for whatever class size we are anticipating?
- c. FMS principal spoke up who has hope for orchard on school grounds someday. Suggest working with school to see if they can come up with some land that has better exposure for fruit trees than the park site. Fruit trees work well with school schedule (pruning in spring and harvesting in fall). Says kids leave school in groups of 10 with one adult, so maybe plan that kind of space for kids to gather at the Caretaker's gardens. Someone who works at Columbia and Parkview gardens suggests a central space for kids to gather, get tools, go when they are finished with their work.
- d. Katie Fleming suggested documenting everything, photograph the progression of the garden so other folks can replicate it.
- e. Turning to deer, many folks wanted to keep deer out of the site completely, and view them as an impediment to gardening here and on the southside. Cathy McKenzie suggested that we create some space for deer and fence them out of others. She later clarified that she did not mean that we should not fence them out of the Caretaker's garden, but just create space for them somewhere.
- f. Show of hands on deer fence, about _ of folks present thought a deer fence would be appropriate. Someone suggested getting artists in the community to build fence panels, and said she lives on Parkridge, deer have gotten really bad in the last year. Mary Teesdale suggested a venison roast to get rid of the deer.
- g. Someone suggested experimental deer fencing (nonspecific) to see if it worked. Jackie Lynch suggested using an invisible fence with dogs. Mary Teesdale suggested planting things deer don't like, using cayenne water, etc. FMS teacher said she planted a silver garden because deer don't like those plants, and suggested trying something similar.
- h. Parking: Robyn suggested ADA parking, one slot for utility vehicle, a drop off spot, plus lots of bicycle parking. Someone suggested covered carts to ferry materials from other parking areas. What about elderly folks? Someone suggests possible pervious areas for temporary parking for certain events to accommodate these folks. Someone else pointed out that we are trying to help folks be more self-reliant, which includes encouraging them to find alternative methods of transportation. Someone suggested maybe a golf cart to shuttle less-able folks from parking area.
- i. What about possible commercial uses? Danny suggested about a CSA, where neighbors could buy crops grown on the site. Mary Teesdale does this, and requires the buyers to come pick the crops on the site. Marvin indicates that this idea may be a problem for Parks.
- j. Paul suggested donating crops to Food Bank.
- k. Someone suggested diversity of plants to show what grows here, and then having a plant sale.

What about the house?

- a. There should be an office for administration of site and activities, to be shared by other groups if possible.
- b. Someone suggested a goal of making the building off the grid. Someone else said keep it on the grid and sell power back to the grid
- c. Robyn put Board's commercial kitchen idea out to the audience – no discussion
- d. Discussion of making building more energy efficient by super-insulation, making walls thicker, and other ideas
- e. Dave suggesting planning for future energy independence
- f. Building will be used for teaching in winter and site for hands on learning in growing season
- g. Danny suggested a resource library
- h. Someone points out that self-reliance involves a lot more than food production; other things include woodworking, weaving, herbology, storing, seed-saving, clothing production
- i. Not much support for a caretaker actually living on site
- j. Someone suggested using basement for tool storage, drying plants, for a facility to maximize life of saved seeds
- k. Someone said "If we're not incorporating seed saving, this is a waste of time". Lots of nodding heads
- l. Rae suggested keeping spaces open and as large as possible, to keep building flexible
- m. Someone expressed a preference for keeping building's historical appearance
- n. Someone said we need something to open up an obvious main entrance, to welcome folks.
- o. Someone suggested we need to find a way to make the greenhouse pervious, or to convince the City that they are clean impervious surfaces

What are possible funding sources?

- a. Someone suggested finding a way to access emergency preparedness funding by doing Victory Gardens, etc.

Steve made closing comments at 9:05, thanked Dean Kahn for publicizing CLSR's efforts, encouraged folks to use website and email. Thanked everyone for coming.