

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ABBREVIATED MINUTES
September 28th, 2012
12:00 – 1:15 pm

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

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

Make-up Fieldtrip: October 11th - In attendance: Jackie, Adam, Bert, Mary & Mo Bookwalter and Greg Price on behalf of GCH

Fieldtrip to Garden City Harvest River Road Farm

GCH has been managing a 3.25 acre parcel along River Road for 15 years with acreage devoted to a community garden area with 55 rented garden plots, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Share Program for over 100 people, and a large area that grows food for donations to the Poverello Center and Missoula Food Bank. Additionally, a Volunteer for Veggies Program attracts about 150 volunteers each year to work at the farm in exchange for vegetables. GCH manages four Neighborhood Farms now (in addition to 5 Community Gardens), but the River Rd Farm is especially important because it is in a low income neighborhood and 78% of the garden plot renters are low to moderate income families. Here is a link to more info about the 4 Neighborhood Farms:

<http://www.gardencityharvest.org/aboutneighborhoodfarms.html>

The property is owned by a real estate developer who has expressed his interest in selling the land for several years, but has gotten more serious about wanting to move forward this year. GCH pays \$1,000/month to lease the land. There is a small house fronting River Road on the property that is currently rented to people not associated with the garden. A 2009 appraisal valued the property at \$430,000, which translates to roughly \$100,000/acre if a value of about \$100,000 is assigned to the house. Jean informed members that a new appraisal is currently being prepared. An Environmental Assessment and house inspection was also performed in 2009 and no environmental issues/problems were noted.

The plan is for GCH to purchase the property in order to secure the garden space in perpetuity. This would be the first farm that GCH would own. GCH has also approached the City about using bond funds to help purchase the PEAS Farm, but in that case we are looking at City ownership with a long-term lease to GCH. Jean said that future plans for the house include an education center, a future office when the time is right to move from the current one on Hickory St across from the Parks Department (and Parks owns their current office site), and living quarters for the garden caretaker/manager. They could really use more cold storage space that the garage could provide. In regards to the land, their future vision includes the following:

- Install a well for additional water
- Add more community garden plots (80 were requested this year)
- Add a playground for children in the area west of the garden plots
- Install a pavilion structure for picnics and shade
- Plant fruit trees on the west side and create a berry field
- Expand the chicken area for egg-laying chickens to create an "egg share" program

In regards to why does it make sense to purchase farmland at \$100,000/acre, Jean and Greg explained that 30,000 lbs of vegetables was grown in 2011 on the property and that such a huge amount could not have been possible without the 100s of hours donated by all the volunteers. Weeding is done by hand; chemicals are used very minimally.

Community involvement is strong and a key to the success of this farm. The list of volunteers is diverse, including youth groups, local businesses, churches, schools, UM students and many others. This level of volunteerism, serving low income families, and providing approximately 5,000lbs for the Poverello Center and Food Bank could not happen if the farm was located miles outside of the city. In addition to all the healthy food provided, this farm helps fulfill a need of many nearby residents to enjoy being outdoors. The Master Parks & Recreation Plan lists the River Road area as being underserved by parkland and recreational facilities.

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.

