

2017 – 2018 BUDGET QUERY

Question: 4

Date: September 27, 2016

Topic: Suyematsu Farmstead Planning Proposal

BACKGROUND

The City of Bainbridge Island owns the public farmland known as Suyematsu-Bentryn Family Farms, a 26-acre property located south of Day Road. This property and other City-owned farmland is managed for the City by Friends of the Farms (FOF) under a 30-year master lease. In Spring, 2014 the City’s Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), in cooperation with FOF, approached the City Council to request to apply for a no-match grant, administered by the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). The grant funds were requested to support the work needed to place the Historic Suyematsu Farmstead on the local, historic register and to create a historic property management plan. Council approved the grant application, and the grant was awarded to the City in October 2014.

The DAHP grant funds were used to support work by the Sheridan Consulting Group in 2015 to complete the “Suyematsu Farm Historic Structure Report and Feasibility Study” and to complete the property’s Nomination Form for the Local Historic Register. Both the study and nomination form were reviewed by the FOF, City staff and the HPC at multiple combined and independent meetings throughout 2015.

The feasibility study articulates the significance of this property and its unique contribution to the community’s history. The HPC believes this property represents an important site with strong connections to the island’s agriculture history and Japanese-American heritage. Following completion of the report, the HPC requested that the City formally recognize the site’s historical significance and identify a framework for preservation activities by taking two steps:

1. Adopt the Suyematsu Farm Historic Structures Report and Feasibility Study so that it can be used as a tool for guiding future development/ redevelopment at the site. The City Council adopted this report on April 12, 2016.
2. Affirm the nomination for the Historic Suyematsu Farmstead (a 5-acre portion of the property) for placement on the local historic register. The City Council, acting as the property owner, approved the nomination on April 12, 2016 and the property was added to the local register. At that time, the Suyematsu property became the first publicly owned property listed on the City’s local register.

	2017	2018	One-time or ongoing	Comment
Estimated Dollar Change	\$50,000		One-time	
Funds involved	General Fund			
FTE Change	N/A	n/A		

Now that the property is listed on the Register, the HPC has encouraged the City to identify and complete projects to preserve significant structures and landscape at the site. Using the results of the Feasibility Study, the HPC identified their top priority preservation projects for the Historic Suyematsu Farmstead: the barn, the farmhouse, and the “worker sheds.”

As part of the 2016 discussions related to preservation goals for the property, City Council supported additional staff work to investigate options for next steps. Over the summer, City staff held several discussions with the Bainbridge Island History Museum (BIHM), FOF, and other stakeholders to identify a potential framework to address preservation opportunities at the site. The goal was to identify specific resources and responsibilities to be shared among stakeholders and to move ahead with the identified priority projects in a coordination way. These discussions centered around the concept of a community partner to lead preservation efforts, to move the proposed projects forward in a timely way, and to emphasize coordination among the wide range of stakeholders connected to the property.

The result of these discussions is the attached proposal from FOF. This proposal describes a project team that will lead and complete the first phase of this work, and will develop detailed information and scope for the remaining phases.

The consulting team KO Projects (Katie Oman with Bill Moskin), has significant experience with similar projects in other communities, as well as local knowledge of Bainbridge Island. The partnership with BIHM will ensure that issues of conservation, display, and access are integrated at the outset of project planning. The role of project manager will be filled by FOF, facilitate integration of preservation plans with the ongoing agricultural activity at the site. As described in the scope of work, the project team will engage other community stakeholders throughout the process, and will also seek extensive participation from the broader community.

The 2017-18 Proposed Biennial Budget includes one-time funding of \$50,000 in 2017 to complete the first phase of this work, which seeks to implement the goals established by both the Feasibility Study and local register listing. The intent is for this initial City funding to kick start a larger community effort to preserve this site, identify funding for priority projects, and to help build sustainable connections between the Suyematsu property and other island activities and organizations with related missions.

INFORMATION PROVIDED

Friends of the Farms Historic Suyematsu Farmstead Planning Proposal (September 6, 2016)