



## MEMO

To: Bob Pederson, Director, Island County Planning Department; Larry Kwarsick, Town of Coupeville Planner  
From: Mark Preiss, Reserve Manager  
Re: Farm Exemptions proposal for Design Review  
Date: 25 November 2009

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### Trust Board Members

*Jan Pickard, Chair*

*Fran Einterz, Vice Chair*

*Al Sherman, Treasurer*

*Marilyn Clay, Secretary*

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*Mark Preiss,  
Reserve Manager*

Based on continued conversations with the farmers of Ebey's Reserve, I am submitting for your consideration the following recommendations for addressing farm exemptions, and related agricultural process questions for the design review program in Ebey's Reserve.

I have given serious consideration to Wilbur Bishop's *Agriculture Exemptions from Historical Review* document, among other resources and discussions, and have vetted the exemption recommendations below with the full Trust Board. My comments are mainly focused on the agriculture exemptions for design review – however, it is the Trust Board's intent to work with the farmers and the county on identifying appropriate building permit exemptions and fees once the design review program is moved forward.

The agriculture exemption list is intended to strike a balance that addresses the concerns of the Reserve's farmers, while also being mindful that the most important historic resources in the Reserve are the buildings, the farmsteads that represent Central Whidbey's history from the period of pioneer settlement to today's community.

This memo is also drafted understanding that by and large, projects that have gone through design review in the reserve have benefited from the process, and that the final project on the ground is more compatible with the reserve's rural character because it has been vetted through the design review process.

Design review has been an important and integral tool and safety net used across the reserve for more than 20 years. Working more closely with our Town and County partners, this process must be made more customer friendly, and significantly better staff supported. The design review program should be predictable, and responsive to the needs of our farmers and our residents. With a unified approach, and the renewed commitment of our partners, I believe it will be.

### **WORKING FARM EXEMPTIONS**

Much of the recent discussion regarding the revised design guidelines has focused on potential impacts to working farms. Historically, the agricultural landscape has been emphasized in preserving the rural sections of the Reserve. However, some farm structures are historically significant because of their age, their size or their past use. Preservation of these buildings--the historic houses and the major agricultural structures—is very important to our understanding of the Reserve's history.

It is recognized that today's farm economy is challenging. It makes sense that many farming activities and agricultural structures be exempted from historical design review, and building permit fees and processes. Assisting farmers in adapting to changing methods and practices is important to the Reserve's viability. However, some activities have potential long-term effects on the character of the landscape. For these activities, historical design review is a good tool. Review is not the like applying for a building permit. Its goal is not to prevent projects from being built, but to help them meet the

### Trust Board Partners

*National Park Service*

*Washington State Parks*

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needs of the owner while taking into account the historic character of the Reserve.

As part of my own assessment, I had asked Wilbur Bishop to provide me with a list of potential agriculture exemptions. I have used his *Agriculture Exemptions from Historical Review* list as a starting point. My modifications and recommendations are in italics in section 1.

1. POSSIBLE AGRICULTURE EXEMPTIONS:

- Ordinary maintenance on all existing structures and buildings including replacing, rebuilding or substituting any existing building or structure in substantially the same location, size, appearance and materials, if such are destroyed or damaged by fire, storm, or other casualty.
- Minor alterations to existing non-significant buildings to adapt or improve the functional use for current or future agricultural use. Examples include but are not limited to: annexes to existing structures, the addition or expansion of doors, window, etc. *Additions to or changes to historically significant buildings are not exempt from design review.*
- Maintenance alterations to existing buildings. Examples include but are not limited to painting, siding and roofing. *Alterations to historically significant structures are exempt if they use the same type of materials.*
- The construction of fencing or other animal management structures. Examples include but are not limited to: wire or other open fences, temporary or portable shelters, portable feeders, waterers, corrals and loading chutes.
- The construction of poultry barns, hay barns, livestock barns, milking parlors, tractor and storage equipment storage barns or shop buildings for servicing and repairing farm equipment that is used in conjunction with the farming operation, *if the structure is less 2500 square feet, and located within 150 feet of existing farm cluster buildings. The Trust Board recommends that the farmer work with the Historic Review Committee in siting of these new structures*
- The construction of commodity storage facilities, *if less than 2500 square feet, if located within 150 feet of existing farm cluster buildings.* Examples include but are not limited to: grain bins, silage pits and cold storage.
- The construction of compost processing facilities. Examples include but are not limited to: grinders, batch-processing units, production areas (e. g. concrete slabs and barriers) and windrows.
- Manure handling and storage facilities. Examples include but are not limited to: manure pits, pump units, support buildings and piping.
- Erection of crop support or protection apparatus. Examples include but are not limited to: high or low tunnels, greenhouses, temperature protection (i.e. wind machines, outdoor furnaces or heaters) and trellising. *Structures less than 2500 square feet are exempt, if located within 150 feet of existing farm cluster buildings.*
- Erection of wildlife, rodent and bird control apparatus, *35 feet or less in height.*
- Erection of mechanical agricultural structures. Examples include but are not limited to GPS guidance towers, weather stations, antennas, computers, pumps, radiators and fuel storage, *35 feet or less in height.*
- Erection of renewable energy structures. Examples include but are not limited to: wind turbines, mag-wind turbines, digesters and sustainable fuel production. *Design review is a tool to improve projects in historic districts. Structures less than 2500 square feet in size, and located within 150 feet of existing structures are exempt from design review.*
- Construction or erection of food and feed processing facilities. Examples include but are not limited to bulk processing equipment and structures, milling, slaughterhouses and

other food-related processing. *Structures less than 2500 square feet in size are exempt from design review, if located within 150 feet of existing farm cluster buildings; those over that size, or outside of the existing farm cluster will undergo design review.*

- Construction or erection of well houses and farm utilities structures *less than 2500 square feet, if located within 150 feet of existing farm cluster buildings.*
- Use of irrigation piping, pumping and application systems.
- Grading and construction of drainage ditches and ponds for storage or containment.
- Cropping patterns and boundaries.
- Erosion protection. Examples include but are not limited to: tree planting and removal, brush removal, hedgerow planting and removal and terracing. Removal of significant trees, tree stands or hedgerows and planting of trees in open areas is not exempt. *The important landscape features would be identified in the Reserve Heritage Farmstead Plan*
- Signage no larger than 2 feet square related to management or public safety. Examples include but are not limited to markers, hunting containment, u-pick and seasonal advertisement and warning signs (e. g., liquid manure pits, no trespassing).
- Temporary of seasonal support structures, examples include but are not limited to outhouses and tents. *define seasonal*
- As new and different approaches to agriculture evolve, the need for new and different equipment, apparatus and structures will also evolve. New developments will be assessed through the Reserve Heritage Farmstead Plan.
- New construction on properties with NPS easements. These projects will be reviewed by the Trust Board, as the Designee of the Secretary of the Interior.

#### NOT EXEMPT

- New construction over 2500 square feet, and new construction outside of existing farm cluster (existing construction zone)
- Recommend that farmers seek guidance from historic preservation committee or Trust Board staff on siting of new structures exceeding 1500 square feet located within 200 feet of farm cluster, primarily for siting purposes.

#### DEMOLITION

- I recommend that working farms be allowed to operate under Island County's existing demolition ordinance for one year. This exemption would only be for working farms.
- During this timeframe, the Trust Board will work with the farmers and farmstead owners to complete Reserve Heritage Farmstead Plans for their farms, to identify the high priority historic structures and landscape features that we should focus on preserving over time.
- Once a farmer or property owner has this plan in place, they will be eligible for Ebey's Forever Fund support, as well as the Reserve Preservation Field School. First year funding from this program will be awarded in this calendar year.
- The partners would reassess the demolition ordinance after one year and determine best course of action.

#### TOOLS TO SUSTAIN EBHEY'S HERITAGE OF FARMING

- In the months ahead, the Trust Board and staff will work directly with the farmers to complete the Ebey's Reserve Heritage Farmstead Plans – on a willing participant basis.
- Once completed, these plans will give the Trust Board and partner's important information about the health of these historic and cultural resources, and give the farmers new tools and incentives for their current and future farming operations.

- The completed Reserve Heritage Farmstead Plan will be adopted by the Trust Board.
- The Trust Board has the resources to complete these Reserve Heritage Farmstead Plans within the current fiscal year, and can be done in the next six months as requested.
- The farmer will be eligible for funding from the Ebey's Forever Fund with an adopted Reserve Heritage Farmstead Plan.
- The farmer will be eligible to participate in the annual Ebey's Preservation Field School with an adopted Reserve Heritage Farmstead Plan.
- The Ebey's Forever Fund will distribute its first monetary awards in 2010.

#### LEVERAGING LOCAL RESOURCES

- The Trust Board is working with historic architectural conservator Harrison Goodall developing a Building Doctor program for the Reserve. The program will feature a stable of preservation experts available to provide on-site technical support to farmers and other owners of historic properties in the reserve. This stable of experts will include structural engineers, electricians, woodworkers, roofers, grants writers, architects, etc.
- We are developing a Historic Structures Conditional Assessment Database that will feature all of the historic structures listed as contributing in the National Register of Historic Places. This new tool, being designed by Harrison Goodall, will give the Trust Board and our Island County and Town of Coupeville partners a better understanding of the "health" of our historic building stock, and help focus our funding and support toward those resources at greatest risk.

It may be that a list of exemptions is not something we want to codify, but rather have it as a working list that the partners agree upon, and that is reviewed on an annual basis. We have a good paragraph to work with, for code purposes, which is taken from easements we have in the Reserve. In any event, I wanted to start with the farmer's list.

I want to thank the farmers and the many citizens of the Reserve for providing me with important and timely feedback. I don't expect folks to jump up and down for regulation. That'll be the same day cows jump over the moon. But we all understand the importance of having design review as a tool to help protect the Reserve's rural character. The sideboards we're laying out gives a farmer more room to sustain their operations, the freedom to be innovative – and gives all of us the tools necessary to better protect the Reserve's rural heritage for generations to come. Thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations with you. I look forward to the planning commission deliberations next Friday, the 4<sup>th</sup>.

Best Regards,

Mark Preiss  
Reserve Manager