

Salt Spring Farm Produce Centre
Community Meeting Consultation Summary

November 25, 2014

The Produce Centre Planning Committee (PCPC) hosted a community meeting on November 2, 2014 at the Salt Spring Public Library to present the draft Conceptual Design Plan and solicit public feedback and discussion. Approximately 50 people attended the session. Attendees were given the opportunity to view the plans and speak individually with the Designer and PCPC members before the plenary presentation and discussion. Forty-seven people signed in. Three people completed comment forms.

Following are the notes from the plenary discussion.

Question and Answers

Q1. What's the objective of the project?

A. *Increase local food production through a cost-recovery non-profit model*

Q2. Why is shipping and receiving away from skids?

A. *Exact configuration is to be decided and dependent on regulations (height, etc.).*

Q3. What are the green features?

- *Reuse of a brownfield site*
- *Solar orientation (passive and solar + solar collection)*
- *High R values*
- *Rain catchment and onsite storm water retention*
- *Possible rammed earth foundation*

Q4. Are there other models to learn from?

A. *Many examples through the National Good Food Network, and lessons learned from other regional and North American efforts.*

Q5. Where is the water coming from?

A. *Local Waterworks, potential well and rainwater.*

Q6. What's the plan for the Barn?

A. *Requires upgrades but could be used as storage, tool coop or other purpose*

Q7. Is the focus on commercial production? There should be fair and transparent policies on the focus and priority.

A. *The Centre is intended to assist those who are commercially producing as well as non-profits such as Community Services. The specifics, policies and operational model are to be determined.*

Q8. Is this project being carried out with public money?

A. Yes. This is a “community-owned”¹

Q9. Is rammed earth possible?

A. Yes. The additional cost will require further fundraising

Q10/Comment. In regards to the cost of green features, we have an opportunity to be innovative and balance upfront costs with long-term energy costs and ecological consequences.

Q11/Comment. Expertise are needed for Green Subcommittee. Anyone interested in lending their professional expertise to the subcommittee should get in contact with Elizabeth White.

Q12. The project objectives are vague. Has someone approached the agriculture/farming community to find out their needs?

A. Yes. Many meetings and consultations have been completed over the past 5 years. We cannot give everyone what they want but are aiming to create flexibility to allow the Produce Centre to evolve overtime in respond to need/interest.

Q13. What is the timeline/completion date?

A. Submit DP amendment by the end of November. Break ground in 2 years or so.

Q14. Are there any retail opportunities on the site?

A. Yes. The zoning allows retail as a secondary use.

Q15/Comment. SSICs is growing at the BVCF. More facilities are required to accommodate farm and food program expansion. SSICS plans to join the PCPC and support the Produce Centre as a means to expanding Food Bank and other programs.

Q16. Why is septic field so close to the stream? Consider other site planning suggestions (see comment form submission).

A. Septic field location based on perk tests. Conceptual Design Plan aims to be flexible to allow site planning options.

Q17/Comment. Consider doing a combination of rammed earth and conventional construction to reduce costs and maximize energy savings. Consider geothermal.

Q18. There is a lot of driveway on the site plan. What’s the materisl? Consider eco-friendly, permeable alternative to reduce run-off.

A. Yes. Interested in pursuing options.

Q19/Comment. The lower level submerged in the hillside should partially provide natural cooling/insulation benefits of rammed earth. Is this correct?

A. Yes. Rammed earth has other benefits and green characteristics, as well as less heat loss and moisture issues compared to concrete.

¹ Note from the Produce Centre Planning Committee: This is a facility planned for the benefit of the community, funded through a variety of sources including grants and donations.

Salt Spring Farm Produce Centre Consultation Summary: August 13 Stakeholder Meeting

Summary

The Produce Centre Planning Committee (PCPC) held a stakeholder meeting on August 13 from 7pm - 9pm at the Farmers' Institute. The purpose of the meeting was to present the draft conceptual plans for the Produce Centre and receive feedback.

The meeting was advertised through SSIAA, PCPC, Tuesday Market and ING email lists, the SSIAA website, Facebook and printed flyers distributed at the August 11 Tuesday Market. Eight members of the public attended the meeting. Five PCPC reps, the designer and project coordinator were also in attendance. Several people gave their regrets and asked to be included in future consultation.

Anne Macey gave a brief overview of the project followed by Donald Gunn's presentation of the draft conceptual plan drawings. Attendees were asked for their feedback and comments. These are summarized below.

Comments

Honey House and Beekeeping

- Support for honey house location
- Beekeepers would like to supply and fundraise for bee plants, hives and designated beekeepers. This could property farm status
- National honey bees research on Salt Spring has provided national attention – good potential for training and workshops

Kitchen Use and Design

- Consider different kitchen design that allows for a teaching space, workshop opportunities and training programs
- Overall design seems well considered
- Need to determine which users are being planned and adapt plans accordingly
- Is this space for small business to use as incubator or is it planned for occasional users? Different users will have different facility and time needs
- Dumb waiter a must to make basement space functional as a supportive element to kitchen
- Equipment training should be a prerequisite for all users
- Clearly mark first aid station on plan
- Walk-in freezers are always needed. Some with individual locks would be useful
- Kitchen should be designed to be more versatile to accommodate more people/multiple users
- Caretaker should be a chef or kitchen professional to oversee kitchen programming, maintenance, etc.

Potential Partnerships

- Sap sucker group may be interested in maple trees and doing demonstrations on property, as well as syrup reduction in Centre
- Is there an opportunity to include the Conservancy?
- Greenhouses could be used to grow plants for sale
- Link with Incredible Edibles group. They may be interested in managing greenhouses and conducting programs

Access

- 24 hours access is ideal especially since some processes are best done at night
- Should employ online calendar to manage user sign-up and identify potentials for rental time sharing
- PC should consider following community kitchen model that allow regular rental slots as well as flexible time slots that assume seasonal and sporadic needs
- Parking constrains uses at site such as large events and markets that attract large numbers of vehicles

Other Space and Planning Considerations

- Should include workshop space for caretaker
- Plan for seed saving area, equipment and storage
- Should include areas for amendment storage and composting
- Should clearly identify staging areas for pick-up and delivery
- Show size of root cellar. Could coolers be integrated with root cellar?
- What's the purpose of the greenhouses?
- It seems like the master plan has too many elements, is much bigger than originally envisioned
- Could use exterior covered space for Winter Market
- Could use solar generation as teaching tool/demonstration
- What is the funding model for the Centre?

Salt Spring Farm Produce Centre
Consultation Summary: March 13, 2014 Processing Kitchen Focus Group

Facilitator: Judi Stevenson
 Reorder: Elizabeth FitzZaland
 PCPC Reps: Anne Macey and Marguerite Lee

Participants in attendance: 7
 RSVP regrets: 9

Introductions and Interests

Grows at FVO. Wants to see more SSI produce for sale. PC and food industry can revive economy
New farm on S. End will be productive in 2015. Will need better processing facilities over time. Interested in flash freezing, large tables, trays, etc.
Interested in building a honey house on PC property to extract honey. Beekeepers will fundraise capital and manage facility.
Resource person from GISS
<i>Developing product ideas/not yet processing. Interested in dryer, ovens, racks, large scale canning. Wondering about booking process and availability</i>
<i>Sold onion crackers at market. Too expensive to rent current kitchen spaces. Passionate about healthy foods. Interested in fermenting food</i>
<i>Representing George Braun. Growing olives, blueberries, grapes and cherries. Looking to expand. Industrial juicing, flash freezing and freezer storage needed. Maybe canning? Future plans to produce olive oil</i>
<i>First year going to market. Wants to use PC to process surplus produce. Current kitchen rates are too high</i>

Discussion: How could your business needs be met at a community facility?

Design

- Kitchen size: as big as Fulford Hall? GISS? Stowel Lake? All Saints? PCPC should tour current kitchens to better understand space requirements.
- Current list of desires requires a lot of space.
- Identify the different areas
- Separated dehydration area required
- Plan for all future venting/duct work
- Consider an RFP for potential users. Compare and prioritize.
- Look into passive energy/systems options. See UVic examples of roots cellars, etc.

Management and Operations

- Someone has to be in charge
- Hire a chef to manage facility, create products and train
- Oversight to ensure cleanliness and regular maintenance, prevent cross-contamination
- TO example... see attachment
- Consider produce merging to create a new product, or hiring a processor (chef)
- Swipe cards for twilight/after hours access
- Online sign-up process/schedule
- Determine access times and prioritization
- Night access is important
- Before market days will be busy
- Fulford Hall downstairs kitchen is getting certified – how can the two facilities coordinate/compliment?

Cost and Fees

- Feedback from market sellers that kitchen rental at \$80-100/day and \$10 - 25/hour is too high. May not include equipment, pots, etc.
- Used refurbished equipment to bring down costs (dryers, choppers, freezers, etc.)
- Financial success lies in marketing to off-island buyers – this will make the biggest difference to farm/processors viability – shared facility makes this more possible
- Where does the \$ come from for equipment and operations? It's a lot of \$!
- Fundraise for equipment
- Consider yearly memberships with discounted use fees
- Kitchen rental fees and storage fees should be separate

Target Users

- Who is the kitchen for? Big producers vs. startup businesses
- Processing plant vs. multi-use kitchen
- What does the “processing year” look like? Different needs at different times.
- There will be yearly, seasonal and specific users
- Frequent users may require on-site storage
- Processing surplus/“emergency” produce should take priority to avoid waste
- Need to determine which small businesses get to use the space in what priority?
- Develop criteria that meet PC objectives and give priority to users who meet criteria
- Is the PC for value-added of LOCAL produce exclusively?
- Most producers grow a lot of variety in small quantities – how do they fit into the PC picture?

Training and Education

- Education/training needed re: food costing, marketing and efficient production techniques
- All users must be Food Safe trained (Mark can setup program and protocol)
- Education is needed ahead of facility opening/during planning process
- Youth job training opportunities
- "Value-added" value is in not wasting produce
- Public education on value, health benefits, etc.

Equipment/Function Priorities

- Industrial/large dehydrators (lots of interest in food community) (5)
- Large scale canning (4)
- Two steam kettles (4)
- Large stainless tables/room to work (3)
- Flash freezing (3)
- Cold storage (3)
- Storage for boxes, products and ingredients (3)
- Bread/pizza ovens (2)
- Vacuum packing (2)
- Convection oven (2)
- Pots and utensils (2)
- Rack and Roll (2)
- Honey house with proper space and hose-down setup
- Industrial juicing
- Freezer storage
- Temp controlled short term storage for product cool-down (important)
- Big stove/8 burners
- Storage for value-added products is not viable
- Teaching kitchen setup
- Walk-in freezer
- Walk-in cooler
- Steam table
- Seed processing/shelling

Salt Spring Farm Produce Centre
Consultation Summary: March 5, 2014 Storage + Wholesaling Focus Group

Facilitator: Judi Stevenson
 Reorder: Elizabeth FitzZaland
 PCPC Reps: Anne Macey and Marguerite Lee

Participants in attendance: 18
 RSVP regrets: 4

Introductions and Interests

<i>Will be going to market for 1st time this year. How can the PC benefit me?</i>
<i>Interested in storage.</i>
<i>Owner of Wavehill Farm with 23 years experience' Interested in how it will work and offered help although may not use it. .</i>
<i>Growing business. Producing hazelnuts and walnuts. Looking for co-op type of place for packaging, shared marketing, storage, cleaning and wholesaling.</i>
<i>Representing SSISFTS</i>
<i>Currently using two properties to access potable water to clean produce. Could PC streamline her operations?</i>
<i>Grows and ferments vegetables. Requires more storage, especially for cabbage. Interested in wholesaling and coordinating off-island sales (perhaps through cooperative).</i>
<i>Owner of Pipe Rabbit Farm. Interested in freezer storage and off-island delivery/sales.</i>
<i>Involved in planning process. Interested in an economic storage option to allow increased squash production.</i>
<i>What would PC look like? What will it provide the community? Interested in alternative storage options for apples and maybe garlic.</i>
<i>Small, organic caterer going to market. Interesting in sourcing local, organic produce.</i>
<i>Interested in opportunities for BVCF farmers and how the PC will shape up. Also representing other interested farmers.</i>
<i>Interested in discussing other uses such as bulk grain for poultry and tool sharing – these are some of the current obstacles to good, efficient growing.</i>
<i>Supports energy and optimism created at 2012 consultation meeting. Interested in squash storage to reduce waste produce.</i>
<i>Background in produce distribution and present as a resource person.</i>
<i>Wants to increase production of his miso business and create Salt Spring Miso. Exploring where to grow produce and process product.</i>

Discussion: How could your storage needs be met at the Produce Centre?

Design

- Collective “apple room” approach vs. individual “storage stalls” approach? How much space per stall? How much space in “rooms”?
- “Self-storage” approach allows individual control and could expand as needed
- “Self-storage” will be too pricey
- Start with something simple: some short term storage and a kitchen
- Create an adaptable design to evolve with need, in stages (2)
- Everyone’s needs are different – we need a dynamic hub
- Storage is contentious – should we focus on other components to move project along?
- Start simple: chest freezers in barn

Management and Operations

- Need an employee to maintain quality, enforce standards, cull
- Person onsite is essential for long term and medium term storage
- Important to figure out marketing component

Quality and Contamination

- “Tricky to store produce for a long time”; can lose 60% if not good control of temperature & humidity
- Concerns for contamination in a shared area; need quality standard for crops being stored
- Standards agreement. Organic? No GMOs?
- Who is liable and who pays compensation for contamination?

Cost and Fees:

- What is the cost of operating this facility?
- What is the cost based on? Be transparent.
- Chicken/egg issue of figuring out costs and fees
- Need to focus on big \$ crops
- What is economical?
- How much will storage cost per lb? 20 cents?
- Chest freezers at \$25/month? Shared utilities?
- Will people pay \$50/month to store 4000 lbs of apples?
- Needs to work for farmers working at a small scale (econ. + logist.)
- Least expensive way to get started:
 1. Pool storage
 2. Agree on which produce to store
 3. Set standards
 4. Hire employee to oversee/manage

Training and Education

- What's worth storing?
- Price difference between wholesale and retail (time vs. price)

Food Co-op (Retail)

- Address lack of winter market
- Create PC oversight
- What produce/products are offered?
- Tainted recent history of Gasoline Alley co-op
- Needs lots of energy to be successful
- Have the market conditions changed?
- Interest in getting involved (3)

Storage Priorities

- Fridges and freezers; short & longer term (7)
- Long term winter storage (6)
- Short term humidity/temp control (4)
- Root storage only unless PC is marketing (3)
- 1 degree C. room for apples, boxes 3 deep on shelves (3)
- Freeze and store berries (3)
- Meat and Poultry (3)
- Should not be "too picky" in the beginning
- Simple rodent/weather-proof warehouse (2)
- Flash freezer -berries
- Wholesaling
- Garlic
- Cool and dry miso storage
- Bagging and storing poultry grain
- 4 degrees C. + humidity control for cabbage
- Some might change crops if storage avail.
- Storage time needed - 2-3 months

Wholesaling

- Wholesaling and co-op not so different
- Someone on the phone (PC) with knowledge of price and demand who arranges all logistics (farmers just drop-off and invoice)
- Make wholesaling easy – online functions
- Maintain brand integrity
- Off-island wholesaling through PC or co-op
- "Love to grow, hate to sell"
- Large volume required to make worthwhile
- Requires consistent ability to fill quotas/demand
- As customer/purchaser: Easier way to connect with local farmers/source local with ease (2)
- Wholesaling is big business – complex and competitive
- Can wholesale without PC, arrange directly with stores/customers

- Requires great manager to make it easy/straightforward
- Some interest in just off-island distribution
- No time for marketing small quantities
- Need year-round wholesale and retail component
- Is there community support?
- Need for Salt Spring brand (on and off-Island)
- How does this work for small farms? Crop rotation + wholesale OR variety + retail?
- Interest in selling to co-op only
- "Vegetable box" pick-up /delivery? with no sign-up/membership
- Direct selling to PC would relieve producers from worrying about daily management and return visits