



Harper Community Meeting Summary

Date: Thursday, September 26, 2019, 6:30-8 p.m.

Location: Colby United Methodist Church, 2881 Harvey Street SE, Port Orchard

Purpose: This is a meeting with Harper residents to discuss the Draft Harper Park Improvement Plan. The 2019 grant from the Department of Ecology continued restoration planning for the estuary as well as developing a plan for Harper Park. This gathering follows two community meetings, a Harper Park site tour and a community conversation about park and estuary improvements. Today's event provides neighbors and staff an opportunity to explore potential park improvements further, learn about grant progress, and hear community interest about the project.

Community Attendees: Janie & Bruce Hinds, Amy Smalley, Carmen Smith, Dennis (last name illegible), George Willock, Shamus McBride, Jim Heytvelt, Kristen Howard

County Representatives: Commissioner Charlotte Garrido; Christina Kereki, Department of Community Development; Eric Baker and Jennifer Haro, Commissioners Office; and Steven Starlund and Jackson Lee, Parks Department.

Agenda:

Commissioner Garrido welcomed attendees and made staff introductions.

Christina Kereki outlined the meeting program as well as the values of the Harper Community as gathered at previous meetings. They include: Harper Estuary and natural settings; healthy estuarine habitats, safety and public access to scenic water views; recreation for all ages; local history and culture; and community stewardship.

Steven Starlund gave an overview of Harper Park, its ownership issues and the draft Harper Park Plan. He explained the landscape classifications, including; active recreation, passive recreation, conservation and natural areas.

There are three stages to the proposed park improvements:

1. Maintain:
 - remove hazard trees

- control noxious weeds
 - restore picnic shelter
 - restore water drainage in field
 - replace foot bridge and entrance signs
 - upgrade historic trail
 - improve privacy fencing
 - organize park stewardship group
2. Enhance:
- add vehicle control barriers along shoreline
 - interpretive signage related to estuary restoration and local history
 - improve picnic furnishings
 - trail standards and annual maintenance
 - parking lot controls & fencing
3. Augment
- update ballfield
 - redevelop field fencing and backstop
 - redesign parking area
 - additional signage as needed
 - docent tours
 - native plant garden

The presentation is available [here](#).

The posters, found [here](#), that were presented for the open house discussion displayed information on:

- 1) park boundaries, ownership and watershed
- 2) park landscape classifications
- 3) community recommendations
- 3) draft playfield & picnicking improvements

Summary of Community Comments

Community Questions/Comments

- Why did the County remove the boat launch when the community did not want it removed? *Staff explained that it did not fit in with the estuary restoration, so had to be removed. The future plan will provide a pullout for cars to launch kayaks, and the parking lot will be improved at the park. A crosswalk study will be done to provide a safe crossing from the parking lot to the beach.*
- There used to be a pond in Harper Creek, just upstream from the pedestrian bridge. Kids used to play and fish in it. *Staff clarified the location of the former pond.*

- The new plan for the baseball field could cause damage to cars. It should stay the way it is. *Staff indicated that it is 270 feet from the proposed backstop to Southworth Drive, so it is unlikely that balls will enter traffic.*
- The logs and trees that were added to the estuary as part of the restoration are ugly and should be removed. *Staff explained that the vegetation in the estuary is changing, due to a change in water flow as a result of the restoration project. Some freshwater vegetation is dying, but new salt-tolerant plants will get established as time goes on. The trees and root wads that were added to the estuary are vital for stabilization and habitat creation and were engineered by a habitat specialist.*

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Address issues raised in the draft park plan.
2. Continue inviting community interest on a project or projects, such as interpretation and signage support. The goal is to partner with community efforts.
3. Create and consider alternative designs for the field at Harper Park.
4. Summarize community comments, identify themes, provide support information and a summary of the estuary cleanup progress, as well as conceptual plan options for Harper Park upgrades.
5. Continue with stewardship efforts for trail improvement, ivy removal, etc.
6. Work with community to develop interpretive plan.