

August 10, 2015

Marshall Bronson
John Mishasek

Mike Diamanti
William Bell

John Carr
David Day

Greenbank Farm

Gentlemen:

On July 8, at the Port's regular meeting, two Commissioners voted to cease negotiations with us regarding the future management of the Greenbank Farm, effectively rejecting the draft management agreement that had been hammered out over nine months and that was receiving its final legal review. This was a surprise action, taken without notice or discussion. In place of the management agreement, the Commissioners announced their intention to have the Port itself manage and operate the Farm, although they did not identify any operating plan, staff or specific changes they would introduce.

Since that meeting, we have urged those interested to make their views known to the Port and many supporters of the Farm have asked us to request that the Port reconsider its action. We have also had several meetings with candidates for Port Commissioner who will take office in December 2015 and January 2016.

The unfolding of events over the last month has led us to conclude that there is no longer any useful purpose in us pursuing management of the Farm. Therefore, to remove any uncertainty on the part of the community or the Port, please regard this letter as formal notification that we no longer wish to be considered in any management role at the Farm, either through reconsideration of our proposal by the sitting Commissioners or through action by new Commissioners later this year. Public discussion should now focus on the Port's plans for the Farm.

We will, however, fulfill our management responsibilities under the current agreements through the end of 2015 and will cooperate in making the transition to Port operation as smooth as possible. We will shortly be providing the Port with a list of matters that we believe need immediate attention in advance of 2016. We intend to continue our lease for the Organic Farm School through March 2017 as we evaluate the future of the OFS.

This decision recognizes our growing perception that there is a deep division between the Port and us regarding the future of the Farm. This extends to the Port's financial support for the Farm and, more generally, to its vision for the Farm within the Island community. We also observe that there is increasing division among the Port Commissioners, old and new, about the future of the Farm. None of this is likely to change in the near term.

During the negotiations, the Port asserted that it had such a financial emergency that it was compelled to reduce or eliminate its financial support for the Farm. In a thorough review of the Port's financial statements, which we shared with the Port, we concluded that this was not the



case. The Port's financial position actually gives it a good deal of flexibility over the next five years. The Port also asserted that the Farm should be self-sufficient and not rely on taxpayer support, a requirement that it does not seem to have imposed on the Wharf, the Port's other property. We requested support for Farm operations that amounted to less than 10% of the Port's budget and would cost the average taxpayer less than \$6 annually. All of this suggests that, even if our proposal were accepted, we would face an ongoing struggle to gain resources from the Port for the Farm, resulting in distractions and dangers to normal operations.

In the negotiations, we identified and argued for our vision of the Farm. We emphasized the importance of integrated management of the Farm, bringing together all of the varied components to reinforce each other – commercial businesses of the tenants, agriculture through the Organic Farm School, recreation through use of the open spaces in the fields and environmental stewardship through care of the wetlands and other wildlife habitat. We expressed our belief that community activity and engagement, as well as programs we originated and ran and alliances with other Island organizations, were instrumental in creating the Farm experience, which in turn provided the base, the energy and flow of visitors and residents that supported commercial activity at the Farm. We also felt this vision was true to the promise of the original save-the-farm movement in 1997 and carried forward the objectives in Port's own 2007 Comprehensive Plan, its 2009 Master Site Plan and as the basis for the 2004 State capital grant that funded the improvements now driving the Farm and its commercial, community and visitor experience.

Throughout the negotiations, we found the Port resistant to this vision. The Commissioners and Port staff dismissed community effort and outreach as secondary. They ignored the \$2.7 million of financial support that has flowed to the Farm from the community over 18 years, more than equal to resources committed by the Port, and instead narrowly focused on the need for economic self-sufficiency at the Farm at any cost. We believe the Port's vision is misguided and that deemphasizing the community role in the Farm will be counterproductive to the economic goals of the Port over time. The Port's operation of the Farm under its vision and financial objectives stands to significantly change the resident and visitor experience at the Farm.

We expect that the divisions within the Port over funding the Farm and the Wharf and over the future direction of the Farm, contrasted with our own views, if we were to have a management role, would be distracting and would undermine the public's confidence in the future of the Farm. We see no purpose in being a part of that ongoing conflict.

Our affection for the Farm is undiminished. While we believe that the Port's action is ill considered and precipitous and that its plans (what we know of them) and objectives are flawed, we hope the Farm will nonetheless survive and prosper.

Very truly yours,

Board of Directors
Board of Directors

Greenbank Farm Management Group

